The Unbooked Table

C1 Advanced · Food · about 2 min of audio

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Name _____ Date _____

Part 1 — Fill the gaps while you listen

1. Restaurants are often urged to fill every seat, yet a _____ unbooked table can make a dining room work better.
2. At six, _____ arrive in neat waves, while actual evenings unfold through late trains, sudden rain, and unplanned reunions.
3. A small table kept open absorbs those _____ without forcing staff to dismantle a carefully arranged section.
4. It also gives a lone diner a place without making a party of two feel _____.
5. _____, empty chairs look costly when rent is rising and margins are thin.
6. But the apparent loss is _____, because a room's value depends on more than its hourly occupancy.
7. When every place is promised, a delayed course can cascade into _____, hurried clearing, and guests watching the clock.
8. One unclaimed table acts instead as a buffer, giving servers room to absorb small surprises _____.
9. Its presence may even attract passersby who would otherwise assume the restaurant has become _____.
10. This is not an argument for careless _____, but a case for treating slack as part of service.
11. The best-run dining room is not the fullest one, but the one with enough space to remain _____.

Part 2 — Write every sentence you hear

1. _____

2. _____

3.

4.

5.

6.

7.

8.

9.

10.

11.

Answer key

Part 1 — the missing words

1. deliberately 2. reservations 3. irregularities 4. inconvenient 5. Certainly 6. misleading 7. apologies 8. gracefully 9. inaccessible 10. forecasting 11. hospitable

Part 2 — the full transcript

1. Restaurants are often urged to fill every seat, yet a deliberately unbooked table can make a dining room work better.
2. At six, reservations arrive in neat waves, while actual evenings unfold through late trains, sudden rain, and unplanned reunions.
3. A small table kept open absorbs those irregularities without forcing staff to dismantle a carefully arranged section.
4. It also gives a lone diner a place without making a party of two feel inconvenient.
5. Certainly, empty chairs look costly when rent is rising and margins are thin.
6. But the apparent loss is misleading, because a room's value depends on more than its hourly occupancy.
7. When every place is promised, a delayed course can cascade into apologies, hurried clearing, and guests watching the clock.
8. One unclaimed table acts instead as a buffer, giving servers room to absorb small surprises gracefully.
9. Its presence may even attract passersby who would otherwise assume the restaurant has become inaccessible.
10. This is not an argument for careless forecasting, but a case for treating slack as part of service.
11. The best-run dining room is not the fullest one, but the one with enough space to remain hospitable.

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