



Setting the Table

Danny Meyer

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In October 1985, at age twenty-seven, Danny Meyer, with a good idea and scant experience, opened what would become one of New York City's most revered restaurants—Union Square Cafe. Little more than twenty years later, Danny is the CEO of one of the world's most dynamic restaurant organizations, which includes eleven unique dining establishments, each at the top of its game. How has he done it? How has he consistently beaten the odds and set the competitive bar in one of the toughest trades around?

In this landmark book, Danny shares the lessons he's learned while developing the winning recipe for doing the business he calls "enlightened hospitality." This innovative philosophy emphasizes putting the power of hospitality to work in a new and counterintuitive way: The first and most important application of hospitality is to the people who work for you, and then, in descending order of priority, to the guests, the community, the suppliers, and the investors. This way of prioritizing stands the more traditional business models on their heads, but Danny considers it the foundation of every success that he and his restaurants have achieved.

Some of Danny's other insights:

- Hospitality is present when something happens *for* you. It is absent when something happens *to* you. These two simple concepts—*for* and *to*—express it all.
- Context, context, context, trumps the outdated location, location, location.
- Shared ownership develops when guests talk about a restaurant as if it's *theirs*. That sense of affiliation builds trust and invariably leads to repeat business.
- Err on the side of generosity: You get more by first giving more.
- Wherever your center lies, know it, name it, believe in it. When you cede your core values to someone else, it's time to quit.

Full of behind-the-scenes history on the creation of Danny's most famous restaurants and the anecdotes, advice, and lessons he has accumulated on his long and ecstatic journey to the top of the American restaurant scene, *Setting the Table* is a treasure trove of innovative insights that are applicable to any business or organization.

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