

Fine Dining at the Saxonburg Hotel

by
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Each year for our anniversary my wife and I splurge on dinner. Since we have young children, going out together without the brood is a rare treat. Ok, let me put it this way since our kids can't read these columns yet - "ITS UNBELIEVABLY GREAT!"

Anyhow, we are partial to the Saxonburg Hotel for its food and ambiance. We don't get there often but when we do, it's usually been pretty good.

This year, on the way to dinner I started chattering about egg-battered Virginia spots that melt in your mouth while my wife couldn't wait to eat those scrumptious crab cakes. We both tried not to eat too much during the day so we had plenty of room for the goodies.

When we arrived, my wife and I were seated at a nice little table in a corner. Being the romantic guy I am, I began whispering sweet nothings to my wife. She smiled her radiant smile and beamed back. We reflected on the whirlwind events and challenges we had over the last year as we brought with us an attitude of gratitude for each other. In our busy lives, this was an extraordinary opportunity to relax and just enjoy each other's company.

I glanced at the history of the Saxonburg Inn on the menu when suddenly our much anticipated evening took a nifty turn when we were greeted by Matt, the waiter. Ordinarily I do not like to engage in small talk because I think its all phony. But Matt who I would guess was in his early 20's had a style that was genuine, free and easy. When I told him that we were there to celebrate our anniversary he congratulated us and told us a short, heartwarming story.

In a culture often absorbed in self, I really enjoy people who don't take themselves too seriously. Self-deprecating humor is usually a tip-off to me that someone probably has a balanced sense of himself or herself. When Matt returned with our drinks we started talking about something that struck us funny and Matt jumped right in with self-deprecating humor that had us howling. His comedic timing was impeccable.

When we were served dinner Matt came back with another story or two. His comments were breezy and funny as he hustled along. My wife and I who have a deep appreciation for customer service began observing Matt as he waited on other customers. "You know honey I'm not sure what it is but this guy has "IT"," I said. "I totally agree," she replied. "I don't know what he'll end up doing for a career in life but he is going to be successful at whatever he chooses to do," I added.

Then after we were half-way through our meal, Matt returned with a small cake with a candle on it. "This is for your anniversary" he said. Incredibly he broke out into his best Dave Matthews impression and sang his rendition of Happy Anniversary to us.

At this point I realized that Matt wasn't just a waiter. He was a dynamic dining phenomenon. We get a zillion stations on cable TV at home and none of them have a show as engaging as Matt. My wife and I were delighted. We said our good-byes to Matt and left the restaurant smiling.

The cynical might suggest that Matt's performance was all an act to get a good tip. If true, I say good for Matt. He deserved it. But to me, Matt was the real deal. I think the people best at customer service are people who by their nature take the focus off themselves and take an interest in the people they are serving. And that was Matt.

While the food was very good, my wife and I intend to go back to the Saxonburg Inn again soon because we had such a pleasant customer service experience. Thank you Matt for going the extra mile. You turned a wonderful occasion into an awesome evening.



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