



ESL Podcast 559 – Ending a Restaurant Meal

GLOSSARY

to clear the plates – to take dirty plates away from the table after people have finished eating

* Once you've finished eating, I'll clear the plates so that you two can talk at the table more comfortably.

out of (one's) way – no longer in front of another person; no longer blocking or filling the space that one needs to use for something else

* Could you please move those boxes out of his way? I'm afraid he's going to trip over them.

doggie bag – a small bag used to carry uneaten food home from a restaurant so that one can eat it later

* She asked the waiter for a doggie bag so that she could take home the leftover pasta and eat it for lunch the next day.

to wrap (something) up – to package something; to put something in a box or wrap it in plastic or paper to protect it so that it can be used later

* Each December 30th, they wrap up their Christmas ornaments and put them away until the next year.

to leave room for (something) – to still have space for something, especially to still have space in one's stomach so that one can continue to eat more food

* Breccia stopped eating her meal so that she could leave room for dessert.

stuffed – very full, with no room for anything else

* After the Thanksgiving dinner, we were all so stuffed that we sat on the couch and didn't move for hours.

check – a bill; a small piece of paper showing what one ordered at a restaurant, how much each item cost, and the total amount of money owed

* Waiter, I think there's a mistake on our check. We didn't order lobster.

to come right up – to appear or to be available very soon

* - I'd like a cup of coffee, please.
- Coming right up.

personal check – a small, rectangular piece of paper used to transfer money from a personal bank account to another person or business

* The store had to stop accepting personal checks, because too many people were writing checks without enough money in their bank accounts to cover them.



ESL Podcast 559 – Ending a Restaurant Meal

credit card – a small piece of plastic that is used to make purchases, with the money being paid to the credit card company later

* They cut up their credit cards so that they couldn't continue to spend money they didn't have.

cash – paper or metal money

* Could you please loan me \$5? I don't have any cash, but I want to buy a sandwich in the cafeteria.

ATM – automated teller machine; a machine that allows one to take money out of one's bank account even when the bank is closed

* Using the ATM is faster than going into the bank to cash a check.

to run out on the check – to leave a restaurant after eating but without paying

* When a couple ran out on the check, the restaurant owner called the police.

ASAP – as soon as possible; as quickly as one can

* Could you please pay the bills ASAP? Some of them are already overdue.

no rush – an informal phrase used to show that one is not in a hurry and that another person should take as much time as he or she needs

* - I'll have the report finished and on your desk first thing tomorrow morning.

- No rush. Take your time. I don't need it until the end of the week.



ESL Podcast 559 – Ending a Restaurant Meal

COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

1. What does the server mean when she asks, “Can I clear these plates?”
 - a) She wants to know whether she can eat the uneaten food.
 - b) She wants to know whether she can take the plates home.
 - c) She wants to know whether they’re finished eating.

 2. What does Alvin mean when he says, “I’m stuffed”?
 - a) He can’t eat any more food.
 - b) He doesn’t like the food there.
 - c) He’s on a diet and can’t have dessert.
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WHAT ELSE DOES IT MEAN?

to be out of (one’s) way

The phrase “to be out of (one’s) way” means to not be in a place where one interferes with what another person wants to do, or to not block or fill the space that one needs to use for something else: “Can you get all that stuff out of my way? There isn’t enough room on the counter to cook.” The phrase “to be in (someone’s) way” means to be using the space that another person needs, or to be blocking the path that someone wants to take: “I can’t turn right, because that other car is in my way.” The phrase “to be out of (one’s) way” also means to be in a very inconvenient location, far from where one was planning to go: “We hardly ever go to the new park, because it’s really out of our way.”

check

In this podcast, the word “check” means a bill, or a small piece of paper showing what one ordered at a restaurant, how much each item cost, and the total amount of money owed. A “personal check” is a small, rectangular piece of paper used to transfer money from a personal bank account to another person or business: “Can I write a personal check to cover our check, or do you take credit cards?” A “check” is also an examination or review of something: “Every month, the school organizes a locker check to look for hidden drugs.” Finally, the phrase “to keep (something) in check” means to keep something under control without letting it get worse: “Do you think we’ll be able to keep the water damage in check until the plumber arrives?”



ESL Podcast 559 – Ending a Restaurant Meal

CULTURE NOTE

Most American restaurants and “diners” (informal restaurants) have similar items on their dessert menu. For example, most dessert menus include apple “pie,” which is a dessert made with a round piece of thin, sweet bread filled with sweet fruit and sometimes covered with another piece of the round, sweet bread. Other “flavors” (tastes) of pie are also common, such as pumpkin pie and banana cream pie, but apple pie is probably the most common. There is even a phrase, “as American as apple pie,” used to describe things that are characteristic of the United States. If the pie is served “*a la mode*,” it is served warm with ice cream.

Chocolate cake is also very common, as are “brownies” (small pieces of dense or heavy chocolate cake). These are often covered in “frosting” (a sweet, colored substance put on top of cookies and cakes for decoration) and sometimes have nuts.

