

Restaurants replacing tips with service charge

By Chris Macias, Sacramento Bee

The rant from Mr. Pink in the 1992 flick “Reservoir Dogs” was delivered like a salvo against the service industry:

“... This tipping automatically, it’s for the birds,” said Mr. Pink (played by Steve Buscemi) before paying a breakfast tab with his gangster crew. “As far as I’m concerned, they’re just doing their job.”

Back then, Pink’s words seemed like a penny-pincher’s rationale. But fast-forward two decades, and a tipless restaurant world that Mr. Pink craved looks closer to becoming a reality.

A movement around Northern California, and the San Francisco Bay Area in particular, is shifting away from the time-honored practice of tipping servers to simply adding a service charge to the bill. Gratuity has long been included in the bill at Chez Panisse in Berkeley and Yountville’s The French Laundry, and recently become the norm at such Bay Area restaurants as Comal and Trou Normand. In Sacramento, The Kitchen has traditionally tacked on a service charge in lieu of tipping.

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