

# Spanish for Restaurant Workers

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150 Essential Phrases for Restaurants & Food Service

Front of House | Serving | Kitchen | Bar

150 Spanish phrases with pronunciation guides

8 restaurant categories organized by shift flow

Cultural guide to dining customs across Latin America & Spain

Quick-reference cards for servers and kitchen staff

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# How to Use This Workbook

This workbook gives you 150 Spanish phrases organized by the flow of a restaurant shift: greeting and seating guests, taking orders, explaining menu items, handling dietary restrictions, managing complaints, processing payments, communicating with the kitchen, and closing procedures.

Each phrase includes the Spanish, English translation, pronunciation guide, and a note on when to use it. The cultural tips section covers dining customs, tipping norms, and how small language efforts improve tips and guest satisfaction.

How to use: Pick one section per shift. Practice 3-4 phrases before each service. Within two weeks, you'll handle most Spanish-speaking tables with confidence.

## Pronunciation Guide

|             |                        |
|-------------|------------------------|
| 'a'         | = ah (like father)     |
| 'e'         | = eh (like bet)        |
| 'i'         | = ee (like see)        |
| 'o'         | = oh (like go)         |
| 'u'         | = oo (like boot)       |
| 'h'         | = always silent        |
| 'j'         | = strong h (like loch) |
| 'll'        | = y sound (like yes)   |
| 'n (tilde)' | = ny (like canyon)     |
| 'rr'        | = rolled r             |

## 1. Greeting & Seating Guests (20 phrases)

### Buenos días / Buenas tardes / Buenas noches

Good morning / afternoon / evening

*[use when Greeting the guest]*  
[see when Greeting the guest] BUH-nahs TAHR-dehs / BWEH-nahs NOH-chehs]

### Cuántas personas son?

How many in your party?

*[use when first question when guests arrive]*  
[see when first question when guests arrive]

### Tiene reservación?

Do you have a reservation?

*[use when checking for booking]*  
[see when checking for booking]

### A que nombre esta la reservación?

Under what name is the reservation?

*[use when looking up a reservation]*  
[see when looking up a reservation]

### Enseguida les preparamos una mesa

We'll prepare a table for you right away

*[use when taking their order]*  
[see when taking their order]

### La espera es de aproximadamente [X] minutos

The wait is approximately [X] minutes

*[use when estimating wait time]*  
[see when estimating wait time]

### Quiere esperar en el bar mientras tanto?

Would you like to wait at the bar?

*[use when offering bar while waiting]*  
[see when offering bar while waiting]

### Por aquí, por favor -- su mesa esta lista

This way, please -- your table is ready

*[use when escorting to table]*  
[see when escorting to table]

### Prefiere una mesa adentro o en la terraza?

Do you prefer a table inside or on the patio?

*[use when seating preferences]*  
[see when seating preferences]

### Quiere una mesa cerca de la ventana?

Would you like a table near the window?

*[use when making table request]*  
[see when making table request]

### Su mesero/a vendrá en un momento

Your server will be with you in a moment

*[use when after seating]*  
[see when after seating]

### Aquí tiene el menú

Here is the menu

*[use when handing over menu]*  
[see when handing over menu]

### Tenemos menú en español si lo prefiere

We have a Spanish menu if you prefer

*[use when offering Spanish menu]*  
[see when offering Spanish menu]

### Los especiales de hoy están en la pizarra

Today's specials are on the board

*[use when pointing to board]*  
[see when pointing to board]

### Puedo empezar con las bebidas?

Can I start you off with drinks?

*[use when offering drinks first]*  
[see when offering drinks first]

### Que les gustaría tomar?

What would you like to drink?

*[use when taking drink order]*  
[see when taking drink order]

### Tenemos una excelente seleccion de vinos

We have an excellent wine selection

~~[use when wine is mentioned]~~  
[see when wine is mentioned-seh-LEHN-teh seh-lehk-see-OHN deh VEE-nohs]

### Quiere ver la carta de vinos?

Would you like to see the wine list?

