

Restaurant & Trattoria Tipping Guide

Restaurants & Trattorias

- **The Rule:** Leave **€1 to €2 per person** for a casual meal, or round up to the nearest €5 or €10 for exceptional service at a nicer dinner.
- **The Math:** A tip should rarely exceed **5% to 10%** of the total bill.
- **Cash is King:** You cannot add a tip to a credit card bill in Italy. Leave your tip in cash on the table or hand it to the server.

Cafes & Bars (Standing vs. Sitting)

- **At the Counter:** If you drink your espresso standing up, leave the small change (e.g., **€0.10 to €0.20**) on the counter next to your receipt.
- **Table Service:** If you sit at a table and receive table service, a small tip is optional but a round-up of **€1 to €2** is plenty.

Decoding Your Restaurant Bill

When your bill arrives, you will often see small surcharges that confuse international travelers.

- **Pane e Coperto (Bread and Cover Charge):** This is a legal, standard fee ranging from **€1.50 to €4.00 per person**. It covers the tablecloth, silverware, and the bread basket. It is applied automatically regardless of whether you eat the bread.
- **Servizio Incluso (Service Included):** Look closely at your menu or bill. If it says servizio incluso, a **10% to 15% service fee** has already been added to the price. In this specific scenario, do not leave any additional tip.

Core Italian Dining Rules

To ensure a seamless, authentic culinary experience, here are a few pointers:

- **Ask for the Check:** A waiter will **never** bring you the bill automatically, as they consider it rude and a sign they are rushing you out. When you are ready, catch their eye and say, "Il conto, per favore" (The bill, please).
- **The Milk Rule:** Italians only drink milk-heavy coffees (like Cappuccino or Caffè Latte) in the morning. Ordering one after 11:00 AM or after a heavy dinner is considered a major faux pas. Stick to Caffè (Espresso) or Caffè Macchiato after noon.
- **Water Preferences:** Water is never served free from the tap. The waiter will ask: "Naturale?" (Still) or "Frizzante?" (Sparkling).

Ordering & Dining

Use these phrases to navigate cafes, trattorias, and that unavoidable restaurant bill.

- **Un tavolo per [due/quattro], per favore** (oon tah-voh-loh pehr doo-eh / kwaht-troh)
– A table for [two/four], please.
- **Vorrei...** (vor-ray) – I would like... (The most polite way to start any order).
- **Un caffè** (oon kahf-feh) – An espresso (If you just ask for "a coffee," you will get a single shot of espresso).
- **Acqua naturale** (ahk-wah nah-too-rah-leh) – Still water.
- **Acqua frizzante** (ahk-wah freets-tsahn-teh) – Sparkling water.
- **Vino della casa** (vee-noh dehl-lah kah-zah) – House wine
(Usually excellent and highly affordable).
- **Salute!** (sah-loo-teh) – Cheers!
- **Il conto, per favore** (eel kohn-toh pehr fah-voh-reh) – The bill, please.
- **Posso pagare con la carta?** (pohs-so pah-gah-reh kohn lah kahr-tah)
– Can I pay with a card?

