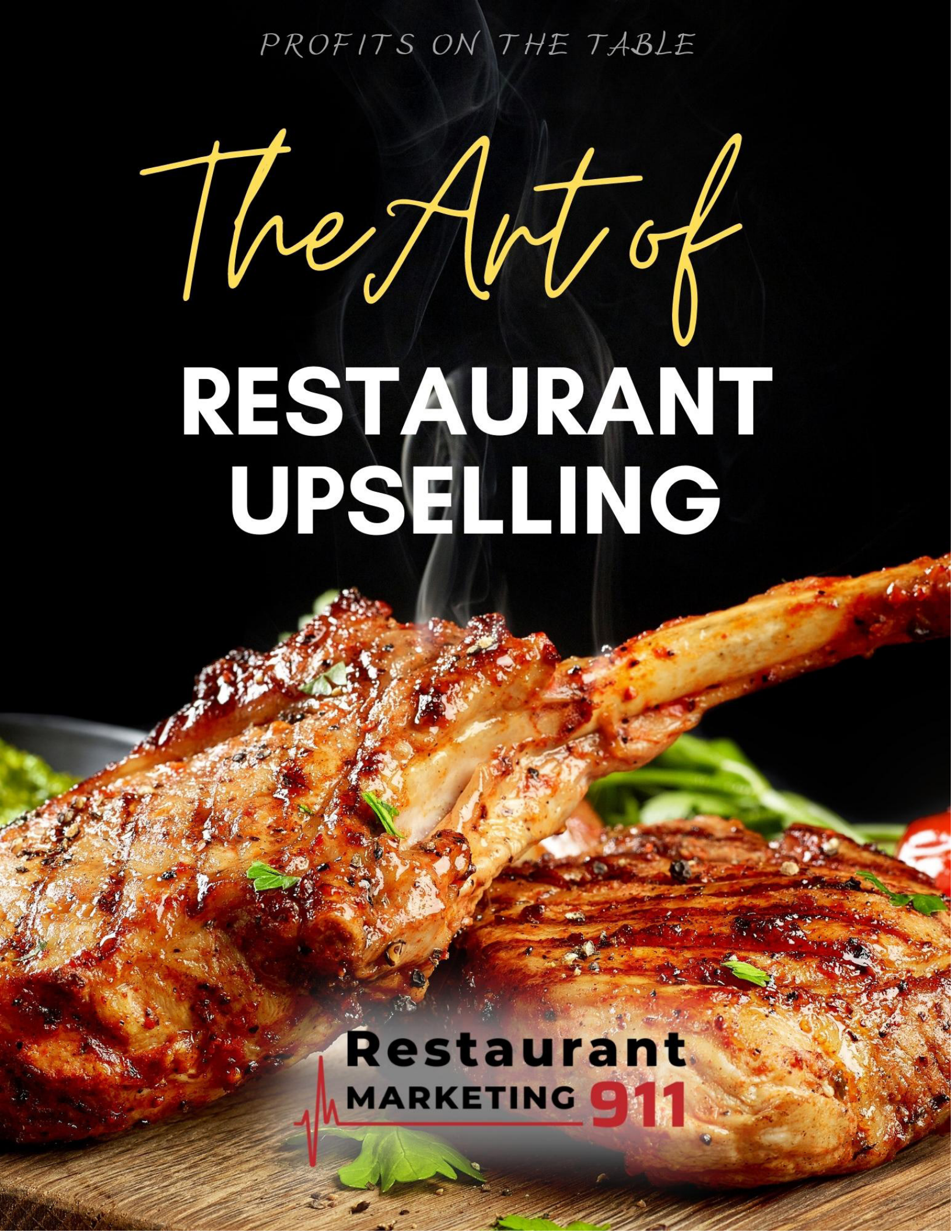


PROFITS ON THE TABLE

The Art of

**RESTAURANT
UPSELLING**

**Restaurant
MARKETING 911**



The Art of Restaurant Upselling

Are you literally leaving money on the table? If your servers are not trained in customer service selling techniques, it's highly likely. Suggestive selling has a bad reputation as “would you like fries with that?” but it is actually beneficial for everyone involved.

