JUST WORDS.

AN ILLUSTRATED ENCYCLOPEDIA OF ENGLISH IN REAL LIFE



At the Restaurant

Nine words from the door to the bill.
Every minute in between, in English.



Fig. 01 — The whole set on one table: soup, salmon, fries, chilli, cake. Every dish is a word.

01 · THE EXPERIENCE

Dinner is a journey — and every journey has its own words.

Think of your last visit to a restaurant. You arrived, someone showed you to a table, you looked at the food on offer, you chose something small to start, then the big dish, something sweet at the end, and finally you paid.

In English, each of those moments has its own word — and when you know the nine words in this set, the whole experience changes: you stop pointing at the menu and you start enjoying the meal. This is not a list to memorise. It is a map.

01	**reservation**	02	**menu**	03	**appetizer**
04	**main course**	05	**side dish**	06	**spicy**
07	**dessert**	08	**bill**	09	**tip**

Read it once. Keep it on your phone. Open it at your next table, anywhere in the world.

Nº 01 — TO BOOK

reservation

01

/ˌrezəˈveɪʃn/ · noun · countable

An arrangement to keep a table, seat or room for you at a specific time.

En español — reservación, reserva

"We have a reservation for two at eight o'clock."

"I called the restaurant to make a reservation for Friday night."

COLLOCATIONS

make a reservation · a reservation for two · under the name of...

Nota — «Reservation» y «booking» se usan en inglés: reservation es lo más común para restaurantes; booking se oye mucho en Reino Unido y para hoteles, vuelos y eventos. La frase que te salva: «A table for two, please.»

KEEP THIS PHRASE ***"A table for two, please."***

Nº 02 — TO CHOOSE

menu

/ˈmenjuː/ · noun · countable

The list of food and drinks that a restaurant offers, with their prices.

En español — menú, carta

"Could we see the menu, please?"

"The menu has something for everyone: pasta, salads and great desserts."

COLLOCATIONS

on the menu · a set menu · look at the menu

Nota — «Menu» se pronuncia MÉ-niu, no «menú» como en español. En España se dice «la carta» para el menú del restaurante, pero en inglés la palabra general es menu en casi todos los contextos.

KEEP THIS PHRASE ***"Could we see the menu, please?"***



Fig. 02 — Where every meal begins.

Nº 03 — TO START

appetizer

AmE /ˈæpətaɪzər/ · BrE starter /ˈstɑːtə/

noun · countable

A small dish that you eat at the beginning of a meal.

En español — entrada, aperitivo

"We shared a tomato soup as an appetizer."

"The appetizers arrived ten minutes before the main course."

COLLOCATIONS

share an appetizer · an appetizer to start · light appetizer



Nota — En Reino Unido casi nadie dice appetizer: ahí es «starter». Mismo plato, otra palabra.

KEEP THIS PHRASE ***"To start, the tomato soup, please."***



Nº 04 — THE CENTRE OF THE MEAL

main course

/ˌmeɪn ˈkɔːs/ · noun · countable

Fig. 03 — The main course: the dish the whole meal is built around.

The largest and most important dish of a meal, served after the starter.

En español — plato fuerte, plato principal

"For my main course, I'll have the grilled salmon."
"The main course was so big that we skipped dessert."

COLLOCATIONS

for the main course · the main course of the day · a vegetarian main course

Nota — También se dice solo «a main»: «Two starters and two mains, please.» Muy común al ordenar.

KEEP THIS PHRASE ***"For my main course, the salmon."***



Nº 05 — ON THE SIDE

side dish

/ˈsaɪd dɪʃ/ · noun · countable

A small extra dish, such as fries or a salad, served with the main course.

En español — guarnición, acompañamiento

"The chicken comes with a side dish of rice."

"We ordered two side dishes to share: fries and a green salad."

COLLOCATIONS

a side dish of... · order a side · on the side

Nota — «On the side» es oro puro: «The dressing on the side, please» = el aderezo aparte.

KEEP THIS PHRASE ***"With a side of fries, please."***



Nº 06 — THE HEAT

spicy

/ˈspaɪsi/ · adjective

Food with a hot, strong flavour from spices such as chilli.

En español — picante, picoso

"Careful — that sauce is really spicy."

"I love Mexican food, but not too spicy, please."

COLLOCATIONS

too spicy · a little spicy · spicy food

Nota — Ojo: «hot» también puede ser picante, pero primero significa caliente. Si dudas, pregunta: «Is it spicy?»

KEEP THIS PHRASE ***"Is it spicy?"***



Fig. 04 — Always leave room.

Nº 07 — THE SWEET ENDING

dessert

/dɪˈzɜːt/ · noun · countable / uncountable

Sweet food that you eat at the end of a meal.

En español — postre

"We were full, but there is always room for dessert."

"What desserts do you have today?"

COLLOCATIONS

room for dessert · a dessert menu · for dessert

Nota — La trampa clásica: dessert (postre, dos S) y desert /'dezət/ (desierto, una S). Más S = más dulce.

KEEP THIS PHRASE ***"For dessert, the chocolate cake."***

AZUL · RECEIPT · Nº 08

bill

/bɪl/ · noun · countable

The piece of paper that shows how much you must pay for your meal.

En español — la cuenta

"Could we have the bill, please?"

"We asked for the bill and paid by card."

TOTAL — "The bill, please."

COLLOCATIONS

ask for the bill · pay the bill · split the bill

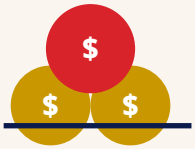
Nota — En EE. UU. también es «the check». «Split the bill» = dividir la cuenta entre todos.

Nº 09 — THE THANK-YOU

tip

/tɪp/ · noun · countable / verb

Extra money that you give to the person who served you, to thank them for the service.