~~[use when offering wine list]~~  
[see when offering wine list-tah deh VEE-nohs]

### Con gas o sin gas?

Sparkling or still?

~~[use when asking preference]~~  
[see when asking preference]

### Enseguida regreso con sus bebidas

I'll be right back with your drinks

~~[use when leaving to get drinks]~~  
[see when leaving to get drinks-oh kohn soos beh-BEE-dahs]

## 2. Taking Orders (20 phrases)

### Estan listos para ordenar?

Are you ready to order?

*[Use when ordering a meal]*  
[Estahn SEE-goh-deh NAHR]

### Ya saben que quieren o necesitan mas tiempo?

Do you know what you'd like or need more time?

*[Use when checking readiness]*  
[Yah sahn oh neh-seh-SEE-tahn mahs tee-EHM-poh]

### Tomese su tiempo -- no hay prisa

Take your time -- there's no rush

*[Use when there's no time pressure]*  
[Tohmeh-neh prisa ee EHM-poo-ah oh eye PREE-sah]

### Que le gustaria de plato principal?

What would you like for your main course?

*[Use when making a main course order]*  
[Que leh goos-tah-ree-ah PLAH-toh preen-see-PAHL]

### Y de entrada/aperitivo?

And for a starter/appetizer?

*[Use when ordering an appetizer]*  
[Eh-deh-ah-ah-tee-ree-TEE-voh]

### Alguna preferencia de como quiere la carne?

Any preference on how you'd like the meat cooked?

*[Use when asking for meat preferences]*  
[Al-goo-nah-see-ah deh KOH-moh kee-EH-reh lah KAHR-neh]

### Termino medio, tres cuartos, o bien cocida?

Medium, medium-well, or well done?

*[Use when ordering meat options]*  
[Ter-mee-oh-oh, trehs KWAAH-tohs, oh byehn koh-SEE-dah]

### Le gustaria probar nuestra especialidad de la casa?

Would you like to try our house specialty?

*[Use when suggesting a specialty]*  
[Leh goos-tah-ree-ah NWEHS-trah ehs-peh-see-ah-lee-DAHD]

### Viene con ensalada o sopa -- cual prefiere?

It comes with salad or soup -- which do you prefer?

*[Use when offering choices]*  
[Vee-nee-SAH-lah-oh SOH-pah -- kwahl preh-fee-EH-reh]

### Que guarnicion le gustaria?

What side dish would you like?

*[Use when offering side dish options]*  
[Que ghooos-tah-REE-ah]

### Quiere algo mas con eso?

Would you like anything else with that?

*[Use when offering additional items]*  
[Que-ah-ah-oh EH-soh]

### Perfecto -- voy a repetir su orden para confirmar

Perfect -- let me repeat your order to confirm

*[Use when repeating an order]*  
[Per-fect soo ohr-DEHN PAH-rah kohn-feer-MAHR]

### Empiezo con las entradas y luego los platos fuertes

I'll start with appetizers and then the mains

*[Use when ordering a sequence of dishes]*  
[Ehm-TRAH-dahs ee LWEH-goh loh PLAH-tohs FWEHR-tehs]

### Prefiere que salgan todos los platos juntos?

Do you prefer all dishes come out together?

*[Use when asking about timing]*  
[Preh-fee-ah-oh loh PLAH-tohs HOON-tohs]

### El plato lleva [ingrediente] -- esta bien?

The dish contains [ingredient] -- is that ok?

*[Use when checking an ingredient]*  
[El-PAH-loh ehs-TAH bee-EHN]

### Se lo puedo pedir sin [ingrediente] si prefiere

I can order it without [ingredient] if you prefer

*[Use when offering a modification]*  
[Seh leh-tee-ah-oh see preh-fee-EH-reh]

### La porcion es grande -- alcanza para compartir

The portion is large -- enough to share

[Use phrase: Portion is large] PAHN-deh -- ahl-KAHN-sah PAH-rah kohm-pahr-TEER]

### Quiere que le recomiende algo?

Would you like me to recommend something?

