

# TO TIP OR NOT TO TIP

*Staffer voices her opinion on how restaurants should not use guilt tipping methods to increase profits*

by **rose kanaley**

**W**e all know the moment. You walk into Panera, give the nice soft-smile and polite “how are you?” and order the typical asian sesame salad with chicken and broccoli cheddar soup. Then they turn the screen around.

Select: 15 percent tip, 20 percent tip, 25 percent tip. Of course, there’s also the “no tip” button, but with the employee watching you choose, you feel too guilty to select it.

Even though fast food restaurants don’t serve or clear the food, I somehow always manage to stare deep into the cashier’s hazel eyes, creating a pit in my stomach that forces me to go with “20 percent tip.”

This method of asking for a tip directly in front of the employees is one that makes anyone involved uncomfortable. No one wants to watch or be watched as they choose whether or not to tip. At least if you don’t tip 20 percent at Café Provence, you have the option to run out before they can notice you only left two dollars on the table.

This phenomenon has been called a guilt tipping method. Owners know that customers are most likely to choose to tip their staff if they’re being watched, so it makes them just uncomfortable enough to tip even when they wouldn’t have otherwise. It’s a deceptive trick, and one that earns most restaurants a 37 percent increase in tips, according to Fast Company.

As someone who will easily cave in and say yes (even when people ask for the chem answers for the fourth night in a row with no intent of returning the favor), this method hasn’t exactly been helping my piggy bank.

According to Liz Fielder, a yogurt shop owner in San Francisco, her company had an increase in tipping of over 30 percent after implementing this screen tipping method.

Let’s be clear, I’m not trying to say that people working at fast food restaurants aren’t working hard and earning their pay — we’ve all witnessed the psycho soccer mom lose it at the staff when

receiving pickles on her child’s burger when she’d clearly asked for it without. And yes, when I go to restaurants with family or friends I am always sure to tip at least 20 percent, even if the waiter spills water on me while refilling my glass or yells at me for asking if I’m allowed to order off the kids menu.

It may seem like nothing to some people, but as a girl paying with her babysitting money, \$2 turns into \$30 pretty fast. While I love hearing about my waiter’s plans to get into the house flipping market or how his boyfriend has been seeming a little distant lately as much as the next person, it doesn’t mean that I’m looking to pay an extra half hours worth of the money I earned changing baby Will’s diaper — hard earned money, if you ask me.

And it’s not just tipping for fast food employers — tipping at nice restaurants poses plenty of issues as well.

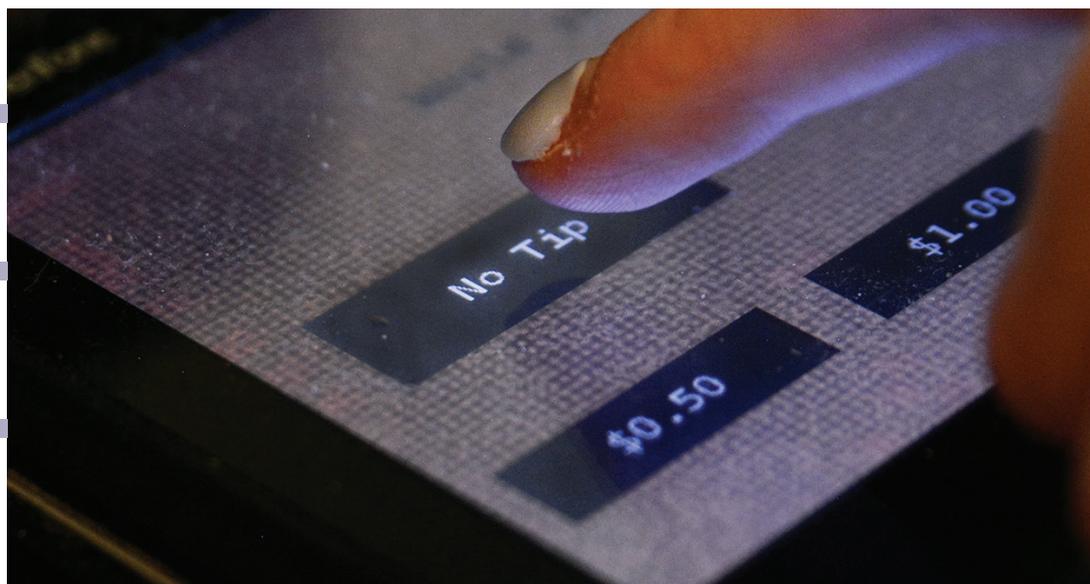
Let’s be real, there are still plenty of people in the U.S. who aren’t going to base their tip off of the quality of the service.

According to “Eater,” tipping can increase racial and gender discrimination, as white males are most often predicted to make more in the position of a waiter than they would a woman or man of any minority.

And with women making up the majority of the industry, at such a low pay they are oftentimes forced to live off of the tips, which can lead to them feeling pressured to tolerate sexual harassment in their workplace.

Call me crazy, but two people working in the same establishment shouldn’t earn different wages because of any characteristic like gender or race. Good service is good service, and that’s all there is to it.

Tipped waiters only have to make \$2.13 per hour, while the federal minimum wage — the lowest amount that fast food workers can make — is \$7.25. Tipped restaurant workers make the rest of their wage through tips.



Not to mention the fact that at certain restaurants, they aren’t serving your food or clearing your table. And while I’m not arguing that they aren’t working hard at their job, I’ll admit that some aren’t exactly putting in an effort to make sure you get the ranch sauce you specifically asked for instead of barbeque, or to even make eye contact with you or to make even the simplest short polite conversation.

I understand why tipping is important, but restaurants in the U.S. use it as a way to get out of paying employees a real wage.

Now maybe fast food workers aren’t making big bucks, but they are making at least minimum wage and they don’t exactly have to worry about relying on their own likeability to make ends meet. They can’t control if you like the food or how long it takes to make it, so they shouldn’t have a salary dependent on this.

The whole tipping system has been messed up since it started in the 19th century, and even Europe has chosen to stop the system altogether — a smart choice, if you ask me.

Should employers really be letting their employees wages be determined by how a 40-year-old woman is feeling about her waiter during her “book club” lunch date with girlfriends?

If a staff’s wage status is really coming down to tips, the employer should be held responsible for paying them more — not the public. If employers were required to keep their wages to an amount they could live off of, tipping wouldn’t be the big deal it is now and we wouldn’t have to be pressured into guilt tipping.

Next time I go pick up my usual order of a kids mac & cheese with bread on the side, I won’t be guilted into pressing the 20 percent tip button.

Because let’s be real — no \$8 mac & cheese meal is worth a \$2 tip.