

Kyte Spite

with Lindsay Kyte

Everyone has had a bad restaurant experience before. I've been forgotten about a few times, had pancakes come with the syrup already on them, and asked for chocolate milk and gotten regular milk with a film of Quik settled at the bottom of the glass. But I have never had such a succession of bad experiences as I did upon visiting a local establishment a couple of weeks ago.

After waiting about twenty minutes for a table (understandable -- they were busy), my friend and I finally got seated. Unfortunately, it was at a table in the middle of the restaurant, and practically on top of the people next to us. Now, I don't know if everyone hates to sit in the middle of the restaurant like I do, but I always feel like it's the "Lindsay Show" when it happens, with yours truly as the main act (look, she's dipping her sleeve in the ketchup!). The server didn't mind us switching to a different location, although it was hard to get her attention to ask her, as she stood in front of our table, yet talked to our oh-so-close neighbours, who were off-duty employees.

I think that my asking her if we could move was the last thought she ever had of us, though. Perhaps there was a mix-up, and she thought a new server would take care of us. But I actually think that she didn't think, or else didn't care. We waited for a long time, and then finally flagged down another server to help us.

Our order was delivered by a completely different person, who forgot the little things we asked for, like barbecue sauce. But, servers are busy people, and a couple of mistakes are forgivable. Yet it really would have been nice to have had the mandatory fin-

ger bowl and extra napkins during the chicken wings, and not after, when someone finally thought of us and brought it, much too late. I looked like the incredible Sauce monster by then, with my hair pasted to my face and the back of the seat, and unable to move my fingers, as they were forever adhered to the sticky table top. Fortunately, my friend applied that little minuscule piece of lemon in the finger-bowl to them, and saved my life.

I told one of our various servers that our original server had obviously forgotten us. The original promptly came over and said in a sickly-sweet voice (and I was already sticky enough, thank you) "Did you girls think I had forgotten you?" Well, yes, honey sugar pie, unless you consider not approaching your customers for forty minutes at a time good service. I thought this, but did not say it. I was saving it for my column.

She asked if we wanted desert. We thought that it was an excellent idea, and ordered the "moist and rich" chocolate cake to split. More like dried-out-sitting-around-all-day and crusty. As the server had some sucking up to do, she came back after a mere half-hour and asked if we were finished this desert that had only one bite taken out of it. My friend politely told her that the cake was too dry to be edible, at which the server lifted it and rudely poked her finger in it. "It's black forest cake, it's supposed to be like that," she stated. My friend sometimes says the things I only think and write about, stewing in my vengeful fantasies, and told Ms. Employee of the Year that no, it was not, and if so, the menu was subject to false advertising. She offered us something else (but not com-

plimentary to make up for our dissatisfaction, I might add), and as we had already committed about two and a half hours to this fabulous dining experience, we declined.

But as we sat there during one of our many waiting periods, we noticed what was happening around us. The man behind us had also been waiting for a long time, and politely asked a server who was wiping a table where his may have gone. She shrugged her shoulders, and said, "I dunno. I think she's gone on her smoke break," and then *went on wiping the table*, without offering him help or going to find the other employee. We were absolutely astounded, and thought nothing could top her shocking conduct.

We were soon proven wrong. We looked to our left, and saw the asked-about server, carrying a plate of food, and sitting down to eat it *in the middle of the restaurant!* Uh, did you ever hear of a "staff room?" And then, she was joined by her good friend, the chef, who also sat down in the dining room to appreciate his own culinary delights. I thought my friend was going to have a breakdown, so I quickly took her out of there.

The reason I can comment confidently on such happenings is that I work part-time at a very good restaurant, and my friend is the hostess. We know that good service is possible as we strive to give it every weekend when we work. We told out maitre-d' about our experience, and he laughed at its absolute absurdity. I'm not sure if that particular restaurant has any idea of minimum service standards, or of proper server decorum, but I am darn sure that they have no idea what black forest cake actually is.

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