Preparing for Service

Kitchen staff use the phrase mise en place, which is borrowed from French and means "put into place," when discussing food preparation. This concept is also used in reference to setting up a dining room, bar, or side station before service. Having the necessary tools and equipment stocked and prepared in advance helps service run smoothly. A restaurant's mise en place may include the following:

- Wiping down tables and chairs, inspecting them for wobbly legs, setting tablecloths, and arranging place settings.
- Polishing silverware and glassware, and inspecting them for chips or other irregularities.
- Setting up service stations and stocking them with additional silverware and glassware, and with other items that can be quickly retrieved during service.
- Folding serviettes, napkins, or side towels.
- Cleaning and polishing other items, such as service trays, coasters, ice buckets, and stands.
- Verifying that menus are clean, correct, and current.
- Ensuring that restrooms are clean, stocked, and ready for service.

In a winery tasting room, mise en place may extend to additional items, such as spittoon, take-home materials for guests, and merchandise for sale.

For a sommelier or a server, or a bartender whose responsibilities include wine service, there are several aspects of mise en place that will help ensure that wine is served correctly, in a timely manner, and in a way that is enjoyable for guests. Service is easier when wine lists, glassware, tools, and serving temperature are considered in advance.