[Use phrase: Offering recommendation] PAHN-deh AHL-goh]

### Es uno de nuestros platos mas populares

It's one of our most popular dishes

[Use phrase: Popular dishes] PAH-tohs mahs poh-poo-LAH-rehs]

### Excelente eleccion -- es mi favorito tambien

Excellent choice -- it's my favorite too

[Use phrase: Positive reinforcement] PAHN -- ehs mee fah-voh-REE-toh tahm-bee-EHN]

### 3. Explaining Menu Items (20 phrases)

#### Este plato es típico de [region/pais]

This dish is typical of [region/country]

~~[Use when Regional context]~~  
[USE WHEN Regional context] EE-pee-koh deh...]

#### Lleva [ingredientes] -- como una especie de [descripcion]

It has [ingredients] -- kind of like a [description]

~~[Use when Describing unfamiliar dish]~~  
[USE WHEN Describing unfamiliar dish] PEH-see-eh deh...]

#### El sabor es [picante/suave/dulce/salado/ácido]

The flavor is [spicy/mild/sweet/salty/sour]

~~[Use when Flavor profile]~~  
[USE WHEN Flavor profile] KAHN-teh / SWAH-veh / DOOL-seh]

#### Se prepara al horno / a la parrilla / frito / al vapor

It's baked / grilled / fried / steamed

~~[Use when Cooking method]~~  
[USE WHEN Cooking method] -noh / ah lah pah-RREE-yah / FREE-toh / ahl vah-POHR]

#### Lleva una salsa de [ingrediente] por encima

It has a [ingredient] sauce on top

~~[Use when Sauce description]~~  
[USE WHEN Sauce description] deh... pohr eh-SEE-mah]

#### Es una receta tradicional de la familia

It's a traditional family recipe

~~[Use when Family recipe]~~  
[USE WHEN Family recipe] dee-see-oh-NAHL deh lah fah-MEE-lee-ah]

#### El arroz viene como guarnición

The rice comes as a side

~~[Use when Side clarification]~~  
[USE WHEN Side clarification] KOH-moh gwahr-nee-see-OHN]

#### Puede elegir entre papas fritas, pure, o verduras

You can choose between fries, mashed potatoes, or vegetables

~~[Use when Side options]~~  
[USE WHEN Side options] EHN-treh PAH-pahs FREE-tahs, poo-REH, oh vehr-DOO-rah]

#### El plato es para una persona / para compartir

The dish is for one person / to share

~~[Use when Portion info]~~  
[USE WHEN Portion info] H-rah OO-nah pehr-SOH-nah / PAH-rah kohm-pahr-TEER]

#### Es picante? ¿Que tan picante es?

Is it spicy? How spicy is it?

~~[Use when Spicy description]~~  
[USE WHEN Spicy description] pee-KAHN-teh ehs]

#### Es picante pero no demasiado -- pica un poquito

It's spicy but not too much -- just a little kick

~~[Use when Mild spicy]~~  
[USE WHEN Mild spicy] deh-mah-see-AH-doh]

#### Puedo pedir que lo hagan menos picante

I can ask them to make it less spicy

~~[Use when Spicy adjustment]~~  
[USE WHEN Spicy adjustment] toh AH-gahn MEH-nohs pee-KAHN-teh]

#### La carne es de res / cerdo / pollo / cordero

The meat is beef / pork / chicken / lamb

~~[Use when Meat identification]~~  
[USE WHEN Meat identification] SEHR-doh / POH-yoh / kohr-DEH-roh]

#### El pescado del día es [tipo] -- fresco, llegó esta mañana

Today's fish is [type] -- fresh, arrived this morning

~~[Use when Fresh fish]~~  
[USE WHEN Fresh fish] DEE-ah ehs... -- FREHS-koh, yeh-GOH EHS-tah mah-NYAH-nah]

#### El postre más pedido es el [nombre]

The most-ordered dessert is the [name]

~~[Use when Dessert recommendation]~~  
[USE WHEN Dessert recommendation] ehs ehl...]