“Cheesecake” is made like a pie, but the “filling” (the part on the inside) is made from cream cheese and sugar. Cheesecake is very “rich” (very creamy and with a lot of calories) and comes in many flavors, like strawberry cheesecake and raspberry cheesecake.

Most restaurants also offer a small bowl of ice cream or a “sundae” (ice cream covered with sauces, nuts, and cherries) as part of their dessert menu.

Some restaurants have begun offering dessert “shooters,” where a very small “portion” (serving size; amount for one person) is served in a “shot glass” (a very small glass, normally used for measuring or drinking liquor). That way, “diners” (people who eat at a restaurant) can enjoy dessert without spending a lot of money or worrying about all the extra calories.

Comprehension Questions Correct Answers: 1 – c; 2 – a



ESL Podcast 559 – Ending a Restaurant Meal

COMPLETE TRANSCRIPT

Welcome to English as a Second Language Podcast number 559: Ending a Restaurant Meal.

This is English as a Second Language Podcast episode 559. I'm your host, Dr. Jeff McQuillan, coming to you from the Center for Educational Development in beautiful Los Angeles, California.

Our website is eslpod.com. If you enjoy these podcasts, consider making a small donation to us, or even better, becoming a member of ESL Podcast. Go to our website for more information.

This dialogue is about someone who is in a restaurant, and they want to leave the restaurant. So it will describe common vocabulary and phrases you use when you are done eating and want to leave. Let's get started.

[start of dialogue]

Server: Can I clear these plates and get them out of your way?

Alvin: Sure, we're all done. Can I get the rest of that in a doggie bag?

Server: No problem. I'll wrap it up for you. Is there anything else I can get you? Did you leave room for dessert? How about some coffee or tea?

Alvin: No, I'm stuffed. Just the check for me, thanks.

Server: Sure, coming right up.

...

Server: Here's your check. I'll take that when you're ready.

Alvin: Do you accept personal checks?

Server: No, I'm afraid we don't.

Alvin: How about credit cards?

Server: Yes, we do accept credit cards.

Alvin: Here's my Discover card.



ESL Podcast 559 – Ending a Restaurant Meal

Server: Oh, we don't accept that one.

Alvin: Okay, here's my American Express.

Server: Sorry, but we don't take that one either. We only accept Visa or MasterCard.

Alvin: I don't have a Visa or MasterCard.

Server: We also accept cash, of course.

Alvin: I don't have any cash on me. Is there an ATM nearby?

Server: There's one about three blocks away, but you'll need to leave something with us so we know you're not running out on the check.

Alvin: How about my doggie bag?

Server: How about your cell phone or your driver's license?

Alvin: Okay, here's my cell phone. I'll be back ASAP.

Server: No rush. I'll be right here making a few calls to Bora Bora.

[end of dialogue]

The "server," the person who works for the restaurant that brings you your food and asks you what you want to eat, says to Alvin, "Can I clear these plates and get them out of your way?" "To clear the plates" means to take dirty plates away from the table after people have finished eating. In American restaurants it's common for the server – the waiter – or someone else, usually someone we would call the "busboy" (busboy – one word) to come and ask you if you are done eating, and then take your plates away from you even though you are still sitting at the table. This isn't done in every country, but it is done, very commonly, here in the U.S. at both good restaurants – expensive restaurants and cheap ones. The server asks, "Can I clear these plates and get them out of your way?" "To get something out of (one's) way" means no longer in front of you, no longer blocking or taking up a space. This expression can have other meanings also; take a look at the Learning Guide for additional explanations.



ESL Podcast 559 – Ending a Restaurant Meal

Alvin says, “Sure (meaning yes), we’re all done (we’re all finished). Can I get the rest of that in a doggie bag?” Alvin is asking the server if he can get the rest of his food, the food that he didn’t finish on his plate, put in a small bag or container so he can take it home with him and eat it later. That bag or container is called a “doggie (doggie) bag.” “Doggie” is another word for a dog. The idea is that you would take it home, perhaps, and give it to your dog. But most people actually take it home to eat it themselves, so we use that expression even if you don’t have a dog. This is a custom that is quite different from many countries. Many countries do not have the custom of taking the food that you did not finish at a restaurant home with you, but in the United States it’s very common, again, at both inexpensive and expensive restaurants.

The server says, “No problem. I’ll wrap it up for you.” “To wrap (wrap) (something) up” means to put something into a box, or to wrap it in plastic to protect it so you can use it later. We might also say “to package (something).” So the waiter is going to put the food – the extra food that Alvin wants into a bag. She says, “Is there anything else I can get you?” This is a common question at the end of a meal for the waiter to ask. “Did you leave room for dessert?” the waiter asks. “To leave room for (something)” means to still have space for something; in this case do you have space in your stomach for more food. It’s a common way of waiters asking, “Did you leave room for dessert?” Of course, the waiter wants you to buy dessert; he’s trying to - or *she* is trying - to sell you more food. “How about some coffee or tea?” Alvin says, “No, I’m stuffed.” “To be stuffed” (stuffed) is an informal expression meaning I’m very full; I’ve eaten too much really. Alvin says, “Just the check for me, thanks.” Alvin is asking for the waiter to bring the bill – to bring the check. “Check” has many other meanings in English. Once again, you’ll find those in the Learning Guide.