En español — propina / dar propina

"The service was excellent, so we left a big tip."

"In the United States, people usually tip around 15 to 20 percent."

COLLOCATIONS

leave a tip · a generous tip · tip the waiter

Nota — La misma palabra es sustantivo y verbo: «a tip» y «to tip». Ojo: las costumbres varían mucho según el país y el lugar — en EE. UU. se espera dejar propina; en otros países es opcional o ya va incluida en la cuenta.

KEEP THIS PHRASE ***"Keep the change."***

02 · IN REAL LIFE

Saturday night at Azul

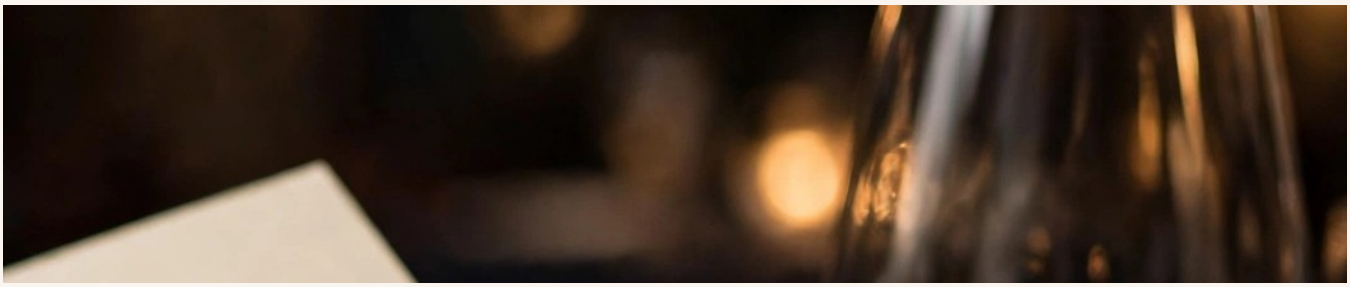


Fig. 05 — Azul, just before eight. The table is ready; the words are about to happen.

WAITER Good evening! Do you have a **reservation** ?

ALEX Yes — a table for two, under the name of Alex.

WAITER Perfect. Here is the **menu** . Can I get you something to drink first?

SAM Just water, please. What do you **recommend** today?

WAITER The tomato soup is a lovely **appetizer** , and the grilled salmon is our most popular **main course** .

ALEX The salmon for me, with a **side dish** of rice. Is the sauce **spicy** ?

WAITER A little — but I can bring it on the side, if you prefer.

SAM Chicken for me, please. Oh — I am **allergic** to nuts. Is that a problem?

WAITER Not at all. I will tell the kitchen right away.

ALEX That was delicious... Is there room for **dessert** ?

SAM Always! The chocolate cake, to share.

ALEX Could we have the **bill** , please? ... The service was wonderful — let's leave a good **tip** .

THE NINE WORDS, IN ORDER OF APPEARANCE

1 **reservation** *you book*

2 **menu** *you choose*

3 **appetizer** *you start*

4 **main course** *the centre*

5 **side dish** *on the side*

6 **spicy** *the heat*

7 **dessert** *something sweet*

8 **bill** *you pay*

9 **tip** *you say thanks*

THE SAME MEAL, AS A STORY

Alex and Sam arrived at Azul at eight. They had a **reservation** for two, so their table was ready. Sam looked at the **menu** and asked the waiter: "What do you **recommend** ?" They shared a small **appetizer** , and for the **main course** Alex chose the salmon, with a **side dish** of rice. Sam told the waiter about her allergy — "I'm **allergic** to nuts" — and the kitchen took care. For **dessert** , they shared a chocolate cake. Then Alex asked for the **bill** and left a good **tip** . A perfect night, in perfect English.

READ IT TWICE

First, just enjoy the story. Then read it again and find the nine words — each one appears at its exact moment of the meal.

"Nine words. One dinner. Zero pointing at the menu."

03 · THE COLLECTOR'S PAGE

Keep this page.

The whole set, indexed. Save it, screenshot it, use it at your next table.

SAY IT LIKE THIS — USEFUL EXPRESSIONS

A table for two, please.
Una mesa para dos, por favor.

Could we see the menu?
¿Nos trae el menú?

What do you recommend?
¿Qué recomienda?

I'm allergic to nuts.
Soy alérgico/a a las nueces.

The bill, please.
La cuenta, por favor.

Can we split the bill?
¿Podemos dividir la cuenta?

Keep the change.
Quédese con el cambio.

It's on me.
Yo invito.

THREE USEFUL WORDS TO KNOW

allergic /əˈlɜːdʒɪk/ *adjective*
Que un alimento te hace daño: «I'm allergic to nuts.» Siempre va con TO.

recommend /ˌrekəˈmend/ *verb*
Recomendar: «What do you recommend?» — la pregunta favorita de todo viajero.

takeaway /ˈteɪkəweɪ/ *noun · BrE*
Comida para llevar. En EE. UU. se dice «takeout», o «to go»: «To go, please.»

THE SET AT A GLANCE — AN INDEX

- **appetizer** — entrada
- **bill** — la cuenta
- **dessert** — postre
- **main course** — plato fuerte
- **menu** — menú
- **reservation** — reservación
- **side dish** — guarnición
- **spicy** — picante
- **tip** — propina

THE MEAL, IN ORDER — ALL NINE WORDS

1 **reservation** 2 **menu** 3 **appetizer** 4 **main course** 5 **side dish**
6 **spicy** 7 **dessert** 8 **bill** 9 **tip**

by Valencia
JUST IN ENGLISH

“Words are not studied. Words are collected.”

SABER INGLÉS ES SABER USARLO

Next Wednesday: JUST WORDS Set 002. Same time, a new world of words.