# Restaurants fight back against reservation hoarding and no-shows with new fees and tactics



In the current dining landscape, restaurants grapple with an alarming trend: the prevalence of reservation hoarding and the impact of no-shows. Many guests reserve tables for large parties, only to arrive with a fraction of their group, leaving venues struggling to manage the resulting lost revenue. Lawrence Weeks, owner of North of Bourbon in Louisville, Kentucky, highlighted this issue, noting that guests often secure larger reservations merely to guarantee entry at busy times. “And then when they show up it’s ‘Oh, four people couldn’t come,’” he remarked, illustrating the frustration felt by many restaurateurs.

To combat this growing challenge, numerous establishments have instituted cancellation fees, like North of Bourbon's $25 per missed guest. However, Weeks admits that these measures often fall short. While some cities may boast sufficient foot traffic to offset cancellations with walk-ins, smaller locales like Louisville find empty tables a common scene when no-shows occur. "I don’t think that people understand how much one seat in a restaurant costs," Weeks added, emphasising the economic strain that comes with every unfilled reservation.

Despite an increase in restaurant spending, as per recent data shared by Resy, more diners are cancelling or failing to show up. This paradox is exacerbated by reservation platforms such as Appointment Trader, which enable customers to buy sought-after reservations—often booked by bots. As restaurants struggle to navigate this minefield, the competition between platforms like Resy and OpenTable has focused more on superficial differentiators rather than the pressing issue of no-shows. Restaurant owners commonly report that technological differences are minimal, with cash incentives and perceived prestige of the platforms driving their decisions more than any practical solutions to reduce cancellations.

Efforts to tackle no-shows are varied, with some restaurateurs expressing frustration over guests’ evasive tactics to avoid fees. A chef indicated that when using Resy, he found that incorrect credit card information often went unchecked until it was too late to charge for a no-show. Meanwhile, OpenTable is enhancing its deposit features, responding to the need for better safeguards against this pervasive issue. Notably, some high-end restaurants, like Restaurant Gordon Ramsay, impose substantial fees for no-shows or late cancellations, revealing that different establishments adopt widely varying approaches rooted in their unique operational needs.

Other restaurants have opted for more innovative strategies to assure customer commitment. Dorsia, a members-only platform providing access to hard-to-get reservations, requires users to pre-commit to a minimum spend, which has reportedly led to increased attendance. Similarly, The Joyce in Miami Beach proactively checks in with guests prior to their booking, emphasising the importance of personal communication in fostering reliability.

Conversely, establishments like Voodoo Vin in Los Angeles have taken the radical step of eliminating reservations altogether. Owners Natalie and Michael Hekmat reverted to cooking for regular patrons who consistently attended, successfully avoiding the pitfalls of last-minute cancellations. This shift reflects a broader trend among restaurateurs reconsidering their approaches to reservations as they seek to navigate a challenging and evolving dining landscape.

Ultimately, the spectre of no-shows looms large, leaving restaurants in precarious positions where innovation and adaptability are vital. As diners continue to wield power over reservations, restaurateurs must strike a delicate balance between accommodating the whims of customers and maintaining the financial health of their establishments.

### 📌 Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://www.foodandwine.com/reservation-hoarding-and-no-shows-ruining-restaurants-11751717), [[2]](https://www.mosaic-solutions.com/blogs/reduce-no-shows-at-restaurants/)
* Paragraph 2 – [[1]](https://www.foodandwine.com/reservation-hoarding-and-no-shows-ruining-restaurants-11751717), [[3]](https://www.tablein.com/blog/prevent-restaurant-no-shows), [[4]](https://www.pushoperations.com/blog/restaurant-operations-dealing-with-reservation-no-shows)
* Paragraph 3 – [[1]](https://www.foodandwine.com/reservation-hoarding-and-no-shows-ruining-restaurants-11751717), [[5]](https://www.tablecheck.com/en/blog/strategies-minimize-restaurant-no-shows/), [[6]](https://restaurant.eatapp.co/blog/opentable-alternatives)
* Paragraph 4 – [[2]](https://www.mosaic-solutions.com/blogs/reduce-no-shows-at-restaurants/), [[7]](https://resdiary.com/blog/reduce-no-shows-restaurant)
* Paragraph 5 – [[3]](https://www.tablein.com/blog/prevent-restaurant-no-shows)
* Paragraph 6 – [[1]](https://www.foodandwine.com/reservation-hoarding-and-no-shows-ruining-restaurants-11751717), [[6]](https://restaurant.eatapp.co/blog/opentable-alternatives)

