

DESIRED SERVICE

# Lucca

1117 11 <sup>TH</sup> ST.
916.669.5300
LUNCH & DINNER MON THRU FRI
10% TIP (LUNCH) 14% TIP (DINNER)

Lucca Restaurant owners Terri and Ron Gilliland have a nicely appointed and designed restaurant with great-tasting and original dishes. Lucca, from its first days, has had a reputation as one of the classy restaurants in which to be seen enjoying good food and drinks with Sacramento's business and political leaders.

My guest and I recently visited Lucca for a business lunch that was unfortunately interrupted several times by unprofessional gaffes. I observed a busser clearing a table (which had been dirty for 20 minutes) by dumping water from the glasses into a patio fountain. He then proceeded to throw some of the table trash into flowerpots. I could not believe my eyes and lost my concentration — my guest had to repeat an important discussion point. My heart went out to the owners.

Lack of communication between our server, her busser and a runner forced other interruptions. Immediately after we were seated, I asked her to replace the tap water with bottled water. I stopped the busser from pouring the tap water, after repeating my request. We ordered the risotto cakes (split two ways); my guest had the refreshing gazpacho and we split the tasty steak salad. I specifically asked that the salad be served after the soup. The runner brought both at the same time; he obliged after I asked that the salad be sent back. At the end of the salad course the server asked if everything was fine,

to her credit; however, she neglected to clear our plates. When the runner arrived with our entrees, my guest moved her plate to facilitate the juggling of dishes.

Fortunately, my dinner meeting had fewer annoying interruptions. Our waiter, with a little training and more self-confidence, would be any restaurateur's dream, and I would ask for him again. He was very pleasant, made sure he clearly understood our order, followed through and watched our progress without being intrusive. He showed his inexperience, or lack of confidence, by not understanding body language, being hesitant when approaching our table and reciting the daily special as a hymnal. We would have preferred him introducing the dishes in his own words using appetizing descriptions, especially since the dishes were good. The butcher's cut, a hanger steak, was flavorful; however, I question the cut of meat because it did not look like a traditional hanger loin. The soft-shell crabs were crunchy and fresh, and the chicken risotto was rich; we credit the chefs for the excellent dishes.

Lucca's ambiance is unique and welcoming, but the tables in the main dining room are small for the standard place settings and placed too close together for private discussions. The back dining room is spacious and secluded for private functions. However, when used for overflow seating, customers may feel left out of the action.

TIPPING GUIDE

0% = No Service, 5% = Inadequate Service, 10% = Barely Adequate Service, 15% = Good Service, 20% = Outstanding Service

*Our reviewer has more than 25 years of experience as a waiter, owner, manager, maître d' and sommelier; he was trained in a four-star restaurant in upstate New York and has helped open four successful restaurants in Napa and Sacramento. He will remain anonymous in order to avoid preferential treatment.*