

Telephone Facts & Figures

Food For Thought: Cell Phones In Restaurants

(NAPS)—According to a recent survey by the National Restaurant Association, 42 percent of adults with cell phones said they have made or received a phone call while dining in a restaurant. However, many people find it hard to enjoy their meals amid the noise of ringing cell phones and the conversations that follow. As a result, an estimated 20 percent of fine-dining restaurants have instituted policies on cell phone usage in their dining rooms.

The problem is that people are often caught between wanting to enjoy a peaceful evening out on the town and wanting to stay in touch, such as with a babysitter at home for safety reasons.

“In today’s culture, cell phones have become ubiquitous, yet most of our patrons come in seeking to get away from the workday world, away from the incessant ringing of the phone,” said Sandy Shea of the Chez Shea restaurant in Seattle. “In an intimate dining-room atmosphere, cell-phone conversations are considered obnoxious and rude.”

At the same time, the convenience factor is an important contributor to cell phone usage. “Consumers seem to have two schools of thought on cell-phone use in restaurants,” said Steven C. Anderson, president and CEO of the National Restaurant Association. “There are a vast number of people who want to stay in touch while visiting with friends at a local bar, just as there are individuals who would like to dine without the interruption of a cell phone ringing. That is why each restaurateur is establishing policies that best suit the needs of his or her customers as well as the establishment.”

Fortunately, new technology is making it possible for people to enjoy the convenience of having and using a cell phone without disturbing the people around them. The “wireless Web” lets consumers communicate via the Internet, with the portability of a cell phone.

For example, MSN Mobile is a highly customizable service that allows users to receive personalized information at specified times. The instant messaging feature lets people receive one-way pages on their cell phone from people including friends, family members, co-workers and babysitters. Plus, with wireless e-mail via



Restaurant owner, Sandy Shea’s menu spells out her no cell-phone policy.

the MSN Hotmail Web-based e-mail service, users can silently exchange information.

Content such as news, sports, weather and stock updates also is available to users of MSN Mobile. In addition, users can access horoscopes, lottery numbers and entertainment news; check flight times; get driving directions; and utilize CitySearch to get information about and purchase tickets for local events.

“People used to stare when I had to make a cell phone call while I was out to dinner, but it is important for me to stay in touch,” said Ryan DeCurtis, Web systems manager for IKON Office Solutions. “With MSN Mobile, on the other hand, I can check my flight status, get the latest info from my office and even check in with my girlfriend, without a ringing phone, and without saying a word.”

Shea agrees that options exist for a solution which satisfies everyone. “Using the wireless Web or even a vibrating alert would keep diners in touch without disturbing others,” Shea said.

There are currently more than 1.5 million users of MSN Mobile. Through relationships between Microsoft Corp. and Nextel Communications, Sprint PCS and Verizon Wireless, the MSN Mobile service is a menu option on more text- and Web-enabled cell phones than any other wireless portal in the United States and Canada and is available on all Web-enabled phones as well as other handheld devices. Users can personalize the information they receive by visiting the MSN Mobile Web site at <http://www.mobile.msn.com> from their computer or directly from their mobile device.

To learn more, visit the Web site at <http://www.mobile.msn.com/>.