

english for waiters – a2 level handbook

a complete vocabulary and phrase collection for 5-star restaurant staff

1 restaurant areas & staff

word	definition	translation
restaurant	place where people eat	
dining room	area where guests eat	
terrace	outdoor eating area	
lobby	entrance area of a hotel	
buffet	table with many dishes to choose from	
bar	place where drinks are made	
reception	front area for welcoming guests	
restroom	toilet for guests	
kitchen	place where food is cooked	
manager	person who leads the restaurant	
assistant manager	helps the manager	
chef	main cook	
sous-chef	helper cook	
pastry chef	cook for desserts	
waiter	person who serves food	
waitress	female waiter	
host	person who welcomes guests	
hostess	female host	
sommelier	wine expert	
bartender	person making drinks	
busser	clears tables	
runner	brings food from kitchen	
head waiter	chief waiter	
service staff	all staff serving guests	
concierge	person giving information	
event manager	person planning events	
housekeeping	staff cleaning rooms	
porter	staff carrying luggage	
front desk	place to check in	
mâitre d'	head of dining room	
reservation desk	desk to make bookings	
food runner	brings food to tables	
expediter	sends food to tables	
barback	helps bartender	

inventory manager	checks kitchen items
wait station	area assigned to a waiter
table captain	waiter in charge of tables

2 table items & equipment

word	definition	translation
plate	flat dish for food	
bowl	deep dish for soup or rice	
cup	small container for hot drinks	
glass	container for water or wine	
mug	big cup for coffee or tea	
napkin	small cloth or paper for cleaning mouth	
tablecloth	cloth covering the table	
tray	flat thing for carrying dishes	
cutlery	knife, fork, spoon together	
knife	tool to cut food	
fork	tool to eat food	
spoon	tool to eat or serve food	
serving spoon	big spoon for shared food	
serving fork	big fork for shared food	
bread basket	basket with bread	
butter dish	dish for butter	
salt shaker	container with salt	
pepper mill	container for pepper	
condiments	extra sauces and spices	
wine glass	glass for wine	
water glass	glass for water	
champagne flute	glass for champagne	
highball glass	tall glass for drinks	
martini glass	glass for martini	
teapot	container for tea	
coffee pot	container for coffee	
sugar bowl	container for sugar	
creamers	container for milk or cream	
carafe	container for water or wine	
pitcher	container for water	
table number	number of table	
centerpiece	decoration for table	
candle holder	holder for candle	
bread plate	small plate for bread	
dessert plate	small plate for dessert	
side plate	small plate for side dishes	
coaster	small mat for drinks	

salt and pepper set	small containers for seasoning
chafing dish	dish to keep food warm
cloche	cover for a dish
ice bucket	container for ice
ice tongs	tool to pick ice
serving trolley	cart to carry food
platter	large plate for sharing food
ladle	big spoon for soup
cocktail shaker	container to mix drinks
straw	small tube to drink liquids
menu cover	folder for menu
place card	card with guest name
napkin ring	ring to hold napkin
soup spoon	large spoon for soup
dessert fork	small fork for dessert
water pitcher	container for water
wine decanter	container to aerate wine
ice napkin fold	decoration for napkin
serving tray	tray for multiple items

3 food and drink vocabulary

word	definition	translation
appetizer / starter	small food before main dish	
main course	biggest part of meal	
dessert	sweet food after main	
side dish	extra food with main dish	
beverage	a drink	
sparkling water	water with gas	
still water	water without gas	
wine pairing	wine chosen for food	
allergy	when food makes sick	
gluten-free	food with no gluten	
vegetarian	person who does not eat meat	
vegan	person who does not eat animal food	
seafood	food from sea	
fish	animal from water	
shrimp	small sea animal	
lobster	large sea animal	
crab	sea animal with claws	
clams	shellfish food	
oyster	raw shellfish	
scallop	sea food	
squid	sea food	

