

Lesson 8: Restaurants – Making Reservations & Understanding the Menu

We're going to **eat out** – that means eating at a restaurant. This will be a two-part lesson. Today you'll learn how to make reservations, what to say when you arrive at the restaurant, and how to understand the menu.

Tomorrow you'll learn how to make orders, interact with the waiter or waitress, pay for the food, and talk about your experience at the restaurant.

Conversation #1 – Making a Reservation

It's a good idea to call the restaurant and make a reservation in three cases:

- First, if you are going to a nice/expensive restaurant.
- Second, if you are going to a restaurant that is very popular.
- Third, if you are going to the restaurant with a large number of people, and you want to make sure that the restaurant has enough space for everybody.

Restaurant: Angelo's Restaurant.

John: Hi, I'd like to make a dinner reservation for tomorrow night at 7:30.

Restaurant: How many in your party?

John: Six.

Restaurant: Can I get your name and phone number?

John: My name is John Smith, and my number is 203-555-8714

Restaurant: Okay, so I have a reservation for a party of six, under the name "Smith," tomorrow night at 7:30, is that correct?

John: Yes, that's right. We'll also need one high chair and one booster seat.

Restaurant: Not a problem. Is there anything else?

John: No, that's it, thanks.

Restaurant: All right, Mr. Smith, we'll see you tomorrow night at 7:30.

Conversation Vocabulary & Phrases

- In general, when making a restaurant reservation, you need to give your name, phone number, and the date and time you plan to go to the restaurant.
- When the person at the restaurant asks "**How many in your party?**" she wants to know how many people total will be coming to the restaurant.
- If you have any special requests, you can make them – for example, in this conversation, Mr. Smith asks for one **high chair** and one **booster seat**. A high chair is a chair for a baby, and a booster seat is a chair for a small child.
- While making the reservation, you can also ask for a table in a specific location, for example:
 - "**Can we have a table near the window?**"
 - "**Can we have a table on the balcony?**"

Conversation #2 – Arriving at the Restaurant

When you enter the restaurant, the person (usually a woman) who greets you is called the **hostess**. If you made a reservation before arriving, you can say to her:

- "I have a 7:30 reservation for John Smith."

If you didn't make a reservation, you might need to wait for a table if the restaurant is **crowded** (that is, if there are many people in the restaurant):

Hostess: Welcome to Angelo's – do you have a reservation?

William: No, we don't.

Hostess: It's gonna be about a 10-minute wait. Can I get your name?

William: Johnson.

Hostess: OK, and a table for two?

William: Mmm-hmm.

Hostess: All right, you can wait right over there and I'll let you know when your table is ready.

Conversation Vocabulary & Phrases

In spoken English, "going to" is often pronounced "**gonna**," like when the hostess says "It's gonna be about a 10-minute wait."

The expression "**mm-hmm**" is a way to say "yes." English has many different ways to say "yes" and "no" (click [here](#) and [here](#) for some examples).

Also, if the restaurant has a bar, the hostess may ask if you want to sit at the bar and have a drink while you wait.

If there are tables available when you enter the restaurant, then the hostess will ask you how many people:

Hostess: Good evening. How many?

William: Two.

Hostess: Right this way, please.

(right this way = come with me - you should follow the hostess to the table)

After you sit down, a person will come and ask if you want any drinks. The name of this person is the **waiter** (if he is a man) or **waitress** (if she is a woman) – or **server** (which can be a man or a woman).

Server: Hi, my name is Sarah and I'll be your server tonight. How are you doing?

William: Good, thanks.

Server: Here's the menu. Can I get you anything to drink?
(notice the pronunciation of "Can I get you" – *kinlgetcha*)

William: Just water for now.

Server: OK, I'll be back in a few minutes to take your order.

The **menu** is the list of foods that the restaurant offers, and how much they cost. We use a specific verb for the action of asking for food in a restaurant: **to order**.

Vocabulary Builder: Understanding the Menu

The menu will often be divided into different sections:

- **Appetizers** or **starters** are small amounts of food that are eaten before the main dish.
- **Main dishes** or **entrees** are the biggest and most important parts of the meal, eaten after the appetizers and before dessert. This can also be called the **main course**.
- **Specials** are specific dishes that are prepared particularly for today, and are often at a reduced price.
- **Combos** is short for **combinations** - two or more foods that are ordered together as a single item (for example, at McDonald's you can order a "combo" of a hamburger, French fries, and soda for one price).
- **Side dishes** or **sides** are small portions of food that can be ordered to accompany the main dishes – for example, you can order a steak with a side of mashed potatoes.
- **Desserts** are sweet foods eaten after the main dish, like ice cream, cakes, pies, etc.
- **Beverages** is another word for **drinks**. There are also **cocktails**, which are mixed alcoholic drinks (like margaritas, martinis, and other alcoholic drinks like tequila and rum that are mixed with fruit juices and other ingredients).

