Tipping

撰稿: Karen

"Gosh," I cried after I left the restaurant, "I forgot to leave a tip!"

Being Chinese, I take for granted that I don't need to tip for service in China. In addition to my poor math, I'm just not used to figuring out how much I should pay in total for a meal in America. To avoid that embarrassment, I'd rather shop and cook at home in my own kitchen with my own invention of recipes. No tip needed!

I remember last year when I travelled with my classmates and my teacher to New Orleans; I deliberately brought a calculator with me for fear I would embarrass myself in the go-Dutch scenario. Luckily, my travel mates were more familiar than me with the strategy of adding up and division. In a minute, the result of how much each person should pay was crystal clear. I saved my calculator for the next time, which never came during the trip.

"What will happen if I don't tip the waitress?" I asked, seeking for a making-both-sides-happy solution.

"Huh," my American friend gave me a surprised look, "you'll not get good service next time and it's really bad manners."

"But what if I only dine in that restaurant once?" I argued. "The waitress might never see me again. Does my tipping matter?"

"Yes, you don't want to disrespect others. Frankly, the servers are living on your tips. Unlike the cook, they have a very low salary."

"You see, I'd rather the bill comes with a service charge like the restaurants in China do, so I don't need to figure it out on my own. Plus, isn't tipping voluntary? Is there a law in America that customer must leave a tip?"

"No law restricts it, but tipping has become a custom here. It'd be unusual to not leave a tip in a restaurant."

I guess I can't win the debate. After all, tipping is an unwritten practice in America. I have to tip my server even though at times I have bad service. As unaccustomed as I am to adding sales tax to my purchase, when in America, I must do as the Americans do to tip my waitress.

I rushed back to the restaurant and dropped three dollars at the cashier for my server. 🄯