

kevin blanco ledesma

by Kevin Blanco Ledesma

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Module: BA Dip CertHE International Gastronomy Management



Teacher : Chris Rogers

Reflective portfolio of practical tasks

1. At the beginning of my experience as a waiter, I noticed my nervousness and my inexperience. However, as time went by, I felt more comfortable with the surroundings and what was expected from me. Each customer is different, there are some who are quite pleasant and understanding with your work, while others are quite unpleasant, they can even be somewhat disrespectful, which can negatively affect the experience in the internship, but in this situation, you must stay positive and keep a professional and friendly attitude (Rodrigues, 2023).

In my opinion, just two seconds are enough, a small gesture such as going to greet customers at the door and welcome them or helping them hang their coat, removing their chairs to make it easier for them to sit are some of the things that a good waiter can do to connect with the customer and make a good impression.  2 Once you have had the first contact with customers and have been pleasant, everything is much easier, since you have created a connection which allows you to talk to them, ask about their tastes and priorities and capture information which will be reflected in your way of providing the service (Garzon, 2021).

A clear example could be the comparison between a service between a couple's romantic dinner and a birthday party. During a romantic dinner the waiter acquires a more discreet attitude, he tries not to interact too much with the customer, only what is necessary since it is a special moment between them. The server needs to keep an eye on the table to be quickly attentive to solve requests. In a birthday of friends the waiter will interact more, He will ask some questions (how old are you), he will be more involved at the table which will allow him to be confident enough to ask (do you need another round at the table).  3

Each situation is different and so is each person, so the waiter must identify what the type of situation is, the type of customer and act according to the situation, getting the most out of the service and making the customer enjoy their experience, since happy customers are assured to  4 One of my best experiences in my internship was serving a table of 6 people, as I saw their interest in wines I was able to recommend a Rioja Alta 904 (Antonio Rioja, 2023) a wine of excellent quality, I showed a little of my qualities and opened the bottle elegantly and we were able to

comment on some of the flavors and aromas of the wine, When the table finished eating, grateful for my service, they left a generous tip of 60 pounds, which made me really happy since both me and the whole team would benefit financially, but more than that, the real experience is to think that those customers had an incredible time, they were well served, they learned something new about oenology and surely they will come to the restaurant again, I think that has to be one of the most important aspects of the waiters process (Lias, 2022).

2. Due to my passion for hospitality and especially for cooking it is inevitable to have entered the world of wine, my knowledge of oenology (Tomas, 2018) grows day by day since a good chef requires knowledge of oenology to get the most out of his meals through a good pairing. During our study period we have had some classes on how to see the properties of wine which have really helped me in my practices and when it comes to offering wines to customers.

One of my first days in the internship I took a wine menu home so I could study what types of wines we sold and what variety of wines we had, then I asked my manager what the best-selling wines were and what was the wine of the month (Adminevab, 2023), which he replied they did not have any, maybe that would be a good point for the restaurant to keep in mind. Choose and classify a wine as wine of the month, taking into account its value for money and profit. The brasserie has an immense amount and quality of wine, in its cellar there is close to a million pounds worth in value, it is very difficult to make a wine recommendation to such a prepared place and with a high range of products, but if I had to choose one it would be the Formiga wine (Juan Cordobez, 2019). A wine from Priorat, is a region in Camp de Tarragona, Catalonia, Spain, a red wine with a very intense color intensity, a smell that can be smelled as soon as you open the bottle and although it may seem strong, on the palate it is light, elegant and easy to drink, as well as these qualities it is an ecological wine and respectful of the environment.

3. My ability to communicate with the customer has grown favourably due to following the service protocols properly. The first step is to greet the customer and present the wine menu followed by taking their drink orders. After serving the drinks, food

menus will be presented, and food orders will be taken. After food is served desserts or coffee will be offered and finally take the bill to the table. Following this protocol helps in the organization of the service and that all tables are served correctly (San Luis, 2017). I definitely think this has helped my communication with the customer, knowing what is the next step to follow, this has changed my way of seeing how the system works inside the bar, the work of the waiter and the manager that has a job of high responsibility since they are the direct line to the customer that is an added pressure that you do not have in the kitchen.  9

A good way for the customer to thank and value our work is through tipping, taking into account that I have served a total of 47 tables of which 80 percent have left tips, I think I am in the right line, luckily so far the customers have always been very cordial and grateful to me, as well as my colleagues and boss who at all times are willing to listen to my questions and help me.  10

4. Throughout my professional career as a chef I have seen the world of hospitality behind the stoves, this experience has helped me to better understand the set of all the skills and to realize the small details when preparing a service for customers (Bueno, 2022), by this I mean activities such as a separation of about 25 centimeters between chairs and tables giving a feeling of warmth and welcome, the polishing of each glass or glass by hand or a thorough cleaning of chairs, table and floor before each service, without forgetting to do it again once the customer has gotten up.

