

The Digital Restaurant

HOW TABLESIDE ORDERING
DRIVES PROFITABILITY





**With a focus on being
exciting and different,
Service Inspired
Restaurants provides
their guests inspired
cuisine and service.
It's why they have 61
restaurants in a diverse
portfolio including Jack
Astor's, Canyon Creek
and more.**

**WITH PLENTIFUL
COMPETITION
AND MORE
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ENOUGH FOR A
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As minimum wages increase and the competitive landscape intensifies, how can we squeeze more out of the customer experience without customers feeling squeezed?

FOR SIR CORP, TWO DECISIVE ON-THE-FLOOR STRATEGIES CREATE BANKABLE EFFICIENCY.

Best known for its 40 Jack Astor's Bar and Grill locations across Canada, Service Inspired Restaurants (SIR Corp.) serves customers with needs as diverse as the geography they operate in. With plentiful competition and more extreme costs, it's not enough for a restaurant to simply show up.

Plenty of operations are what we'd call 'high-juju' environments—box seats for a baseball game, a craft beer market during a jazz festival, or an ocean front patio. When the energy is infused with the magic of a special experience, a cold brew or an iconic dish is essential. As restaurant owners, how can we capitalize on those memorable moments? As minimum wages increase and the competitive landscape intensifies, how can we squeeze more out of the customer experience without customers feeling squeezed?

A Cornell University study explored the impact of tableside ordering and payment. They discovered that the more functionality is brought to the table, the more an operation can pull in during any given shift—and with less effort. The study found that:

- Guests who pay at the table turn over 17% faster, and guests who both pay and order with a mobile device turn over 31% faster
- Guests who pay at the table require 36% less server time, and guests who both order and pay at the table require 65% less server time



THE MINDSET-SHIFT FOR A MORE PROFITABLE PATIO

First, the restaurant freed a focused team of servers from the trap of paper + fixed, indoor terminals. Servers take customers' orders on a tablet that's a fully-functioning terminal in-hand—a tableside link straight to the bar and the kitchen.

Second—and this is a revolution in the flow of food service staffing—servers are there to serve. Not to spend their time dashing back and forth. At SIR Corp restaurants like Jack Astor's, a team of food runners deliver food and drinks from the kitchen to tables outside. Servers are freed-up to focus on conducting business—coordinating orders and taking payments—and to be cheerful, attentive facilitators of great times.

SIR Corp's servers don't just rely on a high-juju advantage. They capitalize on it for higher checks and covers, faster table turns, and more people through the door.




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CONSIDER THE FLOOR OF YOUR OPERATION:

It may be a subtle shift, but consider these key principles of operating a restaurant with staying power in the digital age:

- How do customers choose what they want and ask for it? Is it paper-based? Is it as efficient as it could be?
- How much dead time is embedded in the back-and-forth movement of your servers? What if that dead time were reassigned to make-customers-happy time?
- If you could fit an extra round of guests at each table per night—without servers or customers feeling squeezed—how would that impact your bottom line?

The image shows the interior of a restaurant. The ceiling is a prominent feature, made of a complex, interlocking wooden lattice structure. In the background, a kitchen area is visible with several staff members in white uniforms. In the foreground, several patrons are seated at tables, some looking at their phones. A blue text box is overlaid on the left side of the image.

“Rather than having servers run back and forth to remote terminals, the mobility solution provided a platform where they can stay in their section, provide better guest service and up-sell. It’s made a huge difference. The mobility system allows us to put the right people, in the right place, at the right time.”

—Paul Bognar, President & COO, SIR Corp.

TABLESIDE ORDERING KEEPS SERVERS WHERE THEY BELONG: ON THE FLOOR.

In business, we begin by diagnosing problem areas. Hiccups in movement. But to go even further—to not only trim operational costs but bring in more people and bigger checks—consider shifting your mindset, orienting towards opportunity.

It may be a subtle shift, but consider these key principles of operating a restaurant with staying power in the digital age:

1. ‘Serving’ is not ‘running food’. Serving is being present to lead an experience.

Servers who are back and forth from a patio to a fixed, indoor terminal disappear constantly: to pass along orders, check on ingredients or dish prep with the kitchen, run a credit card, or switch a drink order with the bar. These pockets of vanishing service—multiplied many times by the number of tables in every-server’s section—do more than slow responsiveness

When customers waver—wondering whether or not to order another round, dessert, or the same delicious appetizer they see on the table next door—servers in a paper-based or fixed-terminal establishment are often absent. The window of impulse missed, customers will decide not to bother. Speed of service as well as check size suffers.

