

Restaurant

The Order Taking Standard

Five steps from the first question to the ticket at the pass. A correct order starts with the seat numbers, before anyone at the table has spoken.

Who Section servers and the head waiter	When Every table, once the guests have had time with the menu	You need Seat numbers for every table, the POS, tonight's specials and what is off
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Measured by Order taken within 10 minutes of seating · Every item read back before leaving · Order in the POS within 2 minutes

1 Know tonight

Before service, learn what is off tonight, each special with its price, and two dishes you can describe in one sentence. A guest is told a dish has run out before choosing, never after.

"Before you decide, the turbot has finished for tonight. The sea bream is very good instead."

Common mistake Finding out at the pass that the dish is gone. The guest has to choose again while the rest of the table waits.

2 Approach

Approach when the menus close or the table looks up, within 10 minutes of seating. Stand where the whole table can see and hear you, without leaning over anyone. Take the guests first, the host last.

"Are you ready to order, or would you like a few more minutes?"

Common mistake Standing behind one guest to write. Half the table has to turn round to talk to you.

3 Write by seat

Write each order against its seat number, counted clockwise from a fixed point such as the seat nearest the door. Note cooking, sides and changes beside the seat, never in a list at the bottom.

"S1 beef medium rare, no sauce. S2 risotto. S3 sole, no butter."

Common mistake Writing the order as a list. The runner then has to ask the table who ordered what.

4 Read it back

Repeat the order to the table before leaving: each dish, each cooking point and each change, in seat order. It takes about 20 seconds and catches mistakes while the guest is still there to correct you.

"So, Mr Esposito, the beef medium rare without sauce, and for Mrs Esposito, the risotto."

Common mistake Skipping the read-back for a table of two. Small orders go wrong for the same reasons as large ones.

5 Send it

Enter the order in the POS within 2 minutes, with seat numbers, courses and every change in the guest's own words. Then check the printed ticket at the pass before the first course is called.

"T7 S3: sole, NO BUTTER, sauce on the side. Sent 20:12."

Common mistake Keeping the order in a pocket until three tables are done. Ten minutes of the guest's evening disappear there.

How to Write an Order

Six habits for the order pad and the POS that let any runner, at any table, serve without asking 'Who had the fish?'

Write	Instead of	Because
Seat number, then the dish	The dish, and a guess at the seat	The runner serves without asking
Cooking point in full words	Your own shorthand	The grill reads the ticket, not your mind
Every change, as the guest said it	"As discussed"	The chef wasn't there when it was discussed
Allergy in capitals, by seat	"Allergy at the table"	The kitchen needs to know which plate
Starter, main and dessert apart	Everything on one line	Each course is called at the right time
The time it was sent	No time at all	Pacing is measured from this minute

How to use this with your team

Brief one row a day. At the end of each service the head waiter pulls three tickets at random, checks them against the six rows and reads the result at the next line-up.

Part of the DolceVita Standards Library: free operating standards for every department of the hotel, at dolcevitahospitality.com/free-resources.