Although not all of them are physical jobs, during my experience as a chef I have always required my waiters to ask me through  kitchen as soon as they start their shift and they are the flavour of the soup of the day since it changes daily, what are the special dishes of the day, since they are not reflected in the menu and finally what menu items that need to be sold that day of the day. Otherwise, that raw material will be lost and will result in losses for the company.  11

One of the things that has impacted me the most is the level of stress that a waiter suffers and the good memory and knowing how to be that he has to have, to put us in a situation in the middle of a service a waiter who is in the room attending to  customers I received a series of requests from both customers and non-colleagues (Otter, 2022), to that we have to add being attentive to the kitchen to take the food and that it does not get cold and finally maintain tranquility and elegance since it

could give an image of chaos and would break the professional atmosphere.

On a personal level, it is an experience that has made me believe a lot, on a professional and personal level, giving added value to our colleagues on the floor and in the bar. my opinion about the two areas where I have worked, it is becoming clearer every day that the union and teamwork between the two departments is vital for the proper functioning of the restaurant and the optimization of profit  12

5. I have always been very clear about what my three options are regarding the future and although at the moment I do not know what my option will be, I am clear about which three sectors I can focus on. The first would be to open my own business which would be fundamental to capture my ideas, cooking style and give free rein to creativity, my second option would be to have a position as executive chef (Kourmentza, 2020) in a company with several restaurants which would be focused on the economic part mainly and as a last option I would like to dedicate myself to teaching cooking for a more relaxed lifestyle without leaving aside my position for The rewarding part of teaching my knowledge to new generations.

This small experience as a waiter has helped me realize that I have to take into account many more factors that I was not even aware of, this is a clear example that I need to improve and learn more in this sector and in general in all sectors, since the hospitality industry like everything in life undergoes transformations and renovations, One of the problems that some restaurants suffer over time is decay and monotony, in my opinion the continuous renewal and learning of the subject keeps our business rejuvenated and our passion intact.

One of the most interesting and unknown areas for me partly due to its great extension and variety is the world of wines (elucelo, 2023), we really do not appreciate the power that wines can have in a restaurant in the first place having a sommelier in the restaurant makes our category rise, providing customers with a source of information and learning about the world of oenology. Another of the strongest points of wine is its combination with food, normally when we go to a restaurant the customer asks for the wine he wants, in my opinion there is where the role of the sommelier comes in and once the customers know what they are going to eat is when the sommelier will make a recommendation of what would be the best pairings getting the most out of both wine and food  13 ally the economic part is

always important, some products have a value that proliferates over time, many restaurants buy a large amount of wine that is stored for long periods of time which means that its value increases that is why it is important to be up to date and make the required changes in the wine menu, A clear example and going back to the Rioja Alta 904 wine, a bottle of the 2019 vintage has a value of about 80 pounds while that same bottle of the year 1964 has a value of 325 pounds.

Consider sources 

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FINAL GRADE

58/100

GENERAL COMMENTS

Please book a session with Study Skills to work on academic writing: www.uwtsd.ac.uk/study-skills

Please review the rubric for feedback specific to the assessment criteria.

PAGE 1



Comment 1

Module is Placement: Developing Customer Experience and Service Skills

PAGE 2



Comment 2

Good. A smile and a warm welcome will set the tone and make the customers feel relax, which will enhance their experience



Comment 3

A very good point in terms of different interactions between different sets of customers. Ensuring you ask the right questions, or have read the customer information beforehand, would allow you to prepare



Comment 4

and hopefully come back again! Good service promotes loyalty

PAGE 3



Comment 5

Why did you choose this bottle? What were the table having to eat and did they specify a Rioja, or had you tried it previously?



Comment 6

The waiting staff are key to the customer experience and have positive feedback in terms of tips and/or comments will help reinforce that good behaviour and forming a virtuous circle of service and customer satisfaction



Comment 7

WOTM can be a great way of selling slow moving wines, but if there is an extensive list and the wines sell across the board it could be more problematic than useful



Comment 8

Have you recommended this to customers? What sort of food would it go with? Did you taste it on your own or as part of a training session? It's always good to put these recommendations in context

PAGE 4



Comment 9

Has this changed your perception of the dynamic between FOH and the kitchen? Will you have a different attitude to FOH when you go back to the kitchen again?