Though the to-and-fro looks ‘busy’, it’s a wasted energy that doesn’t add value to the bottom line. When servers respond right away to those open-window moments, guests feel well-tended and check totals are higher.



Eliminate ‘dead’ time so servers can focus where it’s most profitable: on actively serving a larger number of guests with no greater effort.



When servers are more dialled-in, more available, and more effective per-table, they're more incented to do a great job. Everyone, including guests, is happier.

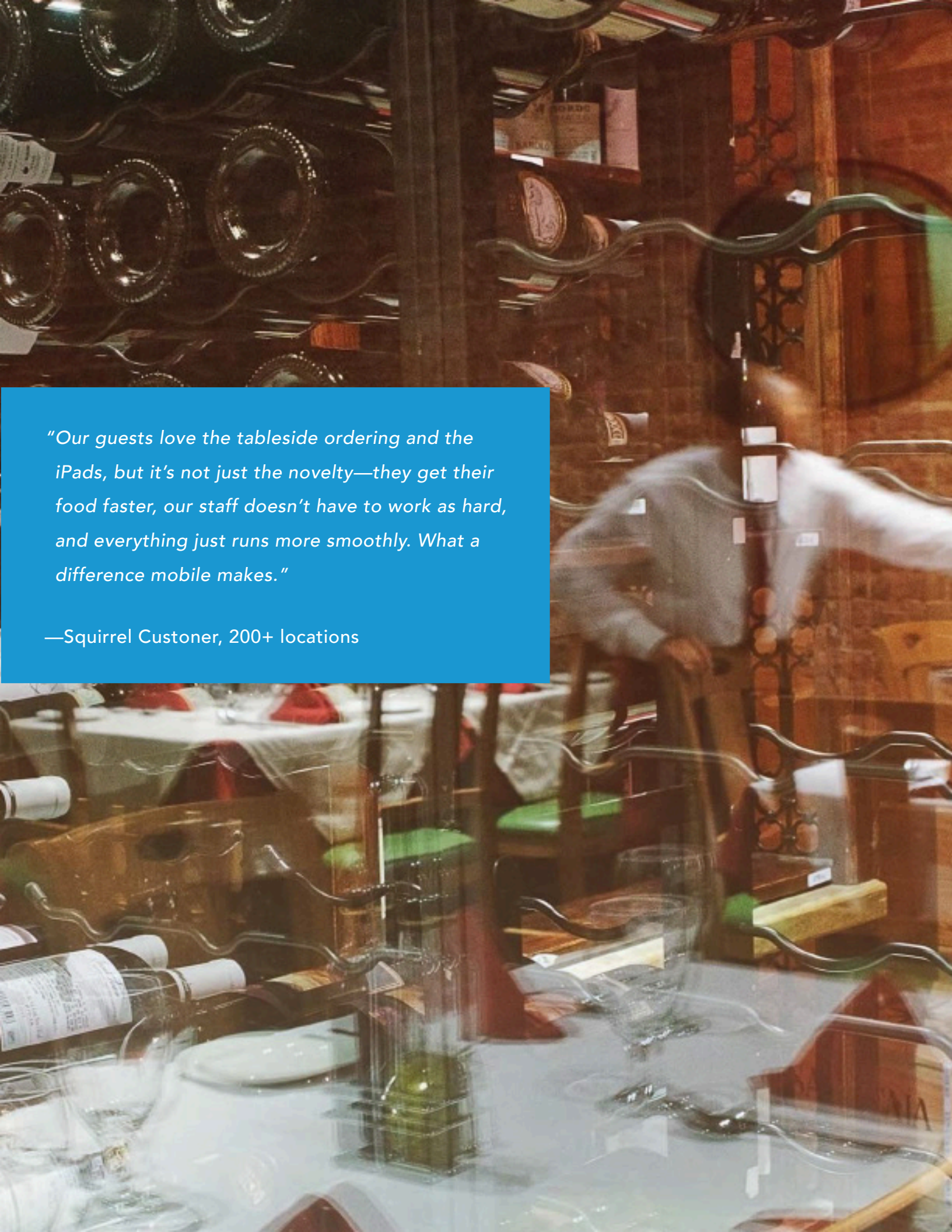
2. Streamline your server roles, so they can be more attentive and make more sales.

