

# What Kind of Service is Right for my Guests?

By Nancy Trigg, Arryved



**The country is starting to reopen, but things aren't going back to "normal" anytime soon. Adaptation is the name of the game and implementing a floating service model maintains a top level of hospitality while keeping staff and guests safe.**

As states and municipalities reopen their economies, many regulations remain in place for the safety of employees and patrons. There are restrictions on party sizes, table spacing, mask-wearing, and more\*. Many of these restrictions are forcing businesses to change their service models—but where do you begin? In this article, we make an argument for floating service as the ideal solution to cope with these new realities.

*\*Check out your local jurisdiction to get details relevant for your business.*



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## Floating Service / Table Service / Counter Service

To understand Floating Service, let's look at the other two most common service models first: Counter and Table Service.

Most taprooms and smaller craft establishments utilize **Counter Service**: guests approach the bar, counter, or window to place their order and receive their items with a limited number of staff required to help them. Bartenders rarely come to the table to take orders. The primary benefit of counter service is reduced cost, and restriction of operations to a centralized location. However, it is the service model most prone to long wait times and can lead to smaller spend per guest compared to other options. Counter service tipping is typically a tip pooling system with a shared pool split evenly between all behind the bar staff. If implementing counter service you could add a little service flare with flags or buzzers and numbers so you can call folks up to get their order or have runners take them out for you during busy times.

The other prevailing service model is **Table Service**, in which a host seats the guest, a server takes orders tableside, a runner delivers orders to the table, and a busser clears the table—a full service operation. However, staffing a table service model can be more costly than many craft establishments can afford, especially if they're accustomed to utilizing counter service. Having staff available at all times to facilitate full table service requires attention to your hourly sales once open, to understand how many and how often, your duplicate staff is

needed. Table service can lead to longer visits by guests and higher tab sizes, but be careful that your staffing costs do not creep up so high as to negate the benefits of the additional spend. Table service tipping is traditionally a single staff/tip model, sometimes with a percentage paid out to support and kitchen staff. However, many establishments are moving to tip pooling, even with table service, to encourage all staff to help and support all customers.

**Floating Service** is the happy medium between Counter and Table. In a floating service model, your staff is empowered to flex through different roles—from bar to floor. Guests are seated at tables and staff come to them (much like in table service). Floating service could also allow a floating server to seat guests at tables while a bartender pours orders behind the bar and the floating server runs the drinks. However you decide to consolidate roles, the key is that you're minimizing movement and congregation while keeping service costs low. Without deploying the entire staff, a taproom could run seamlessly with this semi-table service or Floating Service model. You can also implement this only on days you tend to have crowds and lines and keep your staffing lower on slow days. Floating service usually is accompanied by a tip pooling system, sometimes with tip point and weighted percentages for different roles.

There are a multitude of ways floating service can be implemented. For very small establishments, floating service could be possible with just one employee. Or you could utilize two employees: one behind the bar, another floating on the floor, working in conjunction but staying in their own zones. For larger establishments, try consolidating staff, making a group of server-bussers and bartender-runners. Your server-bussers roam the floor taking orders on Arryved Service and clearing tables, while bartender-runners focus on pouring and delivering drinks. The point is to prevent beer tenders from standing behind a bar when they could be engaging with guests, and to prevent guests from leaving before having that 'one more beer'. Guests' minds will be blown when their drinks arrive while the server-busser is still at the table! This is just one possible solution to utilize floating service in a larger business.

## Why floating service?

Floating service creates a great opportunity to continue creating connections with your guests. Having your owners, or brewers occasionally taking orders tableside can connect your guests to your establishment in a special way, as the guests feel specifically catered to in a way they might not if they just walk up to the bar to get their beverages. The conversation that happens in a tableside context helps servers get to know their guests, which then creates authentic touchpoints for upselling. When guests share their favorite style of beer

or their preferred cocktail, servers can use that knowledge to better suggest options and add on elements to the experience, like tasters of the newest beverage on tap. Tableside conversation also gives servers the opportunity to educate their guests: about the brewing process, the history of a particular dish or drink, or the story of your business. The personal touch enhances the hospitality experience and generates “contagious loyalists”: guests who will return again and again, and spread the word of your hospitality greatness among their friends and family.

Floating service also gives staff a great opportunity to talk about loyalty and engagement programs. Servers can build lasting connections by encouraging guests to become an insider and earn rewards for their valued patronage. The next time that guest decides to venture out, they’ll have a specific reason to visit you!

Amidst the overwhelming changes happening every day, we recognize that flexing your service model might feel intimidating. That’s totally okay! But ultimately, we see customers thriving with a floating service model: it will grow your business, empower your staff, and enhance your guest experience. And it highlights the hospitality that the craft industry is all about!

*Content Provided by Nancy Trigg - President & CGO of Arrayved.*

*Arrayved is a Point of Sale solution for the Craft Industry. Everything you need to serve up a great customer experience, both on premise and online. [www.Arrayved.com](http://www.Arrayved.com)*



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