#### Lleva chocolate, crema batida, y nueces

It has chocolate, whipped cream, and nuts

~~[Use when Dessert description]~~  
[USE WHEN Dessert description] KREH-mah bah-TEE-dah, ee NWEH-sehs]

### El cafe es de origen [pais] -- muy suave

The coffee is from [country] -- very smooth

~~Use when:~~ Coffee origin-REE-hehn... -- mwee SWAH-veh]

### Tenemos cerveza artesanal local -- muy recomendada

We have local craft beer -- highly recommended

~~Use when:~~ Craft beer offer-sah ahr-teh-sah-NAHL loh-KAHL]

### El coctel de la casa lleva [licor], [mezclador], y [toque]

The house cocktail has [liquor], [mixer], and [touch]

~~Use when:~~ Cocktail explanation YEH-vah...]

### Todo se prepara al momento -- tarda unos [X] minutos

Everything is made to order -- it takes about [X] minutes

~~Use when:~~ Fresh preparation note-moh-MEHN-toh]

## 4. Dietary Restrictions & Allergies (20 phrases)

### Tiene alguna alergia alimentaria?

Do you have any food allergies?

*[Use When: Allergy Check] ah-LEHR-hee-ah ah-lee-mehn-TAH-ree-ah]*

### Alguien en la mesa es alérgico a algo?

Is anyone at the table allergic to anything?

*[Use When: Group allergy check] ehs ah-LEHR-hee-koh ah-AHL-goh]*

### Soy alérgico/a a [alimento]

I'm allergic to [food]

*[Use When: Personal allergy]*

### Este plato contiene [alérgeno]

This dish contains [allergen]

*[Use When: Allergen warning] -EH-neh...]*

### Que platos no llevan gluten?

Which dishes are gluten-free?

*[Use When: Gluten inquiry] GLOO-tehn]*

### Este plato se puede hacer sin gluten

This dish can be made gluten-free

*[Use When: Gluten modification] -deh ah-SEHR seen GLOO-tehn]*

### Las salsas llevan harina -- puedo pedir las sin harina

The sauces contain flour -- I can order them without flour

*[Use When: Flour in sauces] ah-REE-nah]*

### Tiene opciones vegetarianas?

Do you have vegetarian options?

*[Use When: Vegetarian options] veh-heh-tah-ree-AH-nahs]*

### Que platos son veganos?

Which dishes are vegan?

*[Use When: Vegan dishes] -GAH-nohs]*

### Este plato lleva huevo / lácteos / queso

This dish contains egg / dairy / cheese

*[Use When: Ingredient disclosure] -voh / LAHK-teh-ohs / KEH-soh]*

### Lo puedo preparar sin queso ni crema

I can have it prepared without cheese or cream

*[Use When: Dairy free prep] -RAHR seen KEH-soh nee KREH-mah]*

### Tiene opciones sin lactosa?

Do you have lactose-free options?

*[Use When: Lactose-free inquiry] -seen lahk-TOH-sah]*

### Usamos aceite vegetal -- no mantequilla

We use vegetable oil -- not butter

*[Use When: Butter substitute] veh-heh-TAHL -- noh mahn-teh-KEE-yah]*

### El caldo es de verduras o de carne?

Is the broth vegetable or meat?