The sudden economy of movement servers are afforded thanks to 1) food runners; and 2) tableside ordering means servers are more present, social, and service-oriented. With their tablet, they never have to say "I'll check with the kitchen..."—and be distracted by a half-dozen request on the way there.

A server armed with a complete picture of the approach and ingredients for every dish—nutritional data, pictures, great pairings, specials, and inventory—smooths the way to faster time-to-order, quicker table-turns, and customer happiness.

Beyond improving tables per-server, how about improving orders-per-table? As an operator, the subtle art of turning tables over more quickly is a direct line to volume and revenue for the bottom line with every lunch rush or evening. Even just by one more table per night, one more check. When servers are quicker to respond, guests order more food and drink. Tables turn over faster. This is not just a mandated crunch to 'do more with less', but a capacity boost.



The background image is a photograph of a restaurant interior. On the left, a large, dark wooden wine rack is filled with numerous bottles. In the center-right, a server in a white shirt is blurred, suggesting movement. The foreground shows a table with a white tablecloth, glassware, and a small green vase. The overall atmosphere is warm and professional.

"Our guests love the tableside ordering and the iPads, but it's not just the novelty—they get their food faster, our staff doesn't have to work as hard, and everything just runs more smoothly. What a difference mobile makes."

—Squirrel Customer, 200+ locations

3. With minimum wage going up across the country, restaurants need to find new ways to cover the floor better.



Get beyond reactive cutbacks to change the floor entirely, delivering an experience that delights guests and the bottom line.

The push for a living wage marks a long overdue shift for many restaurants: to step back and consider their often archaic day-to-day flow of serving customers. Before the movement for higher minimum wages, tableside ordering was a nice-to-have. Now, it's a need-to-have.

Servers with tablets—mobile terminals—trim the cost of running a restaurant with no negative impact. As everyone else tries to trim operating costs by reducing portion sizes, hiking prices, limiting kitchen staff, or slowing service, go the other way. Improve profitability per-table, per-shift, and per-server not by offering less food or less attention—cutting corners—but by giving servers the speed, focus, and technology they need to make the guest experience noticeably better.

GETTING STARTED.

When servers first hold a tablet for tableside ordering, they'll recognize it right away. It's the same interface as what's on the terminal—but it's in their hands. There's no need for training, minimal hardware, a simple subscription, and virtually no implementation process beyond us flicking a switch.

1. Start with a test drive.
 2. If you like, begin with just a few tablets so servers can see the benefits and you can experiment with staffing levels and flow. One, two, a dozen. Whatever you like. Tableside ordering is an easy-entry endeavour, not an all-or-nothing scenario.
 3. If you don't already designate food and drink runners, consider a trial period to rearrange the flow on the floor.
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**WITH SQUIRREL,
GET IT DONE.**

WORK SMARTER. STAGE INNOVATION WITH SQUIRREL.

At Squirrel, we've led food + hospitality enterprises to work smarter since the very infancy of the digital age. We understand the impact of rising labour costs on your long-term business viability. We understand the market pressures on all kinds of operations, from high-volume to fine dining or mom-and-pop. And we know how to navigate through it all to a better way.

Imagine no more staff tethered to terminals. Imagine no more running back and forth to tables with handfuls of paper. Imagine a real-time view of the kitchen. With a smooth digital flow for servers and guests, protect the resilience of your business—and not only to survive the difficult times. On the floor, deliver better experiences to self-generate the best of times.

NEXT STEPS

Talk to an expert or try tablets on the floor

With 30+ years of experience with operations like yours, our team can help you build your unique on-the-floor solution to make the most of your staff and delight guests. Let's envision your efficient ordering flow together. We'd be happy to chat with you about how mobility could transform your front-of-house.

Call 1-800-388-6824 to get started.

OUR SERVICE POWERS YOURS.



Squirrel Systems is proud to be celebrating over 30 years as a technology provider to the global hospitality industry. In 1984, Squirrel revolutionized the industry with the first touchscreen restaurant POS system and continues to introduce market leading innovations to help shape the industry. With a proven platform, extensive domain expertise, and industry leading service and support, Squirrel helps food and beverage operators enable amazing guest experiences.



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