**FOREWORD**

3am. I’m wide awake, sitting at my desk, writing the foreword for this book. Why am I awake? Because the concept of a ‘sleeping pattern’ is alien to me. When you work in a bar, you tend to give up on the idea of a routine. The thought of going to bed at 11pm and waking up at 7am feeling bright and refreshed is nought but a distant dream.

It’s strange - when you come home after finishing a shift at 3am, all you want to do is go to sleep. But you need to eat, have a shower, watch some TV. Basically, just wind down after a long night at work. To go straight to sleep would be the equivalent of working a 9 to 5, then coming home and going to bed at 6pm; this is not what people normally do.

At this point, after working in the industry for 6 years, this routine is somewhat the norm for me. But when you first start doing it – let me tell you – your body clock feels like it’s been beaten into submission with a particularly weighty lead pipe. Your first 3am bar close isn’t so much a slap in the face as it is a staple to the scrotum …

However, I digress. Some of you may be reading this and wondering what on Earth I’m on about. Some of you may even be reading this and toying with the idea of sending me the details of a reputed psychiatrist. That being said, there will be many of you out there who are currently experiencing the dull pang of empathy and can relate to every word.

Those who have worked in the industry will understand the pains I’m describing, will sympathise with the stories of drunkards and inebriated fools and - above all - will know what it is to come home from work to the tune of the birds singing, feet aching and stinking of stale beer to boot. And to those people, I salute you.

When I tell people about this book, the same question usually crops up: “Why are you writing this?” Well, I’m writing this book for two reasons. The first is purely anecdotal. I’ve worked in pubs, bars, night-clubs, restaurants and anything and everything in between. During my ventures into the hellish realm of hospitality, I’ve picked up some amazing stories, made some poignant observations and been subject to some horrendous situations. I’d say it’s a great pleasure to share them all with you, but that would be a lie. Realistically, it’s more a form of therapy for me. A literary baptism for my sambuca-stained soul[[1]](#footnote-1).

More importantly, is the second reason that I’m writing this. This book should serve as an educational guide for the general public of Britain on the subject of ‘how to be a better customer’.

You might think it’s fairly obvious. But in my experience, people rarely realise when they’re being a twat. Alcohol is a magical elixir which so often blinds you to the idiocy of your antics. The ‘jolly juice’ which makes stealing traffic cones seem like a great idea and makes a dodgy kebab taste like the best thing your poor, beer-filled stomach has ever had the pleasure of consuming.

Well, I’m here to put a stop to it. Along this path, strewn with myriad stories from my days behind a bar, I will point out a few courtesies which you’d do well to observe. A few suggestions on how to behave in a public place. And a gentle reminder that you *really* shouldn’t piss off the person who is handling your food and drinks.

Put simply, when you go out to a bar, pub, nightclub or restaurant, you’re paying for a service. And we’re more than happy to provide you with the best service we possibly can, so long as we get the respect we deserve. Of course, I’ll get your child a balloon and sing Happy Birthday - but it’s unlikely I’ll do it with an unwavering smile if you’ve been rude to me since you sat down (and if said child is pelting me with food as I sing my broken little heart out).

Now don’t get me wrong, the very last thing I want to do is to dissuade you from frequenting your local ale-house or meeting the girls after work for a cocktail or four. Drinking has been a wonderful social event for literally thousands of years and I’m not about to try and change that. All I want is to pass on a few wise words and give you an account of what it’s like on the OTHER side of the bar. Because our side of the story is seldom told and I for one think it’s worth telling … even if just for the comic relief.

So, grab a glass of your favourite tipple, kick back and enjoy the journey.

And for Christ’s Sake … bring your empties back to the bar.

1. I’m quite proud of that actually. Feel free to quote me. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)