



Table For One

Reclaiming the Enjoyment of Solo Dining

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In the madness of a digitally connected world, there is beauty in the calm of a meal. Details like the smell of the bread, the marbling of meat, and the connectedness of the food and your pleasure centers become the unwavering star of this small snippet of time. And I am not just talking about having a meal without your phone in hand. I'm talking about the undeniable enjoyment of eating a meal, outside of the home or office, alone.

In a recent analysis from online reservations company Open Table, *solo reservations are up 62% on a national level, making a table for one the hottest seat around. More and more people want to experience a break from the hustle of daily life and just enjoy an hour alone. This is not to be confused with eating lunch alone at a desk. A rushed lunch does not a relaxing afternoon make.

The rise in solo dining isn't only attributed to more people wanting to experience a meal alone. American households are also shrinking. **Over the course of the last 40 years, more than a quarter of households contain just one person. Divorces, the choice to not have children, and simply not wanting to marry are all reasons that contribute to smaller households. So here we single diners are; alone and typically feeling rushed in our everyday lives.

Rather than feel ashamed of the single reservation, there is a new movement of solo diners taking back the table for one. +Coined by sociologist Ray Oldenburg as "The Third Place," a table for one represents an empowered choice by customers, a place that becomes a hangout where one can people watch and sit quietly, involved in the daily bustle of the café or restaurant, but not being bothered. It is also a choice to literally clear the table of distractions and instead be an observer. This is a very powerful and exciting position to be in.



Here in Omaha there are a number of places that appeal to the solo diner. A variety of factors go into accommodating the individual diner: ease of reservations/table access, enjoyable ambiance, portion size, and quality. Taking the time to dine alone is a treat in itself, and having a delicious meal to enjoy along with it brings the entire experience full circle.

These are just a few of the many places in Omaha that make dining out, whether in a group or alone, a wonderful experience.

Baby Blue Sushi Sake Grill

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It isn't difficult to get lost in a plate of truly lovely sushi. Buttery strips of salmon nigiri and rich, dark red cuts of tuna encourage all conversation to cease, save for an occasional "Oh my God" that gets proclaimed towards the ceiling. Many sushi restaurants in Omaha seem crammed with couples or groups, all enjoying their meals during hectic happy hours or lunches.

But for the solo diner, Baby Blue Sushi Sake Grill at the Shoppes of Legacy is a welcome escape.

It has a completely different atmosphere than other cozy, European style cafes, and instead offers a high-end, posh vibe with delicious sushi to match. The wait staff is polite and attentive, no matter how many people they are serving at a time. "We see a ton of solo diners," said General Manager Sarah Canfield. "Having a friendly staff is really the key when it comes to drawing guests dining in on their own."

Baby Blue offers more than just a quiet corner to solo guests. "I would say the most desirable part of Baby Blue's design and ambiance would be having the option of both a sushi bar and {regular} bar to dine at," said Canfield. "A late lunch is a great time to have a quiet, relaxing meal while catching up on some reading, while a bustling happy hour provides the opportunity to chat and meet new people."

Being able to choose how to socialize gives solo diners a sense of empowerment. Whether you feel like a quick bite and a martini, or a meal with the chance of conversation, Baby Blue is the perfect place to spice up any day of the week.

Even in our ever-expanding metropolis, there are still plenty of places to enjoy the company of a meal and our own schedule. Gone are the days when the solo diner was shamed into eating alone at a desk. More and more diners are taking time for themselves and learning the value of stillness. Along with this is an appreciation for truly delicious food.



Writer Jill Neimark perfectly summed up solo dining in a recent NPR story: “Be fascinated by the fact that your food is often sourced from far flung places around the world,” she wrote. “They reach out in all directions to connect to the far-flung farmers, foragers, hunters, truckers, sorters, servers, chefs, and guests who may silently join us at every meal.”

http://www.thereader.com/story/table_for_one

