

Diner

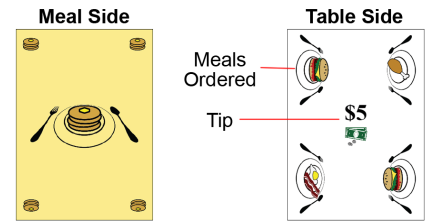
a fast-paced card game for 2-4 players

by Matthew O'Malley

You and the other waiters have a friendly competition going over who will make the most money in tips tonight. Move quickly to seat the parties in your section and get their orders right to serve them and make tips - but make sure you serve everyone before closing time, or the manager will dock your pay!

Components

- 1 sheet of rules
- 54 cards with a table on one side and a plate on the other
- 5 (max) action tokens (not included) - anything small and non-fragile will do: sugar packets, coins, spoons, etc.



Objective

Make the most money in tips by seating tables in your section, collecting plates, and serving the tables, all at the same time as the other players.

Setup

1. Choose a dealer to shuffle the cards table-side up.
2. Give each player 1 action token, and give a 2nd action token to the player to the left of the dealer.
3. Deal 3 cards table-side up to each player. Players hold these cards in their hands, **plates facing them**.
4. Deal 3 cards table-side up in a line in the center of the table. This is called the Lounge, where parties coming to the diner wait to be seated.
5. Split the rest of the cards into 3 roughly equal plate-side up stacks, and place them perpendicular to the Lounge. This is called the Kitchen, where plates are prepared and set out for the waiters to collect them.
6. The area in front of a player is called the player's Section, where tables are seated and wait to be served. When tables are served, they are placed in a pile called the player's Tips, perpendicular to the tables in the player's Section. These areas start empty.
7. Discards will go in the Sink, next to the Lounge, opposite from the Kitchen stacks, plate-side up. This also starts empty.



Play

Players do not take turns in this game! Whenever a player has an action token, the player can take an action and then must pass the token clockwise. Usually, several players will take actions at the same time. However, if one player does not take actions while others do, that player will accumulate tokens to do several actions in rapid succession, while the others wait (and plan) until the tokens come back around.

Play starts when the dealer calls out, "We're open!" All players can immediately start taking actions. When you have an action token, you can take **one** of four actions: Draw, Seat in Your Section, Seat at the Counter, or Serve.

Draw

1. Take a single plate card from top of one of the stacks in the Kitchen and put it in your hand.
2. Pass 1 action token clockwise.

Seating

1. Take a table card from the Lounge, call "Seating," and slide the card in front of you.
2. Replace it with a new table by taking any top card from the Kitchen, flipping it to the table side, and putting it in the empty space in the Lounge.
Don't forget to replace the table in the Lounge! There should always be 3 tables in the Lounge. If a player forgets, the rest of the players should call out "Host!" to remind them.
3. Pass 1 action token clockwise.

You can seat any number of tables in your Section, though only one per action. Once a table is in your Section, you are the only player who can serve that table. But be careful: if you do not serve a table in your Section by the end of the game, you subtract the table's value from your score (they complain and the manager docks your pay). The tip values range from \$1 to \$8, with the majority of tips in the middle of that range. The tables with the rarest plates have the highest tips.

Counter

1. Take a table from the Lounge, call “Counter,” and place the card in the Sink (discarding it), plate-side up - they ate at the counter.
2. Replace it with a new table by taking any top card from the Kitchen, flipping it to the table side, and putting it in the empty space in the Lounge. Again, **don’t forget to replace the table in the Lounge**. If a player forgets, call “Host!” to remind them.
3. Pass 1 action token clockwise.

You will usually seat at the counter to prevent an opponent from taking a high-value table you know your opponent can serve, or if you want to seat a new table in your Section but you don’t think you’ll be able to serve any of the tables currently in the Lounge.

Serve

1. Reveal from your hand **all** of the plates ordered by a table in your Section--you must serve the entire table at the same time, and cannot serve a table in the Lounge--and call out “Order up!” and the plates you are serving: “Burger, burger, pancakes!” Place the served plate cards plate-side up in the Sink.
2. Place the served table in your Tips pile, perpendicular to the tables in your Section (to keep them separate). These Tips will be your score at the end of the game.
3. Pass 1 action token clockwise.

Blue Plate Specials are “wild” cards and can be used as a substitute for any other plate on a table. They are used just as if they were the plate required by the table.

Special “Break time!” rule for 3 or 4 players

The first time that 2 of the Kitchen stacks are empty in a 3 or 4 player game, a player must call out, “Break time!” This does not require an action token. All play stops temporarily (after everyone completes actions that were already started and passes tokens). The player who called “break time” combines the Sink pile and the remaining Kitchen pile, shuffles the cards table-side up, separates them into 3 roughly equal stacks, then turns them plate-side up in the Kitchen. That player then calls, “Break’s over!” and play resumes until the **2nd time** two Kitchen stacks are empty, which signals the game end.

Game End

When 2 of the stacks in the Kitchen are empty (or the 2nd time this occurs in a 3 or 4 player game), any player not currently taking an action can call out, “Closing time!” This does not require an action token. Play immediately stops. If a player started calling out the plates for a (correctly) served table before closing time, that table is moved to the player’s Tips pile.

Scoring: Place your hand of cards and the cards from the Lounge and the Kitchen in the Sink; they have no value. Add the value of the tables in your Tips pile, and subtract the value of any tables in your Section you did not serve. The player with the most money at the end wins! Ties are resolved in favor of the player with the most plates on the tip tables (who served the most customers).

Play notes:

- If a player forgets to complete all of the steps in an action, opponents should call attention to it to make the player complete the action by calling, “Host!” Opponents should not (helpfully) complete actions, like refilling the Lounge, because different cards may be chosen by different players.
- Players should hold their plate cards in one hand, and only use the other hand to conduct actions.
- If there is a disagreement about who was first to put their hand on a card to draw or seat, the card goes to the player whose hand is beneath (first) or whose hand is covering more of the card (second).
- Be honest when serving your tables. As an optional rule, you can halt all play when “order up” is called to allow opponents to confirm that tables are served correctly, but this rule does slow down play and should only be used if necessary.
- While the playing cards have information on both sides, you will only use one side of a card, either the plate side (if it is in the Kitchen, in your hand, or served to a table) or the table side (in the Lounge, your Section, or your pile of Tips). There is no relationship between the two sides of a card (but if a plate is on one side, it is not also on the other).
- There are different quantities of plates, and the rarer the plate the more valuable it is (see the table below). Most plates will appear in each game, but not all, because some of the cards will come out as tables instead of plates. The tip value of a table is determined by adding the tip values of the plates at the table and rounding up to the nearest dollar. Table values range from \$1 to \$8, with most in middle of that range.

| plate | Bacon & Eggs | Pancakes | Burger | Salad | Steak | Blue Plate Special |
|--------------------|--------------|----------|--------|--------|--------|--------------------|
| tip value | \$0.50 | \$1.00 | \$1.50 | \$2.00 | \$2.50 | ? |
| quantity of plates | 14 | 12 | 10 | 8 | 6 | 4 |

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Variation: If the pace of the game is a little slow for your group, or you have a player who consistently hoards action tokens, you can add the following rule: whenever a player has all of the action tokens, the player to the left can simply take an action token.