

You've done a lot more than wait tables!

Extracting the value inherent in students' success in the job of waiting tables

(ideas excerpted from Waiting: The True Confessions of a Waitress by Deborah Ginsberg)

It's difficult for students to beat the money they can earn for the number of hours they put in and the pace of the work seldom allows it to be boring. The level of success of a food server is commonly judged as the amount of money earned. But while many students work as waiters and waitresses, few of them seem aware of the transferable skills involved. Many employers also seem unaware that the skills demonstrated by successful servers are often the very skills the employer is seeking in a job candidate. There is much more to waiting, however, than first meets the eye.

Waiting tables tests a server's ability to cope with much more than remembering an order and delivering it in a timely fashion. It develops self-reliance, resilience, time management and the ability to manage high levels of stress, all invaluable life skills. In addition to providing excellent training in personal organizational abilities, patience and stamina, waiting provides a test of a server's human relations skills. There are few jobs that offer such direct contact with such a wide variety of people and in such a wide variety of moods. Each patron expects the server to treat him or her with individual care.

There is enormous pressure on every food server to juggle a large variety of mental and physical tasks over short, intense periods of time. Timing is everything in waiting tables. A server is constantly being watched and judged. There is no room or time to lose one's cool at the table. How well one can perform under pressure in a restaurant directly influences one's earnings.

Winning an award for selling the most desserts, most exotic drinks, most specials, etc. can be an effective indicator of extra effort. Were they successful in meeting sales-per-ticket goals? Did they train new staff and, if so, why would the restaurant manager give them this responsibility? Did they show up on time, ready to work?

It's reasonable to assume that those who are able to hone these skills will be successful in any career that values these skills.

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