Airport Restaurant Waiter Goes Viral After Demanding 20% Tip

Tipping at restaurants has always been a somewhat contentious topic, but a recent incident at Boston's Logan International Airport has brought the debate cruising back into the spotlight.

Not Your Average Joe's Waiter Demands 20% Tip

A traveler recently shared a photo of their receipt from Not Your Average Joe's in Logan International's Terminal B. While receipt photos circulating the internet aren't all that uncommon, this one was particularly odd and very clearly highly polarizing.

The waiter had scratched out the two lowest tip suggestions on the bill and circled the highest suggested option of 20%. The photo caught fire on social media and again brought up the expectations and ethics of tipping.

The Tipping Debate in America

Tipping is a deeply ingrained custom in the United States but comes with its fair share of confusion and controversy. A 2023 survey by the Pew Research Center found Americans as largely divided on the practice of businesses suggesting tip amounts.

According to the survey, 40% of U.S. adults oppose businesses' suggestion of tip amounts to their customers, while only 24% favor it. The remaining 32% neither favor nor oppose the practice.

Moreover, the survey revealed a solid opposition to automatic service charges. About seven in ten adults (72%) say they oppose businesses including automatic service charges or tips on their bills, regardless of group size. Only 10% of the respondents favor such charges.

What's the Impact on Consumer Behavior?

The incident at Logan International Airport reflects a broader trend in tipping behaviors. Recent data shows that gratuities for workers in several industries are down compared to prior years.

According to Bankrate's findings, diners at traditional sit-down restaurants consistently tip their servers more often than patrons of other services.

However, the proportion of diners who always leave a tip decreased from 73 percent in 2022 to 65 percent in 2023. Americans appear to be fed up with the expectation of a healthy tip regardless of service quality.

What's the Tipping End Game?

The debate over tipping is far from settled, but incidents like the one at Logan International Airport suggest the need for a more thoughtful approach to this long-standing custom.

Tipping was always intended to reward good service, but the growing prevalence of suggested tip amounts and automatic service charges is actually creating feelings of obligation and resentment.

Can businesses strike a balance between encouraging tips and respecting their customers' autonomy? Is it time to eliminate suggested tip amounts altogether? There's likely no easy answer.

However you slice it, tips should never feel forced or obligatory, and the general public is clearly becoming increasingly perturbed by the service industry's unabashed sense of gratuity entitlement.