octopus	sea food
chicken	bird meat
beef	cow meat
pork	pig meat
lamb	sheep meat
salad	raw vegetables
soup	liquid food
sauce	liquid for flavor
spicy	hot taste
sweet	taste like sugar
salty	food with salt
bitter	strong taste
sour	taste like lemon
crispy	hard outside, soft inside
tender	soft meat
fresh	not old
frozen	very cold food
grilled	cooked on fire
fried	cooked in oil
boiled	cooked in water
baked	cooked in oven
roasted	cooked in oven with oil
steamed	cooked with steam
chef's special	dish for today only
tasting menu	small portions of many dishes
set menu	fixed menu
a la carte	order dishes individually
organic	food grown naturally
local	food from this area
seasonal	food from current season
gourmet	very good quality food
finger food	food eaten with hands
slow-cooked	cooked for a long time
melted	food turned soft by heat
caramelized	sugar turned brown by heat

4 taking orders

word / phrase	definition	translation
order	ask for food or drink	
recommend	say what is good	
special	dish of the day	
portion	amount of food	
medium / rare / well-done	how to cook meat	

refill	fill again
course	one part of a meal
would you like a drink?	ask guest about drink
would you like an appetizer?	offer first dish
do you want a side dish?	ask about extra food
how would you like your steak?	ask doneness
would you like dessert?	ask about dessert
can i get you anything else?	offer more
please follow me	ask guest to come
are you ready to order?	ask if guest wants to order
may i suggest a dish?	recommend food
could i offer a special?	suggest today's dish
how many in your party?	ask number of guests
any dietary restrictions?	ask about food limits
could i explain the menu?	offer information
would you like a wine pairing?	offer wine
shall i start with drinks?	ask first drink

5 polite phrases for guests

phrase	definition	translation
good evening, welcome to our restaurant	greeting guests	
may i take your order?	ask what they want	
would you like to start with something to drink?	offer drinks first	
how would you like your steak cooked?	ask about doneness	
is everything all right with your meal?	check if guest is happy	
can i get you anything else?	offer more help	
thank you for dining with us	polite goodbye	
have a pleasant evening	kind farewell	
please enjoy your meal	polite phrase	
thank you for waiting	polite phrase	
we hope to see you again	polite farewell	
could i help you with something?	offer assistance	
please follow me to your table	guide guest	
we are happy to serve you	polite phrase	
please let me know if you need anything	offer help	

6 problems and solutions

word	definition	translation
complain	say something is bad	
apologize	say sorry	
replace	give a new one	
delay	to be late	
spill	drop liquid by accident	

mistake	something wrong
problem	something difficult
issue	something to fix
solution	how to fix problem
wrong order	order not correct
broken glass	glass is damaged
food cold	meal is not warm
allergy reaction	guest reacts to food
lost item	guest lost something

7 talking to kitchen or team

word	definition	translation
chef	main cook	
sous-chef	chef helper	
station	work area for waiter	
runner	brings food to table	
shift	working time	
tray	flat object to carry food	
busser	clears tables	
head waiter	chief waiter	
service staff	all serving staff	
line cook	cook in kitchen	
pastry chef	dessert cook	
expediter	sends food to tables	
barback	helps bartender	
inventory	list of items in kitchen	
prep cook	prepares ingredients	
dishwasher	washes dishes	
server assistant	helps waiter	

8 useful adjectives for food and service

word	definition	translation
delicious	very tasty	
fresh	new, not old	
crispy	hard outside, soft inside	
tender	easy to cut and chew	
spicy	hot taste	
sweet	taste like sugar	
salty	with salt	
bitter	strong taste	
sour	taste like lemon	
polite	kind and respectful	
busy	with many guests	

comfortable	easy to sit
clean	no dirt
friendly	kind to guests
professional	good at job
organized	everything in order
quick	fast service
attentive	watches guest needs
pleasant	nice feeling

9 payment and closing

word	definition	translation
cash	money in notes and coins	
credit card	plastic card for paying	
split the bill	each person pays part	
receipt	paper showing payment	
service charge	money for staff added to bill	
tip	extra money for good service	
here is your bill	present the bill	
would you like to pay by cash or card?	ask payment method	
thank you very much	polite thanks	
have a nice evening	polite goodbye	
we hope to see you again	polite farewell	
payment completed	guest paid	
change	money returned after payment	
round up	increase total to next whole number	
pay online	pay with internet	
pay now / later	choose payment time	