**Journalism – Restaurant Review Name \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

Food, food, food. We eat it every day. Sometimes we relish our meals, and other times we barely notice them. Your next writing assignment is to use your senses of sight, taste, and smell to produce a most vivid description of your food.

**YOUR TASK:** Write a review about a meal you have before Monday. Use vivid adjectives and phrases to explain your dining experience. You may eat out, eat in, cook yourself, take out, order at the cafeteria, whatever. The only requirement is that you follow the guidelines provided, and most of all, let us, your Landstown audience taste your meal, too, good or bad! If you are not dining out, substitute “service” for whoever is putting the meal together. Have fun with the assignment! For instance, if your sister is cooking, she’s your chef…

**How to Write a Restaurant Review**

**[from “raining cats and Dogma” < http://dogma.wordherders.net/archives/001474.html>]**

Through our explorations of a variety of reviews, we have come up with the following guidelines for writing a good restaurant review.

1. Audience: Readers of the review want to know whether or not they should go to this restaurant, so they will not want to just hear your opinion of it, they want to feel like they've experienced the restaurant themselves. This plays out in several aspects of the review. Don't forget that different publication sites appeal to different audiences for a food review: a student newspaper, a vegetarian newsletter, and a major metropolitan publication may have overlapping readers, but the priorities for choosing a restaurant change with each.

2. Thesis: the idea of a thesis statement in an academic paper--direct, clear, and positioned according to a specific expectation--is gone here. While most reviews do yield up some statement that might be considered a thesis, it may appear anywhere, or it may be more metaphorically phrased. The central evaluation is instead cumulative, building and changing as each element is reviewed.

3. Organization: Almost all reviews are structured chronologically, mimicking as best as possible the experience of choosing, entering, dining, paying, and considering another visit. They frequently start with the chef's experience, or what used to be in this space, or the neighborhood, or how long this restaurant has been around.   
 They then take you through getting reservations, walking in the door, then welcome you to the ambience: music, decor, lighting, crowd, etc. They may discuss the service, if it is remarkable at this stage, or they'll jump into the menu--appetizers, entrees (at which point the wine list may come up), and desserts. These elements may be considered for price, value, presentation, preparation, freshness, variety, originality, or conceptualization (does cocoa make a good seasoning for venison? for example). The food must comprise the bulk of the review, at least half of the word-count.  
 Other meals served--lunch, brunch, or special events--may come up, and the entire bill may be at issue, and then a wrap-up brings it all together, just like we all do when walking out of a restaurant for the first time. ("Well, that was good!" or "Y'think? I didn't think it was worth the price" etc.) Usually, when done well, the wrap up is stylish, and yet fairly clear in its evaluation of the restaurant.

4. Evidence: Details are as concrete as possible, always relying on a tactile sensation or a specific flavor over empty adjectives like "delicious," "amazing," or "savory." When possible, cite as many prominent ingredients as possible. This way, the audience feels like they know the dish, instead of simply relying on your taste, which we all know is subjective.

5. Your taste: While it is indeed subjective, it appears more through your framing of the details (Is foie gras smooth and velvety, or mushy and slimy?) than through simple evaluations.

6. Style: The best reviews show just a little of the personality of the reviewer--personal favorites might come up, and a bit of creative flair often go over well in moderation. But this is not the place to make your words go off like fireworks.

7. Narrative: Avoid telling a story of your experience. If the goal is to allow the audience to feel as if they are experiencing the restaurant first-hand, just through your words, the reviewer should be as invisible as possible. Narrate a particular experience only if it is both crucial to the review, and an experience unique to a specific incident not likely to be duplicated in your reader's experience.

8. Mechanics:   
 8a. Tense: To accomplish the effects described above, describe the restaurant in the present tense, reserving past tense only to narrate those rare experiences when you as a reviewer become visible.  
 8b. Sentence subjects: use either direct second-person address, ("You enter into . . .), or put the details of the restaurant as the subject, which often requires passive voice (The shrimp is prepared in a . . .).  
 8c. Sentence Structure: Avoid both overly short sentences, as they make the review, and therefore the experience, feel rushed. But similarly avoid overly complex constructions that convolute the central idea, two or three clauses per sentence maximum.  
 8d. Pronouns: when possible, avoid pronoun use, particularly the impulse to call the restaurant and its staff "they," or to refer to an item of food as "it." With all of the details flying about, these pronouns easily lose their antecedents.

Remember, it takes more than just knowledge of food to write a good review. It takes a knowledge of language and your audience.

**Having trouble writing a review?** [from Chef Moz Dining Guide < http://chefmoz.org/review\_guidelines.html>]  
Try answering some of the questions below.

**Food**      What dishes did you try? How was the flavor? The texture? The presentation? Did it arrive hot from the kitchen? How fresh was the food? Was it too spicy, or not spicy enough? Was there something unusual or interesting on the menu that you didn't try? How big were the portions?

**Service**      Was your waiter helpful? Could he answer questions about the menu? Did he make good recommendations? Were plates cleared away quickly? Was your water refilled quickly? Did you ever have trouble attracting your waiter's attention? If something went wrong with your meal, did they handle it appropriately? Did the bill arrive on time? Did you feel rushed?

**Ambiance**      Was the restaurant clean? Did it have a distinctive style or theme? If yes, what? What kind of patrons frequent the place? Was the music too loud? Was there noise from the kitchen? Were the bathrooms clean?

**Other**      How does it compare to other similar restaurants? Did you feel you got a good deal for the price? Would you recommend it to a friend? Would it be good for some special occasion (kid's birthday party, romantic dinner, ...)? Is it a good place to go with a group? Are you somehow connected with the restaurant (owner, employee, relative of owner)? (If you are connected with the restaurant, you must say so in your review.) Would you recommend making reservations?