

June 19, 2023

Do you want fries with that?

"To consistently exceed member expectations, you need to be obsessed with understanding their needs and constantly finding ways to delight them." - Richard Branson

Members at the member-owned Acacia Golf & Tennis Club enjoy countless amenities including 27 holes of championship golf, a state-of-the-art fitness facility, 25 heated swimming pools, 23 racquet courts, and a world-class dining program compliments of Executive Chef Easton Wielgus. When Mr. and Mrs. Jon Franklin relocated to the lower east side in 1978, they looked at a few different clubs, but decided Acacia was the best fit for their lifestyle and budget.

Over the years Mrs. Franklin has stopped playing golf, but still volunteers her time sitting on the House Committee, participates in the book club, and enjoys eating and drinking with her friends in the main clubhouse dining room. Her favorite item on the menu is a Wagyu beef burger cooked medium-well served with a side of fries. As a matter of fact, Mrs. Franklin was in for lunch yesterday.

"Good afternoon, ma'am. How are you?" asked the hostess.

"I'm fine, thank you. I will be meeting Mrs. Jeffries for lunch. Her son will also be joining us. He's in town for a few days. I thought it would be nice to invite him, too!"

"Yes, of course. Your table is ready. Right this way." Since reservations are required, the hostess was expecting them, had three menus in her hand, and walked Mrs. Franklin to their table, a corner table with a great view of the golf course outside a large picture window.

"Thanks," commented Mrs. Franklin.

"My pleasure. Have a delicious lunch!"

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When Sam, a longtime country club server, approached the table, he already knew what Mrs. Franklin was going to order. “An iced tea with a lemon, Mrs. Franklin?” You could hear the smile on his face in the sound of his voice.

“Yep. It’s hot outside today. An iced tea sounds lovely. Thank you.”

“My pleasure. I’ll be right back.” When Sam returned, he dropped off Mrs. Franklin’s iced tea, 3 glasses of ice water for the table, and some extra freshly sliced lemons.

Shortly thereafter Mrs. Jeffries and her son arrived. They made small talk and when Sam returned to take their order, he already knew what Mrs. Franklin was going to have. “And a Wagyu beef burger for you, ma’am? Cooked medium-well?”

“Yes, that sounds good. And remember, 14 fries.”

“Yes, of course,” Sam said. “I’ll be right back with some freshly baked bread and butter for the table.”

Wait... 14 fries? Yes, that is what Mrs. Franklin said. She wants 14 fries. Not 15 fries. Not 13 fries. She wants 14 French fries served with her medium-well Wagyu beef burger. Now, is that absurd? Yes. But how many fries does she get? 14... But not just 14 fries. She is going to get 14 of the longest, freshest fries in the basket. But why? Why would this member get special treatment when everyone else gets the same small portion of fries? Because yes is the answer.

What is the question?

The next time someone makes a request like this at your club, I hope you think about this article, smile, and make the right decision to give your members and guests what they want when they want it. I also challenge you to order 14 fries the next time you’re out to dinner just to see the reaction from your server. How he or she responds will tell you a lot about the culture at that establishment.

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Bon Appétit!

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