EPISODE 320

Ordering Food in the USA

Full transcript · mini-story · vocabulary review

Hi! I'm Georgiana, and I'm back with a new episode. I'm here to help you speak English fluently.

Okay, let's start!

Ordering food in a **restaurant** can be an exciting experience, especially when you're traveling in the U.S.!

Understanding the Menu

When you go to a **restaurant** in the U.S., you'll usually get a menu that's divided into sections:

Appetizers – small dishes served before the main course.

Entrées – are your main dishes.

Sides – small portions of your meal, like fries or salad.

Desserts – sweet treats to end your meal!

Menus can also have terms like "specials," which the chef recommends that day. If you're unsure, ask your **server**, "What do you recommend?" or "What's today's **special**?"

Phrases for Ordering Food

Here are some common phrases you can use:

To **order**: "I'd like the..." or "Can I have the..."

If you need a recommendation: "What do you recommend?" or "What's popular here?"

To customize your **order**: "Can I have that without...?" or "Could I add...?"

For example, you might say, "I'd like the cheeseburger with no onions, please."

Tipping in the U.S.

Let's talk about tipping. In the U.S., tipping is expected in restaurants. Usually, people leave 15% to 20% of the total bill as a tip for the server. It's their way of saying "thank you" for good service. Don't worry; most restaurants will give you the bill with a suggested tip amount, so it's easy to calculate.

Takeaway or "To-Go"

If you don't finish your meal, asking for a takeaway box is very normal. You can simply say, "Can I have a **to-go box**, please?" or "Could you box this up for me?" This way, you can enjoy the rest of your meal later!

Practice Dialogue

Let's practice a simple conversation:

Server: "Hello! Can I get you started with something to drink?" You: "Yes, I'd like a glass of water, please."

Server: "Are you ready to **order**, or do you need a few more minutes?" You: "I'm ready. I'll have the grilled chicken with a side salad."

Server: "Great choice! Would you like any dessert?" You: "No, thank you. But could I get the rest to go?"

Server: "Of course! I'll bring a to-go box."

Now, let's practice.

Mini-Story

Speaking Practice

Answer the questions aloud with short and quick responses. Repeat the Mini-Story several times to improve your speaking and listening.

I'm an overweight middle-aged woman who wants to lose weight.

Am I young or old?
I'm not young, but I'm not old either.

Am I fit or overweight?
No, no. I'm not fit. I'm overweight.

Do I want to gain or lose weight?
No to gaining weight. I want to lose weight.

What do I want to lose? My dignity?
No, no. Not my dignity. I want to lose weight.

Do I want to eat a slice of cheesecake?
I probably want to eat a slice of cheesecake, but I shouldn't if I'm serious about losing weight.

My dietician tells me that I have to eat a variety of foods but in moderation.

Does my dietician prohibit me from eating greens like spinach or kale?
No, no. My dietician doesn't prohibit me from eating greens. He tells me to eat a variety of foods, including spinach and kale.

Can I eat any sweets?
Yes, my dietician says I can eat a variety of foods, so I can have sweets too.

Can I order French fries when I eat out?
Yes, I can. I can order French fries when I eat out, but in moderation.

Does the dietician tell me to eat big pieces of homemade pizza?
No, no. The dietician doesn't tell me to eat big pieces of homemade pizza. He says I can eat foods in moderation.

When I eat at a restaurant, I try to follow the doctor's advice.

When do I try to follow the doctor's advice? When I eat at a restaurant?
Yes, I try to follow the doctor's advice when I eat at a **restaurant**.

Do I order plenty of high-fat dishes when I eat out?
No, no. I don't order plenty of high-fat dishes when I eat out.

Do I want to eat healthy or unhealthy when I go to a restaurant?
Healthy. I want to eat healthy when I go to a restaurant. Not unhealthy.

Whose advice do I want to listen to? My friend's advice?
No, no. Not my friend's advice. I follow my doctor's advice.

I usually order all the dishes on the menu but eat only half of each plate.

Do I usually order all the dishes on the menu or only half?
All the dishes. I usually order all the dishes on the menu, not just half.

Do I do this occasionally or usually?
Not occasionally. I usually order all the dishes on the menu.

I only eat half of each dish, right?
Right. I order all the dishes on the menu but only eat half of each plate.

After some time, I become heavier than ever and don't understand why.

When do I become heavier than ever?
After some time, I became heavier than ever.

Who becomes heavier? My cat?
No, no. Not my cat. It's me who becomes heavier than ever.

Do I understand why I get heavier?
No, I don't understand why I get heavier than ever.

After all, I did what my doctor recommended.

Well, we're finished with our short practice.

Answering many simple questions can improve your speaking, just like talking in real life.

Thanks for listening, and I'll see you in the next episode.

Review

Vocabulary from This Episode

Review the most useful words and expressions before listening again.

01 **appetizer** a small dish served before the main meal.	05 **server** a person who takes orders and serves food.
02 **entree** the main dish of a meal in American English.	06 **tip** extra money given for service.
03 **side dish** a smaller dish served with the main course.	07 **to-go box** a container for taking leftover food home.
04 **special** a dish recommended or offered for a limited time.	08 **customize an order** change a dish to suit your preferences.

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