Some menus also categorize the foods by types – for example: sandwiches, soups, salads, seafood (that means animals from the ocean like fish, crab, lobster, etc.), pasta, meat, and poultry (poultry means chicken).

Now let's learn various ways that food can be prepared.

Food can be **grilled** or **barbecued** (cooked on a grill)



Roasted or **baked** (cooked inside an oven)



Boiled (cooked in water)



Fried (cooked in oil)



Sautéed (cooked in a very small amount of oil)



Broiled (cooked at high heat for a short time)
Marinated (soaked in liquid to give it more flavor)

Breaded (covered with bread crumbs and cooked)

Steamed (cooked with water vapor)

Steamed vegetables are not cooked **IN** the water. They are cooked **ABOVE** the water.



Sometimes, the food is also described by its appearance:

A thin cut of meat or fish is called a **fillet** (the “t” in fillet is silent).



Vegetables can be **chopped** (cut into squares):



or **sliced** (cut into thin pieces):



Cheese can be **grated** (scraped into small pieces):



Also, food can be **covered with** or **topped with** a liquid, which is called **sauce** or **dressing**.

With meat and pasta, we use the word **sauce**.



With salads, we use the word **dressing**:



For some more advanced restaurant menu vocabulary, click on these two example menus: [American Diner Menu](#) and [British Restaurant Menu](#).

Asking questions about the menu

Here are some typical questions you can ask the server in order to find out more information about the dishes on the menu:

- **“Is that a big portion?”**
(portion = quantity of food)
- **“Is it spicy?”**
(ask this to find out if the food has “hot” peppers)



- **“Does it have any peanuts in it? I’m allergic.”**
(allergic = your body has a bad reaction)
- **“Do you have any diet / light dishes?”**
(some restaurants have a “light” section of the menu, with foods that are healthy and low-fat, but you can also ask the server which dishes are good for a person on a diet)
- **“Do you have any vegetarian dishes?”**
(ask the server this question if you don’t eat meat)

- **“Does that come with any sides?”**
(sometimes, the entrees come with side dishes like potatoes, vegetables, salads, or soups, which are included in the price of the main dish)
- **“Can I substitute a salad for the soup?”**
“Can I have a salad instead of the soup?”
(ask one of these questions to find out if it’s possible to exchange one item for another)
- **“Do you have a kids’ menu?”**
(many servers will give you a kids’ menu automatically if they see you have children, but you can also request it)
- **“What are today’s specials?”**
(many restaurants have dishes that are prepared especially for that day, and some have a reduced price)
- **“What do you recommend?”**
(if you really don’t know what to order, you can ask the server for a suggestion. Often, he or she will recommend a popular dish that the restaurant is especially known for)

You’ve finished Lesson 8 of the Everyday English Speaking Course! Now take the quiz to test your memory of the phrases from this lesson – and come back tomorrow for part II of our restaurant lesson.

Quiz – Lesson 8

1) We'd prefer a table _____ the window.

- A. close
- B. near
- C. next

2) What are today's _____?

- A. menus
- B. reserves
- C. specials

3) Does that _____ with any sides?

- A. go
- B. come
- C. bring

4) What kind of salad _____ do you have?

- A. coverings
- B. dressings
- C. toppings

5) I have an 8:00 _____ for a party of four.

- A. appointment
- B. order
- C. reservation

6) Is that a big _____?

- A. plate
- B. portion
- C. special

7) I can't eat oysters - I'm _____ to shellfish.

- A. allergic
- B. reactive
- C. sick

8) The lamb chops are _____ in red wine; they're really delicious!

- A. boiled
- B. marinated
- C. steamed

9) Can I have vegetables _____ the French fries?

- A. instead of
- B. because of
- C. exchange for

10) The _____ chicken is a low-fat option.

- A. baked
- B. grated
- C. fried

11) Do you have a kids' _____?

- A. appetizer
- B. menu
- C. waiter

12) I'll be back in a few minutes to take your _____.

- A. combo
- B. dish
- C. order

Lesson 8 Quiz - Answers

1.B 2.C 3.B 4.B 5.C 6.B 7.A 8.B 9.A 10.A 11.B 12.C