*[Use When: Broth type] vehr-DOO-rahhs oh deh KAHR-neh]*

### Este plato lleva frutos secos -- nueces, almendras

This dish contains tree nuts -- walnuts, almonds

*[Use When: Nut warning] -vah FROO-tohs SEH-kohs]*

### Puede ser grave -- contiene mariscos

It could be serious -- it contains shellfish

*[Use When: Shellfish allergy (severe)] -tee-EH-neh mah-REES-kohs]*

### Voy a avisar al chef de su alergia

I'll inform the chef about your allergy

*[use when informing kitchen chef deh soo ah-LEHR-hee-ah]*

### Nuestro menu sin gluten esta aqui

Our gluten-free menu is here

*[use when GF menu is available GLOO-tehn ehs-TAH ah-KEE]*

### Puede comer arroz, verduras, y carnes a la parrilla sin problema

You can safely eat rice, vegetables, and grilled meats

*[use when safe options available RIS, vehr-DOO-rahs, ee KAHR-nehs ah lah pah-RREE-yah]*

### Si tiene una reaccion, diganos inmediatamente

If you have a reaction, tell us immediately

*[use when Emergency protocol ank-see-OHN, DEE-gah-nohs een-meh-dee-ah-tah-MEHN-teh]*

## 5. Handling Complaints (20 phrases)

### Disculpe -- hay un problema con mi plato

Excuse me -- there's a problem with my dish

*[use when opening complaint opening] EH-mah kohn mee PLAH-toh]*

### Lo siento mucho -- que paso exactamente?

I'm very sorry -- what happened exactly?

*[use when opening complaint response] SOH ehk-sahk-tah-MEHN-teh]*

### La comida esta fria

The food is cold

*[use when making complaint] REE-ah]*

### Enseguida se lo caliento / preparo uno nuevo

I'll heat it up / make a new one right away

*[use when making complaint] KAH kah-lee-EHN-toh / preh-PAH-roh OO-noh NWEH-voh]*

### Esto no es lo que yo pedi

This isn't what I ordered

*[use when making complaint] DEE yoh peh-DEE]*

### Disculpe -- voy a verificar su orden inmediatamente

I'm sorry -- let me verify your order immediately

*[use when giving order response] fee-KAHR soo ohr-DEHN]*

### La carne esta demasiado cocida / cruda

The meat is overcooked / undercooked

*[use when making complaint] tah-see-AH-doh koh-SEE-dah / KROO-dah]*

### Con gusto se lo cambio por uno en su punto

I'll gladly replace it with one cooked to your liking

*[use when making complaint] KAHM-bee-oh pohr OO-noh ehn soo POON-toh]*

### Hay un error en la cuenta

There's a mistake on the bill

*[use when making complaint] ehn lah KWEHN-tah]*

### Permitame revisarlo con el gerente

Let me review it with the manager

*[use when escalating bill issue] SAHR-loh kohn ehl heh-REHN-teh]*

### Ya lleva mucho tiempo y no ha llegado nuestra comida

It's been a long time and our food hasn't arrived

*[use when making complaint] EHM-poh ee noh ah yeh-GAH-doh]*

### Voy a la cocina a verificar ahora mismo

I'll go check in the kitchen right now

*[use when checking back] KAH ah veh-ree-fee-KAHR ah-OH-rah MEES-moh]*

### Con todo gusto le ofrezco un postre/cafe por la espera

I'd be happy to offer you a dessert/coffee for the wait

*[use when offering service] yeh oh-FREHS-koh oon POHS-treh]*

### Disculpe -- encuentre algo en mi comida que no deberia estar

Excuse me -- I found something in my food that shouldn't be there

*[use when finding object] EHM-TREH AHL-goh ehn mee koh-MEE-dah]*

### Retiro esto de inmediato y le traigo un plato nuevo

I'll remove this immediately and bring you a new dish

*[use when removing object] ehm-dee-AH-toh ee leh TRY-goh oon PLAH-toh NWEH-voh]*

### El gerente quiere disculparse personalmente

The manager would like to apologize personally

*[use when manager visits] EH-reh dees-kool-PAHR-seh pehr-soh-NAHL-mehn-teh]*

### Esta cuenta no la vamos a cobrar

We won't charge you for this

[Use when Closing a dish] lah VAH-mohs ah koh-BRAHR]

### Acepto sus disculpas -- gracias

I accept your apology -- thank you

[Use when Guest accepting apology] -- GRAH-see-ahs]

### Que puedo hacer para que disfrute su experiencia?

What can I do so you enjoy your experience?

