

Des Moines Register

Estimated printed pages: 2

November 2, 2005

Section: Juice

Page: 12J

HOW TO TIP YOUR...RESTAURANT SERVER

Morain Michael

Staff

Kathleen Ebert, 30, waitress at Mezzodi's, 4519 Fleur Drive.

HOW IT WORKS

In many restaurants, servers divvy out a percentage of their tips to bartenders, hosts and hostesses, and runners who help relay food and dishes to and from the kitchen. At Mezzodi's, Ebert keeps all of her tips but usually kicks in a few dollars for the buser who works weekends. Nearly all of Ebert's income comes from tips. "My paycheck -if I get one -is a bonus," she said.

SHE EXPECTS . . .

During her nine years waiting tables, including a stint at Las Vegas' New York, New York casino restaurant, she's learned to expect just about everything. She notes, though, that diners at Mezzodi's are more generous than those in Las Vegas. Generally, people should tip between 15 and 20 percent -even if the meal isn't perfect. "I don't cook the food."

BEST TIP

Every once in a while, big parties in the banquet room will throw in an extra \$100, Ebert said, and most people are pretty generous. "I like to talk with people, and I've made some great money," said Ebert, who graduated from college but chooses to wait tables simply because she enjoys the job. "I'll probably do this as long as I can."

EXPERT SAYS

15 to 20 percent of the bill -before tax -is standard. Remember, a waiter or waitress is usually getting paid less than minimum wage, and has to "tip out" -give a percentage of his or her tips to the bartender, bus boys and sometimes even the host or hostess. So stiffing them is stiffing the whole restaurant.

-Michael Morain

Copyright (c) The Des Moines Register. All rights reserved. Reproduced with the permission of Gannett Co., Inc. by NewsBank, inc.