

La Provence

101 DIAMOND CREEK

ROSEVILLE

916.789.2002

LUNCH & DINNER
TUES THRU FRI

13% TIP

At La Provence Restaurant & Terrace, I encountered very friendly staff. When people experience friendly service in a restaurant, they generally equate it with good or professional service. But a good server is both friendly and professional.

The two servers that served me had the first part of the package, but needed to refine their technique and be aware of surrounding guests. This refinement is especially needed because the restaurant has a French theme. The principals pull this off very well with the restaurant's interior and exterior design and décor, as well as with the food. However, the servers did not exhibit the professionalism I have experienced in France.

Our lunch waiter greeted us and my guest ordered a Dubonnet, a cocktail popular in the 1950s. The bartender asked the waiter to return to our table to get the recipe and advice on the appropriate glass rather than looking up the drink in a bar guide. This proved to me the bartender was inexperienced.

As the waiter was reciting the specials, he stopped suddenly, as if his eyes were struck by headlights, and did not resume for about five seconds. He finally pulled out his notes and, after a profuse apology, resumed. I noticed our waiter's remarks to surrounding tables and us were exactly the same, so his speech sounded like a broken record. Although it is important for guests to hear accurate information,

waiters should change their spiel, as guests can overhear neighboring conversations.

When I first started waiting tables, I was trained to serve food from the left and remove from the right, and to serve and remove beverages from the right. The exception to these rules is true French-style service, where food and beverages are served and removed from the right.

Our dinner waitress used what I call the freeform style of service: She served from the left and right, and reached across my guest to serve my beverages rather than walking around us to properly serve me. I consider her style sloppy — and disconcerting, because La Provence is a fine-dining establishment where I expect high standards to be carried out.

Though the design of the staff uniforms conveyed the French theme, the servers and bussers looked more like Western gun-slingers, with their aprons slung low on their hips and their serviettes tucked behind their back. I noticed that our dinner waitress was the only server with a loose tie and undone top button.

Overall, the service I received at La Provence ranged from adequate to good. The food was delivered on time and at the right temperature, there were no mistakes with the orders, and the staff made us feel comfortable. On the other hand, the service lacked polish, was not proper and did not carry out the French theme the restaurant is trying to convey.

TIPPING GUIDE

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

Our reviewer, who will remain anonymous to avoid preferential treatment, 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. His opinion does not necessarily reflect the opinions of the individual members of the Comstock's staff.