[Use when Expressing guest] H-rah keh dees-FROO-teh soo ehk-speh-ree-EHN-seeah]

### Gracias por su paciencia -- se lo agradecemos mucho

Thank you for your patience -- we really appreciate it

[Use when Closing complaint] lah-see-EHN-seeah -- seh loh ah-grah-deh-SEH-mohs]

## 6. Payment & Tipping (15 phrases)

### La cuenta, por favor

The check, please

[use when: Guest requesting bill]

### Enseguida le traigo la cuenta

I'll bring the check right away

[use when: Responding to bill request]

### Todo junto o por separado?

All together or separate checks?

[use when: Bill splitting]

### Como quieren dividir la cuenta?

How would you like to split the bill?

[use when: Splitting bill]

### Aceptamos efectivo y tarjetas

We accept cash and cards

[use when: Payment method]

### La propina esta incluida?

Is the tip included?

[use when: Asking about gratuity]

### La propina no esta incluida -- es a discrecion

The tip is not included -- it's at your discretion

[use when: Tip not included]

### Se sugiere entre el 15 y 20 por ciento

Between 15-20 percent is suggested

[use when: Suggesting tip range]

### Quiere agregar la propina a la tarjeta?

Would you like to add the tip to the card?

[use when: Tip adding]

### El total con propina es [cantidad]

The total with tip is [amount]

[use when: Final total]

### Puede pagar en dolares o [moneda local]

You can pay in dollars or [local currency]

[use when: Payment options]

### Aqui esta su cambio -- que tenga buen dia

Here's your change -- have a nice day

[use when: Returning change]

### Necesita factura o recibo detallado?

Do you need an invoice or detailed receipt?

[use when: Receipt request]

### Gracias por venir -- los esperamos pronto

Thanks for coming -- we hope to see you soon

[use when: Farewell]

### Fue un placer atenderlos

It was a pleasure serving you

[use when: Farewell]

## 7. Kitchen Communication (20 phrases)

### Sale una mesa de [numero] -- [X] personas

Table [number] is up -- [X] people

~~[Use when Ordering food in kitchen... --... pehr-SOH-nahs]~~  
[Use when Ordering food in kitchen... --... pehr-SOH-nahs]

### Entra una orden -- [plato] sin [ingrediente]

Order coming in -- [dish] without [ingredient]

~~[Use when Modified order]~~  
[Use when Modified order]

### Alergia: [alergeno] -- mesa [numero]

Allergy: [allergen] -- table [number]

~~[Use when Allergy alert]~~  
[Use when Allergy alert]

### El plato sale con papa o con ensalada?

Does the dish come with fries or salad?

~~[Use when Side verification]~~  
[Use when Side verification]

### Urgente -- la mesa [numero] esta esperando

Urgent -- table [number] is waiting

~~[Use when Rush order]~~  
[Use when Rush order]

### Cuanto tiempo para [plato]?

How long for [dish]?

~~[Use when Time check]~~  
[Use when Time check]

### Diez minutos -- ya casi esta

Ten minutes -- it's almost ready

~~[Use when Kitchen On estimate]~~  
[Use when Kitchen On estimate]

### La mesa pide todo junto por favor

The table wants everything together please

~~[Use when Table Food together]~~  
[Use when Table Food together]

### El cliente dice que la carne esta muy cocida

The customer says the meat is overcooked

~~[Use when Food Complaint kitchen]~~  
[Use when Food Complaint kitchen]

### Hay que rehacer [plato] -- venia [problema]

We need to remake [dish] -- it came [problem]

~~[Use when Remake request]~~  
[Use when Remake request]

