99 Ways to Steal In a Restaurant or Bar

Provided by Skurla’s POS Solutions (we help STOP the theft)

Ever wonder if your employees are stealing from you? In the food and beverage industry it is estimated that 25% of employees steal regardless of the controls in place; 25% will not steal regardless of the controls in place; and 50% will steal if given the opportunity. The controls in place in a restaurant determine whether 25% are stealing or 75% are. Here are some things to look out for from Practitioners Publishing Company's Guide to Restaurants and Bars.

CASH REGISTER:

Restaurant Owner is the Victim:

1. Serve the drinks and/or food and collect the money while the register is being closed out at the end of a shift or at night or when the ribbon or tape is being changed.

2. Phony walk out - keep the cash and claim that the customer left without paying.

3. Short ring - charge the customer the actual price, under ring the sale on the cash register, and pocket the difference.

4. No sale - charge the customer the actual price but don’t ring up the sale. Bartenders often put the cash into their tip jar, their pocket, or leave it in the cash drawer.

5. Phantom cash register - put an extra cash register in the bar during specific times (for example, during happy hour) since the sales are not recorded on the master cash register tape they can be skimmed by the perpetrator.

6. Short tape - some old cash registers do not have cumulative cash register readings. In those cases, the cashier can total the cash register at a point before the end of the shift and use a new tape until it is time to close out. Then the cashier can keep the new tape and the cash generated during that period.

7. Voided sales - the cashier voids the check or some of the items on the check and keeps the proceeds.

8. Over-rings - the cashier records an "over-ring" to reverse an actual sale.

9. Fictitious paid-outs (paid outs are amounts taken from the till to pay for beer and food deliveries, light bulbs, and other miscellaneous charges)

10. Alter the breakout of tip and check amounts on credit card receipts to overstate the tips and understate the checks.

11. Cashier accumulates guest checks and rings them up after the customers leave (amounts can be altered or tickets may be destroyed)

12. Cashier steals cash and covers it up by falsifying the cumulative cash register readings and destroying the tape.

13. If the waitperson acts as banker, he or she can provide the customer with an old guest check and not record the current sale.

14. Cashier records sales on the training key, which does not feed into the cash register's daily or
cumulative sales total.

15. Cash hot check for friends.

16. Steal customers checks made payable to cash.

17. Charge the customer full price, but ring up the sale at the discounted child or senior citizen price.

18. Jam the cash drawer during critical hours so that the drawer must be left open.

Customer Is the Victim

19. Shortchange the customer (for example, by giving change for a $10 instead a $20)

20. Have the customer sign their credit card slip in advance and overcharge for food or drinks.

21. Alter amounts on credit card slips.

22. Run the credit card through twice.

BAR:
Restaurant Owner is the Victim

23. Bartender does not ring up the sale.

24. Wait person acts as bank and sometimes does not ring up the sales (this generally will be detected if there is a pre-check system)

25. Returned drinks - bartender claims that a drink was returned when in fact it was sold.

26. Give-a-ways - if no internal controls exist the bartender might give away free drinks to friends or in anticipation of receiving larger tips. If a liquor breakage analysis is used to control inventory, the bartender can top off the bottle with water.

27. Undercharge for drinks in anticipation of receiving a larger tip.

28. Pour higher quality liquor than ordered and mention it to the customer in anticipation of receiving a larger tip.

29. Mislead the manager as to how many drinks have been sold from a keg. (Generally, there are lax controls over kegs because of the level of waste involved and the difficulty of inventorying the amount on hand)

30. Phantom bottle - bartender brings his or her own bottle of liquor and pockets the cash earned from its sale. This scheme is much more devastating than merely stealing a bottle of liquor because even though the cost of the bottle is nominal (for example, $10), the lost margin on sales from the bottle is significant (for example, $90)

31. Collusion between the bartender and cocktail server to overcome the dual inventory control system. In a pre-check system, the cocktail server will input the drink order and the bartender will release the drinks based on the documentation system. The two systems provide independent totals, which can be reconciled. However, if there is collusion, the server does not enter the drinks into the system but the bartender makes and releases them.

