

“Vegetables are a must on a diet. I suggest carrot cake, zucchini bread, and pumpkin pie.” Jim Davis

The Value of Service

By Naomi Williamson
and Michael Kutscheid

Have you ever dined at the new, expensive, hot restaurant everyone is talking about and walked away wondering, “What happened to the service?” In one of my first jobs as a host, a customer stopped on the way out the door and said, “You know, Mike, I drove over 30 minutes through the snow to get here, we picked your restaurant out of dozens, but tonight our server forgot our salads and there was a long wait for cocktails. The service just didn’t live up to the rest of the experience.” In our very competitive restaurant market, there are a good number of very talented kitchens that prepare wonderful food served in beautiful surroundings. What often distinguishes the very best from all the rest is consistent excellence in service.

But isn’t service simple? We often think of waiting on tables as merely pouring water, bringing a plate from the kitchen and clearing it away once you’ve finished eating. Yet you know you expect so much more. After being welcomed and comfortably seated, the people who serve you need to know the food, know the wine and confidently and competently respond to all your dining questions. The menu is a creative product of the Chef. The server needs to be a humble translator and facilitator where needed. The image of a waiter sniffing at your ignorance should be a thing of the past.

For the hour or two you’re being served, your server should approach you with gracious humility. The excellent server has the patience to understand and accommodate your specific service needs. Are there food allergies or preparation necessities? Are you looking for something quick or for a leisurely dinner? The restaurant you want to frequent makes sure its staff has the right



Sanctuary’s red beet carpaccio salad with baby bok choy, blackberries, sweet onions and white cheddar cheese

attitude, has tasted and knows the food, has tasted and knows its wines and is trained in how to handle each stage of your dining experience.

Any server can make a mistake, but if you feel like he or she doesn’t care about you and the experience you’re having, you won’t return. But the server who approaches you with kindness, knowledge, grace and patience will help make your mother’s 80th birthday memorable, your anniversary unforgettable, your business meeting successful or your snap decision to indulge yourself something you’re glad you did.

When you choose among the many dining out alternatives, you deserve to have everyone in the restaurant appreciate that choice. For that special hour or two, a great restaurant and server try to make you feel like your happiness is their reason for being.

That’s value!



Michael Kutscheid (pictured above) and Naomi Williamson are owners of **Sanctuary** restaurant- located downtown Minneapolis near the Guthrie and the Dome, at 903 Washington Avenue South. Check out their unique menu at sanctuaryminneapolis.com.