### Oidos -- voy en eso

Heard -- I'm on it

~~[Use when Kitchen acknowledgment]~~  
[Use when Kitchen acknowledgment]

### Necesito [ingrediente] en la estacion

I need [ingredient] at the station

~~[Use when Ingredient needed]~~  
[Use when Ingredient needed]

### La salsa esta muy salada / muy aguada

The sauce is too salty / too watery

~~[Use when Sauce adjustment]~~  
[Use when Sauce adjustment]

### Falta sal / pimienta / limon

It needs salt / pepper / lemon

~~[Use when Seasoning call]~~  
[Use when Seasoning call]

### La freidora esta a [temperatura] grados

The fryer is at [temperature] degrees

~~[Use when Equipment status]~~  
[Use when Equipment status]

### Se acabo [ingrediente] -- que sugerimos?

We're out of [ingredient] -- what do we suggest?

~~[Use when Item out]~~  
[Use when Item out]

### Sugiramos [sustituto] -- es muy parecido

Let's suggest [substitute] -- it's very similar

~~Use when substituting suggestions~~ [see where substitution-suggestion pah-reh-SEE-doh]

### No olviden la guarnición del plato [numero]

Don't forget the side for dish [number]

~~Use when side is mandatory~~ [see where side mandatory wahr-nee-see-OHN dehl PLAH-toh...]

### El plato va con [guarnición] y [salsa] al lado

The dish goes with [side] and [sauce] on the side

~~Use when giving instructions~~ [see where giving instructions ahl LAH-doh]

### Limpio -- cierro la estación

Clean -- closing the station

~~Use when closing station~~ [see where closing station roh lah ehs-tah-see-OHN]

## 8. Closing Procedures (15 phrases)

### A que hora cierran?

What time do you close?

*[see when closing time]*

### La cocina cierra en [X] minutos -- todavía pueden ordenar

The kitchen closes in [X] minutes -- you can still order

*[see when closing time]*

### Disculpe -- ya cerro la cocina

I'm sorry -- the kitchen is now closed

*[see when closing time]*

### Todavía tenemos postres y bebidas

We still have desserts and drinks

*[see when closing time]*

### Voy a cerrar mi caja -- necesita algo mas?

I'm going to close out my register -- do you need anything else?

*[see when closing time]*

### Hay que limpiar las mesas del patio

We need to clean the patio tables

*[see when closing time]*

### Las sillas van sobre las mesas para trapear

Chairs go on top of tables for mopping

*[see when closing time]*

### Trapeen debajo de las mesas tambien

Mop under the tables too

*[see when closing time]*

### No olviden apagar las velas y las luces del patio

Don't forget to put out candles and patio lights

*[see when closing time]*

### Dejaron algo -- es de la mesa [numero]?

They left something -- is it from table [number]?

*[see when closing time]*

### Guardemoslo en objetos perdidos

Let's put it in lost and found

*[see when closing time]*

### La basura -- saquenla al contenedor

The trash -- take it out to the dumpster

*[see when closing time]*

### La caja cuadro -- todo bien

The register balanced -- all good

*[see when closing time]*

### Buen trabajo hoy -- nos vemos manana

Good work today -- see you tomorrow

*[see when closing time]*

### Cierren con llave -- hasta manana

Lock up -- see you tomorrow

*[see when closing time]*

### Tipping Across Spanish-Speaking Countries

Mexico: 10-15% is standard. In tourist areas, 15-20% is appreciated. Tips are a significant part of server income. Argentina: 10% is customary, though some upscale restaurants include 'cubierto' (cover charge). Spain: 5-10% is normal -- tipping culture is less aggressive than in the Americas. Locals often round up or leave small change. Colombia: 10% 'propina voluntaria' is often added to the bill -- you can decline but locals rarely do. Chile: 10% suggested, often added automatically. Peru: 10% is standard.