32. Barter - bartender trades the cook free drinks for free dinners.
33. Kickbacks - a liquor distributor provides kickbacks. Kickback schemes can be difficult to detect. For example, if the distributor offers to sell the bartender ten cases of vodka for the price of nine, the bartender receives the value of one case as a commission. The distributor will charge the restaurant for ten cases and ten cases will be delivered and counted.

34. Complimentary cocktail or wine coupons are stolen by maids and sold to bartenders who turn in the coupons to justify missing inventory. For example, the wine server buys a coupon for $5 and sells a bottle of wine to a customer for $25, reaping a net profit of $20.

35. After-shift drinks provided to employees but not consumed by employees are sold to customers. For example, the restaurant has 40 workers who are entitled to one drink at the end of each shift. If only 15 of the drinks are consumed, the bartender can sell the extra 25 drinks and pocket the proceeds.

36. Provide free drinks to visiting bartenders.

37. Cook requests a beverage for use in the kitchen (such as brandy, wine, vermouth, sherry, or other cooking spirits) but drinks it instead.

38. Draft beer system not secured at closing and available to afterhours workers.

39. Bartender lines through (red-lines) service orders without ringing up the sales and rings up sales later for a lesser amount.

40. Handwrite bar tabs and ring up amounts less than receipts.

41. Steal bottles of liquor.

42. If the entity sells both drinks and full bottles, claim missing bottles are "to go" sales. Since the margin on to go liquor is generally less than on individual shot sales, this distorts the accuracy of the beverage cost percentage.

43. Reuse old drink receipts.

44. Under-ring drinks recorded on a computerized liquor dispenser tied into a point of sale system by using a magnet to throw off the sale.

45. Ring up cash liquor sales on the service dining room key.

46. Ring up food sold in the bar on the liquor key to help create additional drink sales and throw off beverage cost percentages.

**Customer is the Victim:**

47. Short-pour - bartender pours less than a shot to cover up drinks given away or sold on the side. Some bartenders do this by bringing in a shot glass that is one once instead of an ounce and a quarter. Therefore, it appears that they are pouring a full measure when, in fact, they are short-pouring.

48. Short-pouring can also be done on a computerized dispenses system - the bartender dispenses and the system registers one shot, however the bartender pours the liquor into two glasses.

49. Charge the customer the regular price but ring up the happy hour price. (Many bartenders cover
up the cash register display with pictures of their dog, boat, or children to keep the customer from
noticing how much has been rung up)
50. Charge for complimentary happy hour hors d'oeuvres and bar snacks.

51. Omit most of the liquor from blended fruit drinks (especially if several drinks have been served to
the customer)

52. Pour a lesser quality liquor after the first few drinks and charge for the more expensive brand.

53. Charge the customer for more drinks than actually served.

54. Resell returned beverages. (If the customer leaves an expensive liqueur the bartender may stack
it in the back and resell it to the next customer.

55. Steal the customer's change left on the bar. (Some employees wet the bottom of their drink trays
and set them down on top of the customer's change. The cash sticks to the bottom of the tray.)

56. Add two customer's drinks together, charge both customers and (if caught) claim to have
misunderstood who was purchasing the round.

**FOOD SERVICE:**
**Restaurant Owner Is the Victim**

57. Server collects directly from the customer without providing a guest check and pockets the cash.

58. Reuse old guest check for similar orders and do not ring up the sale.

59. Collusion between the server and the cooks - server does not record order on the pre-check
system but the cooks makes and issues the food without proper authorization.

60. Wait staff claims a meal was returned when in fact it was served and paid for.

61. Add items by hand to pre-checked guest checks. When installing pre-check systems, some
restaurants only pre-check entrees. Therefore, the wait staff can issue salads, appetizers, desserts,
or wine and manually record the item on the bottom of the customer's check. The waitperson collects
the full amount and only remits the amounts pre-checked.