- **GUESTS** – They experience greater satisfaction with their visit because they experience better customer service which is fully focused on their customized needs and desires.
- **SERVERS** – Larger tickets means larger tips. Servers walk away with more money at the end of their shift.
- **OWNERS** – It's a win-win-win opportunity. Customers are happier and Servers are happier and the restaurant is making larger profits.

You might think of suggestive selling as a “Reverse Jedi Mind Trick.” Remember in Star Wars when Obi-Wan is walking through a village with R2D2 and C3PO and tells the approaching Stormtroopers “These aren't the droids you're looking for” when they actually were the droids they were looking for. In your restaurant we're not using mind tricks from the Force, but engaging with your guests using subtle psychological clues to help guide them into an exceptional dining experience.



No Fear

ACTION: Have the mindset that I will engage with the guest and make the ask.

EXAMPLE: *"I am enhancing the guest experience by presenting options that will provide them with their ideal dining experience today."*

BACKGROUND: Unless you were born with natural sales ability, the first thought when someone asks you to 'sell' is probably "I don't want to be a pushy, sleazy used car salesman." It's easy to move past that mindset when you reframe the server-guest interaction from 'selling' to 'educating.'

The guest does not naturally know all the options to customize their meal. Whether it's a choice between regular syrup or an upgrade to real maple syrup, or an enhancement to add blue cheese crumbles to the top of their steak, what you may view as 'selling' is really providing a service by educating the customer about their options, which will allow them to walk away extremely satisfied with your restaurant.



Visualize

ACTION: Use descriptive mouth-watering language to really describe a menu item.

EXAMPLE: *“Would you like a side of fresh, grilled asparagus topped with our homemade zesty lemon-butter sauce?”*

BACKGROUND: If you had a choice between a bowl of vanilla ice cream or a bowl of creamy double-fold vanilla bean premium ice cream, which would you choose? The funny thing is that they’re the exact same thing but one sounds so much better than the other one.

Studies have shown that rich, vivid descriptions can increase the sales of that specific item by 27%. If your guest can close their eyes and fully visualize the offering to the point that their mouth is water based on your verbal description, you have perfected the descriptive upsell.



In the Know

ACTION: Offer a Pairing Option when taking entrée orders.

EXAMPLE: *“This Cuban Sandwich pairs perfectly with our crisp Pilsner.”*

BACKGROUND: They say knowledge is power but in the case of upselling, knowledge is essential for upsell success. The fastest way to lose the confidence of your guest is when they ask questions that you don't know the answer to ...“Is this Halibut fresh?”... “Uumm, I'll have to go ask.” Anything you suggest about menu choices after that will be meaningless. You've lost all credibility as an expert on the one thing you're paid to be an expert on - the menu.

Guests like to feel that they are in good hands, and when you have taken the time to learn about your menu items and what pairs best with each item, you can speak confidently and earn the immediate trust of the guests that you serve.



Just Because

ACTION: Use the word 'Because' to add a reason to your upsell.

EXAMPLE: *"Do you want to add Onion Rings because it's Tuesday?"*

BACKGROUND: If you say 'because' as you offer an upsell item, it automatically adds a justification to make that additional purchase. That reason might be totally non-sensical or unrelated to the actual dining experience, but the bottom line is that it works.

"Are we starting with cocktails BECAUSE the Broncos won today?"

"Perhaps a Strawberry Lemonade BECAUSE the sun came out?"

"Should we add Avocado BECAUSE you're wearing a Kermit shirt?"

Studies support the use of 'Because.' In one test, up to 93% said yes to the item when presented with a 'Because,' versus 60% when presented without a 'Because.'



Power Lists

ACTION: Have a list of 3 high profit-margin items to suggest for each menu section.

EXAMPLE: *“For entrées tonight I really like the Chicken Marsala, Beef Stroganoff or the sautéed Medallions of Beef in Pearl Onion Red Wine sauce.”*

BACKGROUND: Everyone connects with Lists. That’s why you see so many list-based posts on the internet... *“12 Local Restaurants You Must Try,” “3 Ways to Save Money When Traveling,” or “Top 10 Wines for Your Bucket List.”*

The numbering on these lists keeps us intrigued so we keep reading, plus our curiosity wants to find out what comes in at number one.

