

A free guide for restaurant and bar owners

The Table Revenue Playbook.

8 ways to sell more per table without adding a single member of staff. Built on hospitality research, written for real service.

Before we start

Your tables already want to spend more.

Most lost revenue in a restaurant isn't lost at the door. It's lost at the table: the second bottle nobody offered, the dessert that didn't happen because nobody came by, the table that waited ten minutes for the bill.

This playbook collects practical tactics that the best-run dining rooms use to capture that spend. None of them need more staff. Most need a small change in how your team sees the room and when they act.

Use it as a checklist. Pick two or three tactics, run them for a month, and measure the result with the worksheet at the end.

What's inside

- 1 Why waiting costs money: the research
- 2 Make it easy for guests to ask
- 3 Own the second-round window
- 4 Sell dessert and coffee before plates are cleared
- 5 A fast bill, not a fast meal
- 6 Sections, sightlines and a runner at peak
- 7 Suggest something specific
- 8 Engineer your menu
- 9 Measure it: RevPASH and a 30-day pilot

Why waiting costs you money.

Service speed isn't only about happier guests. Researchers have measured what it does to revenue.

+11%

sales per minute when restaurants added table-side service technology: meals got about 10% shorter and checks slightly larger.

Tan & Netessine, Management Science, 2020. 66 restaurants, 2.6M checks.

~15%

more revenue in a simulation without waiting. Longer waits were linked to guests leaving and coming back less often.

De Vries, Roy & De Koster, Journal of Operations Management, 2018. 94,404 guests.

Fast bill

Guests dislike a rushed meal, but they appreciate speed when it's time to pay.

Noone, Kimes, Mattila & Wirtz, Cornell Hospitality Quarterly, 2007.

On cue

Frequent check-backs please some guests and make others uncomfortable. Service on request avoids unwanted interruptions.

Lee, International Journal of Hospitality Management, 2015.

These studies measured related technology and waiting times, not any single product. Your results depend on your venue, which is why section 9 shows you how to measure them.

Make it easy for guests to ask.

Every guest who has to wave, stare or wait for eye contact is a guest who might decide not to bother. Remove the friction and requests come earlier and more often.

Give every table a signal

A clear, discreet way to call a server: a table light, a card, a button. The simplest signal wins, because guests use it without explanation.

Make signals visible from the pass

Your team should see a request from wherever they stand. If a signal can only be seen at the table, it's not a signal.

Agree a response rule

For example: whoever sees a signal first acknowledges it with a nod within 30 seconds, even if someone else will serve it.

How FlipLight does it

A warm table light by default. Guests flip it over and it turns red. Staff see it across the room, serve the table, and flip it back.

Own the second round. Sell dessert early.

The second-round window

The best moment to offer another drink is when a glass is about a quarter full, not when it's empty and the guest has already started thinking about the bill.

- Train the team to scan glasses on every pass, not only plates.
- Offer the same drink by name: "Another glass of the Rioja?" is easier to say yes to than "Anything else?"
- For bottles, offer the second one when the first is at a third.

Dessert and coffee

Dessert is decided in the first minute after mains are cleared. If nobody arrives in that minute, many tables move straight to the bill.

- Put dessert on the main menu or a table card, so guests see it before they're full.
- Clear plates and offer dessert in the same visit.
- Suggest sharing: one dessert and two spoons is still a dessert sold.
- Pair it: coffee or a dessert wine suggested with a named dessert.

A fast bill. A room your team can see.

A fast bill, not a fast meal

Research on meal pacing shows guests want an unhurried meal and a quick exit.

Waiting for the bill is where much of a table's idle time sits, and it's the last memory of the evening.

- Bring card terminals with the bill, never on a second trip.
- Let guests request the bill without catching an eye.
- At peak, prioritise bill requests: a table that leaves sooner seats the next cover sooner.

Sections, sightlines and a runner

- Size sections so each server can see all their tables from one spot.
- Move stations or plants that block sightlines to the room.
- On busy nights, add a runner who only delivers food and drinks. Servers stay on the floor, where the selling happens.

Suggest something specific. Engineer the menu.

Replace "Anything else?"

A closed, specific suggestion is easier to accept than an open question.

Instead of	Try
"Anything to drink?"	"Can I start you with a glass of the house Vermentino? It's lovely with the starters."
"Any dessert?"	"The tiramisu is made this morning. One to share?"
"Anything else?"	"Another round of the same?"

Menu engineering in one table

Sort every dish by how popular it is and how much it earns (contribution margin). Then act on each group.

Group	Popular?	Profitable?	What to do
Stars	Yes	Yes	Keep, feature prominently, train the team to recommend.
Workhorses	Yes	No	Adjust portion or price carefully, pair with high-margin sides.
Puzzles	No	Yes	Move to a better spot on the menu, rename, recommend verbally.
Dogs	No	No	Remove or rework.

Based on the menu engineering model by Kasavana & Smith (1982).

Tactic 8

Measure it: RevPASH and a 30-day pilot.

RevPASH (revenue per available seat hour) is the number revenue-management research at Cornell uses to compare service periods fairly.

RevPASH = revenue in a period ÷ (seats × hours in that period)

Example: €3,600 revenue on a 4-hour Friday with 60 seats = €3,600 ÷ 240 = €15.00 per seat hour.

The 30-day pilot

Week	What to do
1	Baseline. Change nothing. Record the metrics below for every service.
2	Introduce two tactics from this playbook. Brief the team on the response rule.
3-4	Keep going and record the same metrics. Compare like-for-like days (Friday with Friday).

What to record

- Covers and revenue per service, and RevPASH
- Average check per table
- Drinks per cover, and desserts per table
- Table turns at peak

Your pilot scorecard.

Print this page. Fill in one row per service, before and after.

[illegible]

Before (week 1)

Average RevPASH: _____

After (weeks 3-4)

Average RevPASH: _____

Ready to make tactic 1 effortless?

FlipLight is a warm, cordless table light your guests flip to red when they want something. 6–8h battery, one charging station for 25 lights, logo engraving from 25 lights.

Your code for €50 off your first bundle:

FLIP50

fliplight.co

hello@fliplight.co