STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURE

Server Steps of Service SOP

Document no.	SOP-RST-004
Revision	1.0
Owner	General Manager
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Review cycle	Every 12 months

1. Purpose

To give every guest a consistent, well-paced dining experience by defining the order and timing of service steps from greeting through farewell.

2. Scope

Applies to server interactions with seated dining room tables from greeting through payment. Host seating and food safety in the kitchen are covered by separate procedures.

Definitions

Table touch	A brief check-in at a table to ask if everything is satisfactory, beyond the main service steps.
Check-back	Returning to a table shortly after food is delivered to confirm the order is correct and everything is good.
Upsell	Suggesting an additional item, such as an appetizer or dessert, in a natural and non-pushy way.

3. Responsibilities

Server	Owns the guest experience at their tables from greeting through farewell, following each step of service.
Food Runner	Delivers food from the kitchen to the correct table and seat promptly and confirms the order with the guest.
Shift Manager	Supports servers with table timing, handles service recovery, and coaches on the steps of service during the shift.

RACI matrix

Activity	Server	Food Runner	Shift Manager
Greet the table within the target time	R/A	-	I
Take and enter the food and drink order	R/A	-	I
Deliver food to the correct seat	C	R/A	I
Perform the check-back after	R/A	-	I

Activity	Server	Food Runner	Shift Manager
food delivery			
Present the check and process payment	R/A	-	C

R = Responsible, A = Accountable, C = Consulted, I = Informed

4. Materials and PPE

Materials, tools and systems

- Point of sale (POS) system
- Order pad or handheld ordering device
- Menu and specials list
- Table numbering or seat position chart
- Guest table timing standard

5. Procedure

Step	Task	Owner	Done
5.1	**Greet the table promptly** Approach the table within the target greeting time after guests are seated, introduce yourself, and welcome them to the restaurant. **Checkpoint:** Every table is greeted within the target time set by the restaurant's service standard.	Server	☐
5.2	**Offer beverages and describe specials** Ask about beverages, mention the day's specials briefly, and answer any initial menu questions before stepping away to place the drink order.	Server	☐
5.3	**Deliver beverages and take the food order** Return with drinks, then take the food order by seat position so the kitchen and food runner can deliver each dish to the correct guest.	Server	☐
5.4	**Enter the order into the POS accurately** Enter the order into the POS immediately, including modifications, allergies and seat positions, so the kitchen ticket matches exactly what the guest requested. **Warning:** Always flag a food allergy in the POS using the correct allergen tag, following the kitchen's allergen control SOP.	Server	☐
5.5	**Check in before food arrives** Return to the table once to refill drinks or clear appetizer plates, and let guests know approximately when their food will arrive if there is a delay.	Server	☐
5.6	**Deliver food to the correct seat** Bring each dish to the seat position noted on the ticket, confirming with the table which guest ordered which item before setting plates down. **Checkpoint:** Every dish is delivered to the seat position noted on the ticket without guests needing to swap plates.	Food Runner	☐
5.7	**Perform the check-back** Return to the table within a couple of minutes of food delivery to confirm the order is correct and ask if anything else is needed. **Checkpoint:** Every table receives a check-back shortly after food delivery to confirm the order is correct.	Server	☐

Step	Task	Owner	Done
5.8	**Refill and clear proactively** Refill beverages before glasses are empty and clear finished plates promptly, watching the table without hovering or interrupting conversation.	Server	☐
5.9	**Offer dessert and suggest an upsell** Clear the table fully, then offer the dessert menu and suggest a specific item in a natural way rather than a generic upsell line.	Server	☐
5.10	**Present the check promptly** Once the guest indicates they are finished, print and present the check within a couple of minutes, without rushing the table before they ask.	Server	☐
5.11	**Process payment following cash handling steps** Process the payment following the restaurant's cash handling SOP, returning change or a signed receipt promptly.	Server	☐
5.12	**Thank the guest and clear the table** Thank guests as they leave, invite them back, and clear and reset the table promptly for the next seating.	Server	☐

6. Quality checks

- Tables are greeted within the target time on spot checks.
- Food is delivered to the correct seat position without guest swaps.
- Every table receives a check-back shortly after food delivery.
- Checks are presented promptly once a guest signals they are finished.

7. Records

- Table timing spot-check log
- Guest complaint or compliment notes
- Service standard training sign-off sheet

8. KPIs

- Average greeting time after seating
- Average table turn time
- Check-back compliance rate from spot checks
- Guest satisfaction scores from surveys or reviews

9. Common mistakes

- Skipping the check-back after delivering food.
- Delivering plates without confirming seat positions, causing guests to swap them.
- Presenting the check before a guest has asked for it.
- Clearing a plate before every guest at the table has finished eating.

10. Revision history

Revision	Date	Description	Reviewed by
1.0	September 15, 2026	Initial release	Alexa Uskova

Approval

Prepared by	Approved by	Date

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