Comment 10

Asking lots of questions is a great way to learn quickly and embed knowledge. A 2 way flow of information is vital



Consider structure

Evaluate the effectiveness of the structure of your essay.

Additional Comment

Look at your sentence structure here



Comment 11

Does this work and do the FOH staff take this knowledge on board?



Consider structure

Evaluate the effectiveness of the structure of your essay.

Additional Comment

Look at the language and structure in this paragraph. It doesn't make grammatical sense or flow. Remember to check your work before handing it in.

PAGE 5



Comment 12

and customer experience too!



Comment 13

Most UK restaurants do not have a Sommelier, so wine training is important in providing guidance to the public when it comes to choosing a wine. This can be both a driver of engagement and profitability

PAGE 6

QM

Consider sources

Evaluate the credibility, relevance, and range of sources.

Additional Comment

Source for these numbers please

PAGE 7

GRADING FORM: BMGM5003

KEVIN BLANCO LEDESMA

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ENGAGEMENT WITH LITERATURE

Use a range of academic sources relevant to culinary skills and customer service, including journal articles, textbooks, and online resources, to support your reflections and analysis. You should demonstrate the ability to evaluate and reflect on the literature to develop your understanding of customer service, communication, and problem-solving in a culinary context. Use appropriate referencing and citation methods, following the IHM's UWTSD Harvard Referencing Guide, to acknowledge the sources used in your portfolio.



You need to use a wider and more academic source base, although this is a great improvement

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on last term. No mention of trends, although the increasing importance of wine in the Hospitality environment is well served.

KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING

You should demonstrate an understanding of the principles of customer service in the hospitality industry, including effective communication, problem-solving, and relationship-building. Apply relevant theories and concepts related to customer service, communication, and problem-solving in your reflections and analysis. Identify areas of strength and weakness in your knowledge and understanding of customer service and culinary skills and reflect on how you have developed during your placement.



You have brought the learnings and ideas of your Placement to the Portfolio well, with explanations and discussions on how much you've learned and how it has changed and developed your appreciation of the wider Hospitality Industry as a whole. The engagement with the customer is key, as is the support you get from your manager and colleagues, as set out in your Viva. Some work on structure, the use of grammar and also the real development of key points will help you in the future.

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COGNITIVE AND INTELLECTUAL

Analyse and evaluate your personal learning outcomes and experiences during your placement, including the challenges and opportunities you encountered. Use critical thinking skills to reflect on your customer service skills, your ability to solve problems, and your communication skills in a culinary context. Evaluate how your placement has influenced

your attitudes and beliefs towards customer service and the hospitality industry.



You have identified your own areas of weakness, both in terms of awareness of what the weakness is, but also in terms of what you have done to combat that and how this is then transposed into the Placement. Again, try to look at points in the round and make sure you supply the correct referencing to back these up

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PRACTICAL SKILLS

You should demonstrate an understanding of how customer service skills can be applied in a culinary context, including the importance of effective communication, problem solving, and relationship-building. Reflect on your practical experiences during your placement, including the tasks you undertook, the challenges you faced, and the skills you developed. Evaluate the impact of your practical experiences on your development of customer service skills, and identify areas for future improvement.



You have a good grasp of the practical skills needed to establish and connect with customers and a knowledge that allows you to understand that each customer needs a nuanced approach. It would be useful for you to back up some of these points with more academic referencing in order to give your ideas and experience real weight. Connect with Study Skills www.uwtsd.ac.uk/study-skills to help you with this as it will make a real difference to your structure and marks

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TRANSFERABLE SKILLS

You should write this assignment as a reflective essay, provide your student name, number, module name and module code and assignment title. You should use a font of Arial 12 point. Justify your text, in order for your journal to look professional. Use 1.5 line spacing throughout the document. Spelling and grammar should be accurate.



This Placement has obviously introduced you to the crucial role that a FOH operative has in the success of the restaurant and I like the ideas that you were discussing in your Viva over the wine list and the potential for WOTM to enhance the restaurant offering. I would like to see more evidence of this sort of constructive thought in a more strategic way moving forward, looking at the running of the FOH as a whole and the changes you might make given the opportunity. I feel there is a need to be able to communicate your next-level thinking as you move forward within Hospitality and look to run/manage your own business.

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