DISH DIRECTORY — GUIDE

Tipping Etiquette Around the World

Tipping customs vary widely by region, so check whether service is included and follow local practice wherever you dine.

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Tipping is one of the most varied customs in dining, and what is polite in one place can be odd or even unwelcome in another. Customs also shift over time, so treat any general guide as a starting point. When in doubt, follow local practice and check your bill carefully.

Why Tipping Norms Differ

Tipping customs grow out of local pay practices, laws, and dining culture, which all vary by place.

- In some regions, tips form a normal part of service earnings and diners are expected to add them. Skipping the tip there can read as dissatisfaction with the service.
- In other regions, wages or a service charge already cover service, so an extra tip is a small bonus for great care rather than an expectation.
- In still other places, good service is seen as part of the fixed price, and offering extra can confuse staff or be politely refused.
- Within any region, cities, tourist areas, and fine dining rooms may follow different habits than small towns or casual spots.

Regions Where Tipping Is Customary

In these places, adding a tip for table service is the normal habit.

- North America has the strongest tipping custom for sit down restaurants. Diners commonly add an amount above the bill based on the service received.
- Parts of Latin America, Africa, and the Middle East also have tipping customs in restaurants, though expectations vary widely between countries. Ask locally about the usual practice.
- In tourist areas worldwide, staff may be used to visitors who tip. Following the local habit still matters more than following the habits of home.

Places Where Service Is Often Included

In much of the world, the menu price or the bill already accounts for service.

- Across much of Europe, a service charge is often built into prices or added to the bill. Diners may round up or leave a small extra amount for warm service, but a large tip is not the norm.
- In parts of Asia and Oceania, service charges may appear on the bill at larger or upscale restaurants. Casual eateries in these regions often expect no tip at all.
- Always read the bill before adding anything. Paying twice by tipping on top of an included charge is a common traveler mistake.

Places Where Tipping Is Uncommon

In some dining cultures, tipping is rare and the price on the menu is the full price.

- In Japan and South Korea, tipping at restaurants is generally not practiced. Polite thanks and repeat visits show appreciation instead.
- In some other parts of Asia, tipping is not traditional, though high end hotels and tourist venues may accept it. Watch what local diners do.
- If you are unsure, leaving a tip where none is expected is a minor error. Staff will usually return it kindly or accept it graciously.

How to Handle the Bill Anywhere

These habits work in every country and keep you clear of the common traps.

- Read the full bill before you pay. Look for lines such as service charge, cover charge, or gratuity, since wording varies.
- Ask what the charges mean if anything is unclear. Staff answer these questions often and will explain the local custom.
- Carry a small amount of local cash when you can. Some places that accept cards for meals still prefer cash for tips.
- Match the local habit rather than your home habit. The goal is to fit the custom of the place you are visiting.
- When service was truly excellent, a sincere thank you matters everywhere. Kind words travel across every tipping custom.

Frequently asked questions

Do I need to tip at restaurants in every country?

No, tipping customs differ greatly from place to place. In some regions tips are customary while in others service is included or tipping is uncommon.

What should I do if I am unsure whether to tip?

Check the bill for a service charge and observe what local diners do. When still unsure, ask a local or a staff member politely.