

FOOD & BEVERAGE LUXURY STANDARDS

The Upsell Standard

Five steps for offering more without ever selling. Written for servers who are excellent with guests and uncomfortable with money — which is most of the good ones.

1 Read the table

Before you take a single order, decide what this meal is for. An anniversary, a Tuesday, a deal being closed, a family who have been travelling since six. The occasion decides everything you offer afterwards.

“Are we celebrating something this evening, or is this a quiet one?”

FAILURE MODE Treating every table as the same table. The couple on their tenth anniversary get the same script as the sales rep, and neither is served properly.

2 Offer, don’t ask

“Would you like water?” invites no. “Still or sparkling?” invites a choice. Same question, same warmth, and one of them is worth eight euros a table and the other is worth nothing.

“Still or sparkling to start? We have a lovely local one.”

FAILURE MODE Yes-or-no questions. You have handed the guest a decision they have no reason to make.

3 One step up, never two

The upsell is the adjacent option, not the most expensive one on the page. A guest who ordered the house red will take the next bottle up; propose the €180 and you have told them what you think this conversation is about.

“If you enjoy that one, the same producer does a single-vineyard for a few euros more. It’s the better glass.”

FAILURE MODE Reaching for the top of the list. The guest stops trusting the recommendation and orders defensively for the rest of the night.

4 Describe, don’t list

Nobody has ever ordered a dish because of its price. One sentence of real detail — how it is made, who makes it, what it tastes of — sells more than any adjective in the menu copy.

“The burrata comes up from Andria twice a week. It’s still warm when it arrives.”

FAILURE MODE Reciting the menu back. If your description could be read off the card, it adds nothing.

5 Close the meal

The last offer is the one every team skips, because the meal feels finished and nobody wants to prolong it. Dessert, amaro, coffee — this is the highest-margin moment of the night and the easiest to let go.

“Before I bring the bill — an amaro? We make our own, and it’s the reason people stay another twenty minutes.”

FAILURE MODE Bringing the bill unprompted. You have ended the evening on the guest’s behalf.

Seven Moments Your Team Lets Go

None of these require selling. Each is a question that should be asked as a matter of course, and usually isn't.

THE MOMENT	WHAT TO SAY	WHY IT'S MISSED
Seated, before menus	"Still or sparkling?"	Feels too early. It is exactly the right time.
Menus open, no decision yet	"Something to drink while you look?"	The team waits to be summoned.
Order taken, no starter	"Shall I bring something small for the table?"	Assumed the guest chose not to.
Wine chosen, glass almost empty	"Shall I top you up, or shall we try the next one?"	Fear of seeming to push.
Mains cleared	"Cheese before dessert, or straight to it?"	The board is never offered at all.
Dessert declined	"Then an amaro, or a coffee?"	A no on dessert is heard as a no on everything.
Guest lingering, relaxed	"Another? There's no rush from us."	The team reads relaxed as finished.

How to use this with your team

Pick one moment per service and make it non-negotiable for that shift. Count it.
Most teams find the water question alone pays for the briefing within a week.

This standard is drawn from the Food & Beverage Luxury Standards masterclass — filmed on property with the servers and sommeliers who run it. Seven masterclasses, taught by the people doing the work.

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