62. Steal food or liquor. (Walk-in freezers and liquor storage areas are especially vulnerable to theft).
Employees sometimes claim that missing inventory was returned to the vendor or spoiled.

63. Take home "trim" food products.

64. Produce surplus food so that it can be taken home.

65. Many cash registers have been set up to record food sold "to go." This happens often in
restaurants contained in hotels for example, coffee and a roll are sold to customers who choose to
take them out). The waitperson will not record the sale but pocket the cash.

66. Wrap food and drop it into a box in the back or a trash can for later retrieval.

67. Kickbacks from vendors. (Generally, the chef takes a commission and accepts a lesser quality of
meat or produce)

68. Accepting lesser weights (for example, the produce box will be weighed when received. However,
if receiving personnel do not open the boxes regularly, the box might include a chunk of ice)

69. Feed friends for free.

70. Chef purchases specific items not on the inventory for employee or personal consumption.

71. Mobile catering truck driver or hot dog vendor purchases and sells their own inventory.

72. Chef obtains and submits falsified invoices that transfer food purchases to supplies, therefore affecting the manager's ability to perform ratio analysis.

73. Chef demands personal gifts from suppliers in exchange for business for the purveyor. (Price of the gift is passed on the restaurant in higher prices or reduced quality.

74. Wine steward claims sold bottle was broken or returned.

75. Employee steals and uses gift certificates (for example, they might take a two-for-one coupon and attach it to a guest check for which the customer paid cash and take the cash)

76. Collusion between person receiving food or beverages and truck driver to provide short weights. In some reported cases, half the delivery has been diverted and sold on the street. (A perpetual inventory system backed up by frequent inventory counts by someone other than the person receiving the items can detect these thefts.)

**Customer Is the Victim:**

77. Wait person adds extra items to customer's check. This is often aided by a confusing guest check that is difficult to understand or is faint.

78. Overcharge customers for banquet sales (for example - charge customer for 10 pots of coffee when only 6 were served)

**BOOKKEEPER:**

79. Bookkeeper steals cash and records it as "cash short."

80. Bookkeeper steals cash and records a bad debt expense for improperly written check, NSF check, or incorrect credit card transaction.

81. Bookkeeper writes and cashes checks to themselves but records them in the check register as FICA taxes (or some other frequently paid but seldom reviewed account like utilities expense)

82. Bookkeeper/manager creates fictitious vendors.

83. Bookkeeper holds the daily bank deposit for some number of days and uses the cash for their personal benefit.

84. Bookkeeper adds a "less cash" line to the deposit slip and receives cash at the bank.

**PAYROLL:**

85. Phantom employees-manager adds phantom employees to the payroll and cashes their paychecks.

86. Manager adds fictitious hours to the employees' paychecks and splits the difference with the
employee.

87. Employees overstate their hours. (for example, employees who work the lunch shift go home for a few hours and come back for the dinner shift, but may not sign out when they leave.

**OTHER:**

88. Use the phone for long-distance calls.

89. Keep funds from the vending machine.

90. Keep funds from the grease-barrel pick-up.

91. Steal silverware, glassware, napkins, tablecloths, etc.

92. Fake a burglary.

93. Give away or sell artifacts from the restaurant (such as pictures or statuary)

94. Keep cover-charge receipts.

95. Steal bar supplies (such as jiggers, detergent, linens, and shakers)

96. Steal cigarettes, which are intended for sale at the bar.

97. Revisit the restaurant during closed hours and steal whatever is available.

98. When obtaining change from another cash register don't reimburse it fully and pocket the difference.

99. Borrow the manager's keys and duplicate the void key, then void out entire or partial sales. (It has been reported that at one restaurant a ring of seventeen employees engaged in this practice.)


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