



The fussy eater

Ariel Leve

Five reasons why waiters no longer bother to write down your order. Here's a tip for them: get a pen

I'm an anxious person to begin with. When a waiter or waitress approaches the table to take my order, I like to see them take out a pad and write it down. It has a calming effect. Even if they're not actually getting the order right, it gives me a false sense of security, and I'll take that over no sense of security.

As soon as I see the absence of a pad, I panic. No matter how vigorously they nod, I have absolutely no faith that they will remember what I'm saying. Especially since I tend to preface my order with a dozen questions and rarely request straight off the menu without making my own alterations. Also, it's not exciting that the waiter can remember my order. I've never woken up the day after a great meal and thought, "That waiter's memory was amazing. I have to go back to see what else he can memorise!"

The question is *why* they do it. Are they trying to impress me? Get my order right. That will impress me. Here are some possible explanations for a pad-free approach:

1) It's not cool to write things down. Who writes things down? Old people.



People who still get a kick out of Post-its. No hip restaurant person wants to be seen using a pen and a pad. If you're not a hands-free, pad-free waiter you might as well listen to a Sony Walkman and take the bus. Given the ubiquity of keyboards and touch screens, they probably wouldn't recognise their own handwriting anyway.

2) There is a desire to bond. A pad and pen get in the way of the intimacy. As they build the relationship, it helps to have eye contact. Only I don't want eye contact. I want what I ordered.

3) There is no desire to bond. Writing things down takes time. Committing an order to memory means less time having to engage. The goal is to get me out of there as soon as possible. This is often my goal as well.

A notepad gets in the way of intimacy. I don't want intimacy. I want what I ordered

4) Control. You might think you have the upper hand because they're taking orders but the authority button is reset when they get rid of the pad. Their head is no longer bowed and no matter how much you want them to take note of what you're saying – they'll show you who's really in charge. They're taking their power back and getting your order wrong on their own terms.

5) Trying to seem more professional. This is what I've been told. But what does having a good memory have to do with being a good waiter? When they are hired for the job are they given a memory test? Maybe it's a liability concern. If they don't write things down, there's no evidence they got it wrong. No paper trail if there's a lawsuit. We live in a litigious world. Forgetting to bring the grapefruit juice is a lawsuit waiting to happen.

Sometimes I'll ask, "Are you sure you will remember all this?". The hope is that by challenging them they'll pull out the pad so they don't mess up. Instead I get a look that says: trust me.

It never ends well. It's like challenging the woman at the airport check-in. Have fun sitting next to the drooling infant! Putting them on the spot to remember makes no difference. Either they'll get it right or they won't – and they really don't care either way. Plus, proving my point means they've successfully screwed up. See? I was right, I didn't get what I ordered. Talk about an empty victory. **OFM** ariel.leve@observer.co.uk

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Name of what it is here on two lines with details

What is it? This is appropriate dummy text that is being employed in

order to ascertain an approximate length because the actual copy has not yet been received

Key ingredient? This is appropriate dummy text that is being employed in order to ascertain an approximate length because the actual copy has not yet been

received This is appropriate dummy text that is being employed in order to ascertain an approximate length because the actual copy has not yet been received

Frustratingly techie? This is appropriate dummy text that is being employed in order to ascertain an approximate length because the actual copy has not yet been received.

Better than a cookbook? This is appropriate dummy text that is being employed in order to ascertain an approximate length because the actual copy has not yet been received This is appropriate dummy text that

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