### Meal Timing: When Spanish-Speaking Guests Eat

Spain: Lunch (la comida) is the main meal, typically 2:00-4:00 PM. Dinner (la cena) is late -- 9:00-11:00 PM. A Spanish guest arriving at 6:00 PM for dinner may be confused if the kitchen is not yet serving. Mexico: Lunch is 1:00-3:00 PM, dinner 7:00-9:00 PM. Argentina: Dinner rarely starts before 9:00 PM, often 10:00 PM or later on weekends. Understanding these norms helps you anticipate busy periods and explain kitchen hours clearly.

### The Language-Tip Connection

Multiple restaurant industry studies show that servers who engage Spanish-speaking tables in even basic Spanish see tips increase by 15-25%. The effort signals respect. A server who says 'Buenas noches, bienvenidos' and can explain one dish in Spanish is consistently rated higher than one who stays entirely in English. Guests from Latin America, particularly first-generation immigrants, often express that a Spanish-capable server turns a routine meal into a memorable experience -- and that's what drives repeat visits and word-of-mouth.

### Regional Names for the Same Foods

Be aware that food names change by country. 'Tortilla' in Mexico is a corn/flour flatbread; in Spain it's an egg-and-potato omelette. 'Taco' in Mexico is a filled tortilla; in Spain it can mean a swear word. 'Palta' (Argentina/Chile) = 'aguacate' (Mexico) = avocado. 'Poroto' (Argentina/Chile) = 'frijol' (Mexico) = bean. 'Ají' (South America) = 'chile' (Mexico) = chili pepper. When a guest uses a different word, don't correct them -- just use their term back. It shows cultural awareness.

### Service Pace Expectations

Latin American dining culture often treats meals as social events that should not be rushed. Guests from Mexico or Argentina may spend 2-3 hours at a table and expect courses to be paced leisurely. Rushing them by dropping the check early, clearing plates the moment someone finishes, or hovering can be perceived as rude. In contrast, Spanish guests (from Spain) may want faster lunch service during workdays but relaxed evening meals. When in doubt, ask: 'Prefiere un servicio rapido o mas tranquilo?' This one question resolves most pacing issues.

### Handling Language Gaps Gracefully

When you hit a communication wall, these phrases save the interaction:

- 'Lo siento, estoy aprendiendo' -- I'm sorry, I'm learning
- 'Un momento, voy a buscar a alguien que hable mas espanol' -- One moment, I'll find someone who speaks more Spanish
- 'Puede repetirlo mas despacio, por favor?' -- Can you repeat that slower, please?
- 'Como se dice [word] en espanol?' -- How do you say [word] in Spanish?

Guests almost always respond warmly to a server learning their language. The attempt itself builds rapport -- and rapport builds tips.

## Server Quick Reference

Buenos días/tardes/noches

Cuántas personas?

Algo de tomar?

Están listos para ordenar?

Alguna alergia?

La cuenta, por favor

Todo junto o separado?

Lo siento mucho

Enseguida

Gracias -- hasta luego

Good morning/afternoon/evening

How many in your party?

Something to drink?

Ready to order?

Any allergies?

The check

Together or separate?

I'm very sorry

Right away

Thanks -- see you soon

## Kitchen Quick Reference

Oídos

Urgente

Alergia

Sin [ingrediente]

Rehacer

Falta sal/pimienta

Se acabó [X]

Cuánto tiempo?

Sale con [guarnición]

Limpio -- cierre estación

Heard / acknowledged

Urgent / rush

Allergy

Without [ingredient]

Remake

Needs salt/pepper

We're out of [X]

How long?

Comes with [side]

Clean -- closing station

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### Complete Your Restaurant Spanish Toolkit

Spanish for Restaurant Workers (\$15) -- this workbook

Spanish for Hospitality Workers (\$15) -- hotel & resort phrases

Spanish for Drivers & Transport (\$15) -- shuttle & transport phrases

All available at [templateforge.com](https://www.templateforge.com)