



Waiting at Joe's

Deeny Kaplan Lorber

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They've served the rich, the famous, and the infamous, ranging from Madonna and Al Capone to Amelia Earhart and Bill Clinton. They've escorted patrons to their cars during the cocaine wars and sent trays of food from the kitchen to high profile patrons via Secret Service agents. They work at the second-highest grossing restaurant in the United States--one of the most coveted jobs in the business. They are the waiters of Joe's Stone Crab, a one-of-a-kind South Florida landmark.

Joe's Stone Crab opened in Miami Beach in 1913 as a modest restaurant situated behind the apartment of owners Joe and Jennie Weiss. Miami Beach, not yet a city, could be accessed only by ferry. Stone crabs weren't even on the menu. A lot has changed in the past century: Joe's Stone Crab boasts locations in Chicago and Las Vegas, and people travel across the globe to dine on its signature stone crabs, a delicacy often mimicked but never matched by countless other restaurants.

Throughout its history, Joe's has never accepted reservations. The anticipation and camaraderie in waiting two to three hours for a table has become as much a part of the dining experience as the exquisite food. Along the way, Joe's has gained a reputation for excellent service provided by its extremely dedicated, talented, and loyal wait staff.

A chance to serve at Joe's is one of the most sought-after jobs in the restaurant business. Staff members are paid extremely fair wages, compensated with retirement packages, and receive generous time off. It's not unusual to encounter a waiter who has been at Joe's for fifteen or twenty years. Some have stayed on for upward of thirty, forty, and even fifty. Bonds between coworkers are strong, and some are so proud of their home-away-from-home that some waiters even request to be buried in the front courtyard at Joe's for all of eternity.

By giving voice to these unsung individuals, Deeny Kaplan Lorber reveals the inner workings of Joe's in this collection of fascinating, intimate vignettes. Go behind the scenes of a thriving business that treats both staff and customers like family. For one hundred years, Miami natives and tourists alike have waited and dined alongside celebrities including Frank Sinatra, Muhammad Ali, Dan Marino, and Jennifer Lopez. There's no other place in the world quite like Joe's Stone Crab; this is the story of the waiters, not the wait.

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