

W H A T I S O U R F A I R W A G E S U R C H A R G E ?

Bouldin Creek Cafe has joined with other members of One Fair Wage Austin in implementing a 20% Fair Wage Surcharge on all guest checks. This helps us ensure that all of our staff earn a stable, livable, and equitable wage - no matter their position at the restaurant.

This type of policy has been the subject of much discussion across the entire restaurant industry for a number of years, as many high-profile restaurant operators have begun to advocate for it. We are joining One Fair Wage Austin and many other restaurants in Austin in instituting the Fair Wage Surcharge. **We strongly believe in it and want to tell you why.**

We are aware and appreciative of the fact that our guests have always approached tipping in good faith, tipped our staff generously, and taken great pride in doing so. However, when tipping alone is the primary source of income for an employee, it can be a problematic practice. Its origins are challenging, its economics are antiquated, and its ultimate impact on employees is counterintuitive.

Unbeknownst to many, the custom of tipping in America today is actually a legacy of slavery and its aftermath. When slavery was amended out of the Constitution in the wake of the Civil War, restaurant work was one of the few jobs offered to former slaves. However, many employers at the time refused to pay any wages to former slaves, with the expectation that guests would provide small tips for their service. This practice of tipping somehow became ingrained in our society and has continued to this day.

In addition to this issue, the seasonal nature of restaurant revenue leaves staff living with wild and unpredictable swings in their tipped income. Finally, tipping has also created an unjustifiable gulf between what “Back of House” kitchen staff can earn compared to their tipped “Front of House” counterparts.

Another consequence of tipping is that it has kept menu prices artificially low for generations, as labor continued to be a minimal cost to restaurants, especially in tip-credited minimum wage states (mostly Southern states), which was usually passed through to the guests via tipping. Furthermore, as new employee benefits (such as healthcare, paid sick leave, etc.) became the norm across different industries during the latter half of the twentieth century, those industries built the costs of these new employee benefits into their business models. However, most restaurants did not provide these employee benefits until recently, and many across the country still don't. As a result, the economic models of restaurants and the menu prices they could charge have never been a function of the true costs to operate a fair workplace. Instead of raising our prices, we have chosen to implement the Fair Wage Surcharge in order to have transparency with

our guests and our staff. The entirety of the 20% Fair Wage Surcharge goes directly to worker's wages, which allows for an accountability that is harder to achieve by simply increasing menu prices.

COVID exposed many of the structural inequalities in our country and demonstrated the value restaurants and their employees bring to society. We believe it is now providing the opportunity to restructure the restaurant labor compensation model, which is long overdue. Thus, to pay our full-time staff a livable wage with benefits, we have implemented a 20% Fair Wage Surcharge on all checks. For guests who would like to leave an additional gratuity, we have also provided a supplementary tipping option. However, any extra gratuity is appreciated but certainly not required or expected.

It is going to take some time for us all to adjust to the new reality of the true cost to dine out at a bar or restaurant. But for us, it's the only way forward to operate a restaurant in Austin that treats and compensates its workers with the respect they deserve, and we believe it is the future of the industry.

Thank you for spending a few minutes to learn about these issues and thank you for your support of Bouldin Creek Café.

If you have any questions feel free to contact us at info@bouldincreek.com