This same power works for upselling. In the pre-shift meeting, the manager should let servers know what 3 items to focus on today. These should be chosen based on being high profit margin items and memorized by everyone to present to the guests.



Enjoy the Best

ACTION: Feature the highest quality items that you have to offer.

EXAMPLE: *"Can I suggest our Private Reserve Tequila for your Margarita?"*

BACKGROUND: It may feel like you're being pushy when you try to upsell to the highest price items in the restaurant, but you're actually flattering the guests when you assume they have discriminating tastes and would appreciate the best things in life.

It's also a matter of educating the customer. In a bar setting the hierarchy of quality is clearly understood as the 'top shelf' products are the best. On a food menu, it's not as obvious. That's where 'upselling' is less about selling and more about sharing with the guest the differences in flavor profile and quality that the premium options offer.



Fear of Missing Out

ACTION: Scarcity is a strong motivator for decision making.

EXAMPLE: *"We only have four of tonight's Chef's special left."*

BACKGROUND: FOMO is real. We can all trace the 'fear of missing out' back to our childhood. You may not have wanted to go to the roller rink, but when you heard that all your classmates were going, they couldn't keep you away. You never want to hear how much fun it was after the fact when you chose not to go!

In a restaurant, the server is the gatekeeper. They're the inside track for knowing what the hot ticket item is right now. And if the guest listens to their recommendations, they'll be rewarded with something special that they might have missed out on otherwise.



Bigger is Better

ACTION: Confirm the guest's request with the larger size.

EXAMPLE: *"...good choice - the Sirloin. Would you like the 12 ounce?"*

BACKGROUND: When a guest orders items that come in multiple sizes, always confirm their order with the largest size.

GUEST: *"I'll have the ribs."*

SERVER: *"Great choice. Is that the Full Rack of Baby Back Ribs?"*

If they want the smaller size, the guest will always let you know.

GUEST: *"Give me a bacon burger and a chocolate shake."*

SERVER: *"Our classic combo. Is that the large chocolate shake?"*



Command Central

ACTION: State a Command within a personal statement.

EXAMPLE: *"I can add a side salad for \$4."*

BACKGROUND: We love people, but they're a lot like sheep. Give them a command and many of them will not stop to question the command, they'll just follow it. That can really be helpful when you're upselling if you combine it with a personal action...

"I can make that a double for you."

"I can add another shot to your Espresso if you'd like."

"I can upgrade your syrup to real maple syrup."

Tell them what you can do for them, and watch how hard it is to turn that down when someone is willing to do something especially for you!



I Recommend

ACTION: Share your personal recommendations.

EXAMPLE: *"I tried the Kung Pao Chicken last night and it was amazing."*

BACKGROUND: Every server needs to have the opportunity to taste each item on the menu so they can talk knowledgeably about it and provide personal recommendations.

How many times have you heard a guest ask...

"What do you think about the Swiss Burger?"

"Would you choose the Cobb Salad or Southwest Salad?"

"Is the Chocolate Mousse any good?"

If their answer is 'I don't know,' they've just been downgraded to an order-taker and lost a great opportunity to upsell, increase their tips, and increase the ticket average.



Follow the Leader

ACTION: Highlight the popular items because people like to join the crowd.

EXAMPLE: *“Would you like fresh strawberry shortcake? It’s our most popular dessert.”*

BACKGROUND: If it’s the most popular, then it must be the best. Right? Well, no not necessarily, but that won’t stop us from following the crowd. The wait staff needs to know what the top sellers are so they can feature them. This is one of the best ways to direct those who are having a hard time deciding what to order.

There’s safety in following the crowd. It acts as a validation that if all those other people thought it was worth ordering, I should be safe ordering it as well.

Most servers will know what the most popular items are simply because they have served so many of them, but by keeping the staff updated on a regular basis, it empowers them to use popularity as a selling tool.



The Name Game

ACTION: Use the customer's name.