The server says, “Sure, coming right up.” The expression, especially in a restaurant, “coming right up” means it will be here very soon, in a very short amount of time. The server comes back and says, “Here’s your check. I’ll take that when you’re ready,” meaning I’ll take your money or your credit card when you are ready to give it back to me. Alvin says, “Do you accept personal checks?” Here, the word “check” doesn’t mean the bill; it means a piece of paper that has your name on it and your bank’s name on it that you sign and give to someone, just like you would give them money. So, a check represents money that you are giving this person. The person, then, takes the check and puts it in his or her own bank, and the two banks will transfer the money over. However most restaurants, at least in big cities nowadays, do not accept personal checks.

The server says, “No, I’m afraid we don’t.” “I’m afraid” is just a polite way of telling someone something perhaps they won’t like. “I’m afraid we don’t accept



ESL Podcast 559 – Ending a Restaurant Meal

personal checks,” the waiter is saying. Alvin says, “How about credit cards?” “Credit cards,” like Visa, MasterCard, American Express, are small pieces of plastic that you give to someone when you want to buy something. They, then, will take the money from the credit card company, and later you have to pay the money back to the credit card company – at least you supposed to; not everyone does!

The server says, “Yes, we do accept credit cards.” Alvin says, “Here’s my Discover card.” Discover is another kind of credit card, like a Visa and MasterCard, but not a very popular one. The server says, “Oh, we don’t accept that one.” Alvin says, “Okay, here’s my American Express.” Well, many businesses accept American Express, but not as many as Visa and MasterCard. So, this is a restaurant that does not accept American Express. The server says, “Sorry, but we don’t take that one either,” meaning we don’t accept that one; you can’t use it to pay for your bill. “We only accept Visa and MasterCard.” Alvin says, “I don’t have a Visa or MasterCard.” Now, Alvin is probably a little stupid, because if you live in the United States, and you want to use a credit card, you should always have either a Visa or a MasterCard because you should know many businesses do not accept Discover or American Express.

The server says, “We also accept cash, of course.” Actual money that you give someone is “cash.” Alvin says, “I don’t have any cash on me,” meaning I don’t have any cash with me in my wallet. “Is there an ATM nearby (is there an ATM close to here)?” An “ATM” is an automated teller machine. It’s a machine that you can get money out of from your bank account, any time of the day or night typically.

The server says, “There’s one about three blocks away, but you’ll need to leave something with us so we know you’re not running out on the check (or your check).” “To run out on the check” means to leave a restaurant without paying. You go, you eat, and then you leave and you don’t pay for it. Of course, that’s stealing; you’re stealing their food. We use this expression, however, “to run out on,” perhaps because sometimes people actually get up and run out of the restaurant so that they don’t have to pay. I don’t recommend that, by the way!

The server then asks Alvin to leave something with them so that they know he will come back. Alvin says, “How about my doggie bag (how about the rest of the food that I ate)?” Of course, that’s not really going to make you come back necessarily, so the server says, suggesting something else, “How about your cell phone or your driver’s license?” Someone will definitely come back for their driver’s license or cell phone. Alvin says, “Okay, here’s my cell phone.” He gives



ESL Podcast 559 – Ending a Restaurant Meal

it to the waiter – the server. He says, “I’ll be back ASAP.” “ASAP” means as soon as possible, as quickly as you can.

The waiter says, “No rush.” “No rush” means don’t hurry; it’s an informal expression; take your time, take all the time you need. The server then tries to make a joke, “I’ll be right here making a few phone calls to Bora Bora.” “Bora Bora” is a small French Island about halfway between the United States and Australia; it’s in the middle of the Pacific Ocean. Bora Bora is considered a very far away place. The joke is that the waiter is going to his cell phone in order to make these phone calls because, presumably, the phone call would be expensive. Although nowadays, you can just talk to someone on the Internet and it’s free, so you probably don’t need to spend a lot of money. But the waiter is using it as a joke; Bora Bora simply represents a far away place.

Now let’s listen to the dialogue, this time at a normal speed.

[start of dialogue]

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Server: No problem. I’ll wrap it up for you. Is there anything else I can get you? Did you leave room for dessert? How about some coffee or tea?

Alvin: No, I’m stuffed. Just the check for me, thanks.

Server: Sure, coming right up.

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ESL Podcast 559 – Ending a Restaurant Meal

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Alvin: How about my doggie bag?

Server: How about your cell phone or your driver's license?

Alvin: Okay, here's my cell phone. I'll be back ASAP.

Server: No rush. I'll be right here making a few calls to Bora Bora.

[end of dialogue]

The person who wrote the script for this episode would never run out on a check, Dr. Lucy Tse.

From Los Angeles, California, I'm Jeff McQuillan. Thanks for listening. Come back to listen to us next time, but no rush, on ESL Podcast.

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