



Front & Back of the House

In Accord on Customer Service



Gael Hees

Aug 1, 2018

When a person who is deeply committed to customer care and service finds herself working in a restaurant with the same philosophy, the result can be nothing short of a win for everyone — with the customers being the biggest winners of



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all. Monique Francia is just such a person and Sushi Roku is the restaurant.

Nestled on an upper floor of the Forum Shops at Caesars on the Strip, Sushi Roku is as visually pleasing as the food is delicious. Cement-like walls provide a cool backdrop for the rich tones of wood furniture and lighting, textured fabrics and accents; and strategically placed windows give focus to snapshot views of the High Roller, the Strip to the south, and little-seen glimpses of Caesars Palace.

As one of the hosts, Monique is often the first person one sees when they visit the restaurant. Approaching the host station at some restaurants can be a bit intimidating, but not so Sushi Roku, especially if Monique is working. With a quick, sincere smile, efficient questions, and enough banter to make the customers comfortable, she quickly has guests seated and ready to enjoy their meal.

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Monique has the perfect background for a job in the service industry. She grew up in Las Vegas and graduated high school from Southeast Career Technical Academy where she studied nursing. She has worked in home health care and is in the process of figuring out how her UNLV pre-med biology major courses can be transferred to the nursing program. Having worked in a hospital, she knows that patient care is her biggest interest and her long-term goal is to own a nursing home or other type of long-term care facility.

“I always want to treat the people I’m interacting with as a family member or close friend,” said Monique. “I want the service to be exceptional and something that will be comfortable as well. I always want the guests to feel well taken care of.”

In a similar manner, the restaurant management stresses being responsive to customer needs and wishes. Group meetings, a communications notebook, and even texts keep hosts and others informed if something changes or an especially

Twinkle Toast

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important guest is coming in. Careful attention is paid to customers' dietary restrictions and other needs. Plus, most of the restaurant's employees have tasted almost everything on the menu and are prepared to make recommendations.

"My manager, Johnny Seo, always knows what is going on," said Monique. "He is aware when there are big groups coming in, or if someone has a special cake they want cut or a favorite bottle of wine they are bringing in," added Monique. "This really helps us," she continued.

Monique's days at the restaurant are usually well-planned and reliable. When she arrives in the afternoon, she is able to look at the reservations for the night, knowing that most if not all customers on the list have been confirmed by someone on the lunch shift. The confirmation calls include directions to the restaurant and suggestions for parking. She also knows who is serving that day, when different areas of the

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restaurant will open and many other bits of information that will make her job easier.

Monique has had her share of challenging moments. With a huge percentage of the restaurant's clientele from out of town, almost everyone is new to the venue. There are several spaces in the restaurant including a dedicated sushi bar, rooms with views of the Strip, and private rooms with more intimate seating. Guiding customers through the restaurant who see places they like with open tables can sometimes be difficult, as can asking someone to sit in the bar and wait for a table when they see tables available.

“Not everyone understands the workings of a restaurant, Monique related. “We try to explain that tables are held for those who have reservations, but it can still leave a guest frustrated. In a bad situation, we can always call a manager who may suggest one of his ‘favorite

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The Catering Coach

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tables' or offer the guest a complimentary appetizer or drink.”

Guests are not the only ones who benefit from Monique's attention to care and attention to detail. She is acutely aware of the needs of the waitstaff and others who benefit from tips. If she places a large party in one service area, she tries hard to give other servers similar or equivalent numbers of customers so everyone is equally compensated.

When not working at Sushi Roku, Monique may be serving at her second job—home health care—or even working her third part-time position as a model for automobile shows. And soon she'll be back in school, with studying and homework to do. When asked what skills she thought a restaurant host or hostess should have, she replied, “Definitely a positive outlook; a calm, reflective attitude; a cheerful demeanor; and good listening skills.” She later added that “good time management” would also be helpful.

The Restaurant Expert

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Gael Hees is a Las Vegas freelancer, specializing in written, graphic and audiovisual communications. She has written for national publications and has won numerous awards for tourism-related printed materials and videos, is accredited in public relations by the Public Relations Society of America and is a certified hospitality educator. gael.hees@icloud.com

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