

Smart Restaurants: Tables and Tablets

Haven Daley:

The next time you reserve a table for two, it may come with a tablet.

Ragat Suri:

You can order your food whenever you want, and you can see delicious pictures of all the items.

Haven Daley:

The founder of E La Carte says he got the idea for the new food-ordering devices when he and some fellow students at MIT were trying to split a check.

Ragat Suri:

Some people had cash. Some people had credit cards. Some people ordered, you know, an appetizer. Some didn't order an appetizer. So it was really complicated, and so we did it for an hour. We got it wrong; we had to do it again. So, you know, it was kind of a bad joke, you know: how many MIT kids does it take to split a check? You know?

Haven Daley:

The tablets not only help you accurately split checks; they also allow diners to pay using the device whenever they want, and have the receipt emailed. And while you're waiting for your food, you can play trivia and other games.

Prasad Subraveti:

It saves, um, a lot of time, um, in terms of waiting for the, uh, waiter to come in and then take your order and then processing it. So it saves a bunch of time.

Haven Daley:

Some worry the tablets could someday replace waiters and waitresses. But the workers at this restaurant say the tablets make service run more efficiently.

Sabrina Adona:

I think they can be helpful to us when it gets really busy. If people are waiting, they won't have to wait for the server to get to them, and they'll be able to put their drinks or their food in as soon as they want.

Ehab Youssef:

There are going to be people that are serving you and making sure the experience is good; but, this again, it helps the customer control that experience.

Haven Daley:

Right now, the tablets are only in restaurants in the San Francisco Bay Area and Boston, with plans to expand nationwide. Restaurants pay a monthly fee for the devices, which E la Carte says more than pay for themselves.

Ragat Suri:

So they see ten to twelve percent higher sales. The reason is people tend just to order more stuff because it's easier to do it, right? So if you see a picture of a dessert and you're like: hey, why don't I just get that dessert? You can do it whenever you want.

Haven Daley:

And the devices don't require a tip.

Haven Daley:

Haven Daley, Associated Press, Sunnyvale, California.

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