

# Upselling Techniques in Restaurants

*by Elizabeth Smith*

Upselling is a common strategy for restaurants to boost their profits. By training your staff in ways to sell more, you can help their tips and improve business. Upselling is more than sales; it requires perception, knowledge and discretion. At its best, upselling can look less like sales and more like customer service; effective techniques should be subtle enough to avoid annoying the customer or making them feel pestered.

## Offer More-Expensive Items

A common restaurant upselling technique is to offer more-expensive items than the ones the customer originally ordered. This tactic is most effective when it is not obvious. Servers often use this technique without the customer knowing by offering two choices of liquor without noting that one is more expensive, for example. In order to push up the bill, servers should have knowledge of the profit margins and prices of each item on the menu.

## Extras

Many restaurants rely on a simple strategy to sell more: offering extra items. A fast food restaurant might ask customers if they'd like a super-sized option or if they would like fries with their meal. A restaurant server will ask a diner if they'd like to start with an appetizer or try a special entree. In some restaurants, the extras are prescribed by management: the chef's special or a new item they want to push, for example.

## Offer Specific Items

Instead of asking customers if they would like additional food or drinks, it is often more effective to be specific. Restaurants often employ the strategy of avoiding generalities that are easy for the diners to dismiss. Instead of asking if a customer wants dessert, for example, the server will ask if they want to try the chef's special dessert and provide a mouthwatering description. This is particularly effective when the server can see that the customers are wavering; the delicious details can convince them to go with their desires.

## Make Suggestions

When a customer is deliberating on what to order or asks for recommendations, a restaurant server has the opportunity to upsell without seeming pushy or irritating. They might name one of the more-expensive dishes on the menu when asked for a suggestion or recommend that the customer try a beverage that will complement their dish. By making helpful suggestions, the customer feels taken care of rather than like a sales target.

## **Demonstrate Enthusiasm**

One of the most effective upselling techniques a server can use is to show enthusiasm about the foods they are pushing. When they can give details about the food and a description of their personal experience and preference, it can be more convincing than simply suggesting an expensive item. For this technique to work, the server should be genuine.