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## Bibliography

1. <https://www.foodandwine.com/reservation-hoarding-and-no-shows-ruining-restaurants-11751717> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.mosaic-solutions.com/blogs/reduce-no-shows-at-restaurants/> - This article discusses strategies to reduce no-shows in restaurants, including charging a reservation fee, sending reminders, and making cancellations easy. It highlights that high-end restaurants like Restaurant Gordon Ramsay charge significant fees for no-shows or late cancellations. The piece also notes that while some small establishments may find upfront fees off-putting, a small booking deposit credited to the final bill can be effective. The article emphasizes the importance of clear communication and flexible policies to manage cancellations and no-shows effectively.
3. <https://www.tablein.com/blog/prevent-restaurant-no-shows> - This article provides five tips to prevent no-shows at restaurants, including taking prepaid reservations, tracking frequent no-shows, and implementing clear cancellation policies. It highlights that prepaid reservations, or tickets, can increase the likelihood of guests honouring their bookings. The piece also discusses the impact of no-shows on restaurants, citing an example where a Welsh restaurant lost around £20,000 in a summer due to no-shows. The article suggests that tracking and blacklisting frequent offenders can help mitigate this issue.
4. <https://www.pushoperations.com/blog/restaurant-operations-dealing-with-reservation-no-shows> - This article outlines five ways to deal with restaurant reservation no-shows, including implementing a clear cancellation policy, requiring a deposit, and using reservation software to send reminders. It suggests that making cancellations easy and holding guests accountable can reduce no-shows. The piece also notes that requiring a deposit or charging for late cancellations can deter no-shows and encourage guests to cancel in advance if they won’t be able to make it. The article emphasizes the importance of clear communication and effective policies.
5. <https://www.tablecheck.com/en/blog/strategies-minimize-restaurant-no-shows/> - This article discusses strategies to minimize restaurant no-shows, including securing deposits, ensuring commitment through credit card authorisation and prepayment, and sending timely reservation reminders. It highlights that requiring a deposit can significantly reduce no-shows, especially for group bookings or during peak seasons. The piece also suggests that sending reminders to guests about their upcoming reservations can help reduce no-shows, as some guests may forget amidst their busy schedules. The article emphasizes the importance of clear policies and proactive communication.
6. <https://restaurant.eatapp.co/blog/opentable-alternatives> - This article reviews eight OpenTable alternatives, including Tock, which helps restaurants reduce no-shows by selling seats and requiring upfront payments. It notes that Tock's event and pre-payment features are key selling points, providing options for taking upfront payments, including reservation upsells. The piece also mentions that Tock offers online ordering features for an extra cost and provides a reservation platform to list restaurants, giving them extra visibility. The article compares Tock's features and pricing to OpenTable's offerings.
7. <https://resdiary.com/blog/reduce-no-shows-restaurant> - This article provides strategies to reduce restaurant no-shows, including securing reservations with deposits and no-show fees, leveraging standby lists, and encouraging walk-ins. It suggests that taking a deposit when bookings are made with a certain number of covers can help ensure guests show up. The piece also discusses the use of standby lists to fill last-minute gaps and encourages restaurants to have systems in place to attract walk-ins in case of no-shows. The article emphasizes the importance of proactive measures and clear policies.