

Tipping Tips When Dining at the Breastaurant

One day last week a friend and I had just finished eating lunch at Monica's restaurant and he was paying our bill. While adding his usual 20% tip to our \$20 tab, he said (almost to himself) "I'm adding a dollar because she's cute."

In retrospect I'm shocked (shocked!) that he would allow something so superficial to influence what is supposed to be – according to Webster – “a gift or a sum of money tendered for a service performed.”

But it made perfect sense to me at the time, and in our defense our waitress really was cute (and probably still is). She was also very good at her job; attentive and personable. And it certainly didn't hurt that she had what I tend to call (in mixed company) “pleasant features.”

After giving it some thought, I concluded that if she had been a below-average server - regardless of looks - she wouldn't have qualified for the \$1 bonus. For me, it's necessary for one to display the fundamental skills necessary to perform a job properly before becoming eligible for additional considerations, however shallow those considerations may be.

Somehow, the fact that these college-age women probably have fathers a good ten years younger than I am doesn't diminish my benign appreciation of the female form. LuAnn is somewhat less generous in her characterization of my harmless observations, describing me as a “leering geezer.” Ow!

Restaurant wait staff these days often includes young, fit college-aged men, but I'm guessing that if our server's name had been Nate instead of Kate, he'd have been a dollar poorer than if he'd had the foresight to be born female. On the other hand, I'm guessing that the Nates of the world are probably collecting their fair share of extra tip dollars from rapidly aging women who fancy themselves fair judges of male horseflesh, and they probably don't think twice about it.

One must be careful when seeming to justify a tipping formula that is partially based on objectifying men or (particularly) women. The Equal Employment

Opportunity Commission (EEOC) has targeted the restaurant industry as “the single largest source of harassment claims.”

According to a study published late last year by the Restaurant Opportunities Centers in cooperation with a dozen equal-rights agencies, women comprise almost exactly two-thirds of all tipped food service workers. Restaurant workers (regardless of gender) reported high levels of harassing behaviors; 80 percent from co-workers, 78 percent from customers and 66 percent from restaurant management.

In any case (rightly or wrongly) servers are at the financial mercy of their patrons, and if I prefer that you not wear an eyebrow stud attached to your nose stud with a chain, I reserve the right to take that into account at tip time. There begins the slippery slope; if you deserve to suffer because of your looks, do you also deserve to benefit?

Not entirely off-topic, a while back I was having lunch with a female friend about my own age, and she happened to be wearing a low-cut blouse. As we were leaning across the table chatting with each other she glanced down and realized she was showing more than she had intended. She sat back, apologizing, but I assured her that as far as I was concerned, she was performing a valuable public service.

I’m guessing most guys would have a similar reaction, but I somehow feel guilty about it. This would seem to validate a radical theory I have been formulating that most men are pigs to some extent - some of us just disguise it better than others.

Back on topic, the fastest growing segment of the restaurant industry lately has been “breastaurants” such as Hooters, Twin Peaks and Tilted Kilt. We shouldn’t be surprised that a tamer version of this theme has been working its way down to the more mainstream public man-caves.

Having completely overthought this issue, I’m still not sure if I should be tipping any differently. I’m afraid I’ll always have that extra \$1 bill just burning a hole in my pocket.

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