



## **You've Ruined My Thanksgiving**

*By Lindsay Watts*

For most Americans, Thanksgiving is a day to sit back with family and fill up a dinner plate, but for servers at one Beverly Hills restaurant, it's just another day on the job. I joined my co-workers and over 500 customers for my third Thanksgiving waiting tables at this popular "seafood grill" (which will remain nameless).

Thanksgiving is usually our busiest and most problematic day at the restaurant. Customers are at their most demanding, this being the most hyped up dinner of the year. While many would be hesitant to complain about Thanksgiving food or service in the home of a relative, patrons here have no problem speaking up about their dissatisfaction.

Server Sam Chandeleria had one party of seven who were unhappy from the time they walked in the door. They had to wait for their table, the turkey was dry, nothing was happening fast enough...

"All night I was very patient, every single thing they were not happy with," says Chandeleria who has spent the last 10 years working on Thanksgiving. One woman at his table was particularly unhappy about the meal,

"The breaking point came when ...I came out with the tray of cups and the coffee and I said, 'Who wants coffee?' and she says, 'I don't want coffee 'til I have my dessert.' And she goes, the kicker, 'You just ruined my Thanksgiving.'"

She was not the only one to have her holiday "ruined" by our restaurant. At our busiest few hours, I saw many angry customers asking for a manager or just looking generally unhappy. We ruin Thanksgivings every year, and if management hasn't heard about it today, they will later with phone calls and letters.

"I mean you could sit at home on your couch watch football like the rest of America...Instead they'd rather schlep to Beverly Hills and have mediocre turkey, since we are in fact a fish house," says server Anna Gilfeather who is working her third Thanksgiving at the restaurant.

It's easy to be a bit resentful of having to be at work on a holiday. Like the complaining customers, some of our Thanksgivings have been ruined too. Most of us were at the restaurant for at least 8 hours of the day, making it almost impossible to make plans elsewhere.

“One guy kept complaining this dark meat is too dry, its dry, and I said ‘Well at least you get to eat turkey today,’ and I walked away. I couldn’t take it anymore,” says Gilfeather.

But not all of the servers let their day be spoiled by the complaints, disorganization and chaotic moments. Christian Amougou is from Cameroon, Africa, so he’s never celebrated Thanksgiving. He says he feels for his co-workers who wish they could enjoy their holiday at home, but doesn’t like hearing all the complaining.

“They get a little irritated to see other people out here with their families and they have to serve them and pretend everything’s OK,” says Amougou. “I guess I understand that part, but the other thing is, this is your work place...might as well work, do what you do everyday, and not complain about being here because it’s where you make your living.”

Few other servers shared Amougou’s sentiment, and it makes you wonder if perhaps it takes someone who doesn’t even celebrate Thanksgiving to give the reminder that this is a day to be thankful, no matter where you are.