EXAMPLE: *"Nate, can I get you another beer?"*

BACKGROUND: We all love to hear our name. When someone calls us by name, it's an instant personal connection. It says that you are seen as a person that we care about, not just a mouth and a wallet.

The importance of names is not a new discovery. Dale Carnegie's classic book "How to Win Friends and Influence People" says "Names are the sweetest and most important sound in any language."

Think about what you do when you hear your name, even out in public. You immediately turn your head to see who is talking to you. That's because our brains get an extra little charge whenever we hear our name spoken.

Using a customer's name creates truly personalized customer service.



Just Try It

ACTION: Provide Free Samples to boost sales.

EXAMPLE: *“Would you like to sample our new microbrew?”*

BACKGROUND: ‘Try Before you Buy’ may seem counterintuitive, but the reality is that sampling increases sales. From retail environments to restaurants, sampling is a powerful sales tool.

The ‘Product Sampling Study’ by Arbitron/Edison found that 35% of customers who tried a sample will buy the sampled product at that time.

Sampling has multiple benefits. It’s great for introducing new menu items but can also be used to expand guest’s willingness to get out of their rut and order something different. By sampling your higher-profit margin items, it’s also an effective way to upsell.

There’s also a reciprocal affect to sampling. Our thought-pattern is, they gave me a gift (the sample), so I’m inclined to return the favor and purchase something from them.



Enjoy it Later

ACTION: Provide to-go opportunities for takeout sales.

EXAMPLE: *"No room for dessert? I can pack up some of our cheesecake to enjoy later!"*

BACKGROUND: How often do guests say they would love to try your dessert, but they're just too full after that amazing meal? There is a solution - offer to pack it up for them and sell them dessert to go!

This works well if you team this up with one of the other upselling techniques...

"The Blackberry Pie is our top seller - everybody loves it."

"This is the last week for our seasonal Crème Brûlée."

"Let me get you a sample of the 7-layer Brownie to try."



Take Your Time

ACTION: Patience with guests pays off later.

EXAMPLE: *“Can I answer any other questions about the menu?”*

BACKGROUND: You’ve got 17 different tasks to do as you juggle the needs of all the tables in your station, and then you encounter ‘that table!’ You know the one - they can’t decide what to order. Everyone has four different questions about five different menu options. They’re in no hurry and will probably be camped at your table for the night.

The best solution is to take a deep breath and embrace the pace. Happily answer every question. Earn their trust at the beginning by showing you care that they have a wonderful experience. If they know that you’re on their side, they’ll be much more receptive to all the upsell opportunities.



Your Way

ACTION: Meet customer's dietary lifestyle needs and preferences.

EXAMPLE: *"You can upgrade to our gluten-free pasta."*

BACKGROUND: There are a lot of diets and dietary choices out there today. From Paleo to Gluten-Free to Vegan to Vegetarian. Providing ways to modify your menu to meet their needs and preferences has multiple advantages.

- It can build Frequency of visits. The number of restaurants who cater to their needs is limited. If they know you can, they will return.
- It removes a 'Veto' vote. When families or friends are discussing which restaurant to go to, many suggestions are vetoed because the menu doesn't contain ways to meet dietary special needs. If you have these options, you won't be vetoed before the group even arrives.
- Upsell Opportunities - on many menus the special diet options cost more. For example, at one of our local Italian restaurants there's an additional charge to upgrade to gluten-free pasta.



Sell the Sizzle

ACTION: Highlight the benefits, not the features.

EXAMPLE: *"The deep-dish pizza is so filling - you won't go away hungry."*

BACKGROUND: There's an old saying in the advertising world that you should, "Sell the Sizzle, not the Steak." People are motivated by the Benefits of an item instead of the Features of that item.

A great example is when you think about why someone buys a power drill. They're in need of a hole, not a 1/4 horsepower ultra-glide battery powered drill. Sell them what they're interested in... the hole!

In the restaurant, the steak may be Aged or Wagyu or Super-duper Prime beef - these are the features. The Benefits of steak come from our senses and how we experience the steak - the aroma, the tenderness of each bite, the flavor, and how filling and satisfied we will feel after eating it.





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