**Case Study 2: Splitting Tips or Splitting Hairs? Should Female Wait Staff Complain?**

Lauren DeStephano pulled on her work uniform, a pair of khaki pants and a white button- down- collar shirt, with Luigi’s embossed in bright red on the breast pocket. She mentally prepared herself for a long Saturday evening of being on her feet and smiling graciously to her customers – even the most demanding, unreasonable ones. Lauren began her shift at 6 p.m. and ﬁnished by midnight. She worked part- time at Luigi’s as a way to supplement her college spending money and to help defray the cost of her textbooks.

Luigi’s is a growing franchise restaurant that appeals to middle- income people – families and single people alike. With a wide selection of Italian dishes at moderate prices (pastas, cannelloni, lasagna, and pizza), popular salads, anti- pastas, trendy desserts, and a full bar menu, Luigi’s attracts large crowds, especially on the weekends. In keeping with the food, the restaurant has an Italian ﬂair. The walls are painted a creamy yellow with faux- ﬁnish designed to give the restaurant a rough- hewn appearance as if it had one time been a Tuscan farmhouse. Italian motifs adorn the walls – landscapes of hill towns, vine-yards, and the ever- present Venetian gondola. The wait staff at Luigi’s is almost entirely female: eight women servers and two male servers. Those clearing tables, the “bus- boys,” are all male, and the three full- time bartenders are male.

When Lauren started her job, she was told that the wait staff pooled their tips with the bus- boys and the bartenders. Bill Myers, the general manager of the restaurant, took all of the credit- card receipts and added up all of the tips that had been added to each receipt. He then took that amount from the cash drawer and added it to the tip pool. At the end of the evening, the money was divided up evenly among all of the wait staff, the bartenders, and the bus- boys who had worked that shift.

When Lauren ﬁrst started her job, she was too busy and preoccupied with college work to think about the fairness of the tip system; however, as she became better acquainted with her fellow female waitresses, her attention to the matter increased. The women often stayed after work and had a drink together. On a Saturday night after the restaurant was closed, they began to discuss the rationale behind the pooling- of- tips system.

Janine began, “I can understand a system where the wait staff would pool their tips because it is really the luck of the draw if someone who is rich and not cheap sits in my section and not yours, Sal.”

“I agree. We can’t really control who sits where and how much they might tip. And I think we all work hard so it is fair that we share our tips. But I’m not sure about sharing them with everyone else,” Sally offered.

“The bus- boys work hard, but they don’t have to deal face to face with the customers as often as we do. Customers don’t blame them for anything. When the steak that was sup-posed to be rare turns out burned to a crisp, we take the ﬂak, they don’t,” Mary said.

Sally added, “I think they deserve some part of our tips, but we shouldn’t have to split them with them. The guys do clear off our tables and get them ready for the next customers that come in. But I agree, they shouldn’t get as much as we do.”

“Look we make $5.50 an hour and we need all of the tips we can get. I have rent to pay and groceries to buy. I can barely make it on what I bring in. I know we make less because supposedly our tips make up for it, but that just isn’t the case.” Mary said.

“How much do the bartenders make an hour?” Lauren asked.

“They make $8.55 an hour. Why should we split our tips with them? They make much more than we do!” Sally fumed.

Mary added her indignation, “Besides, they make tips from customers who sit at the bar. They don’t split those tips with us!”

“Why don’t we try to talk to the general manager about this? We could ask him to meet with us after our next shift,” Lauren offered.

“Good idea, Lauren. Will you ask him?

’Lauren agreed to speak to Bill Myers the next day to set up a meeting.

**The Meeting with Bill Myers**

Myers was an outgoing, friendly man, younger- looking than his 55 years. He bought into the Luigi franchise ﬁve years before and had made a success out of it through working persistently, hiring reliable people, and advertising widely in community newspapers. The restaurant had gone from a small number of patrons to families, college students, and single people, largely because of his efforts. He had instituted happy hours, family meal specials, and once- a- month special events with live music for sororities and fraternities. He was more than willing to talk to the women about their concerns.

“We had an incredible Saturday, didn’t we? You all did very well and I think it could have been one of our busiest nights ever. But, you wanted to discuss something with me, didn’t you?

OK ladies, what’s on your mind?

”Lauren began, “We have some concerns about the pooling of tips system.

”Lauren waited for her colleagues to pitch in. When they didn’t, she continued, “It’s just that we don’t understand why we have to pool our tips with the bus- boys and the bartenders. It seems unfair.”

As soon as Lauren opened up the conversation with their chief concern, the other women volunteered their views.

“Mr. Myers, I’ve been here three years and it’s always bothered me that I have to give my hard- earned tips to the bartenders. They make almost double what I make,” Sally said.

“And they don’t share their tips with us,” added Mary.

“Well, let me address the bartenders’ pay ﬁrst. They make more because their position requires more knowledge. They have to know how to make lots of complex drinks. And they attended a bartending school. In terms of the bartenders’ tips, they don’t get many. Most of our customers sit at the bar only because they are waiting for a table. We don’t get many hard- core drinkers in here.”

“Well, Mr. Myers, about the bartender’s knowledge. . . . We also need to know how to serve tables correctly. How to pour wine, which side to serve from, exactly how the food is made, which items are vegetarian, and what comes with each dish, and how to deal with customers when they don’t get what they expect. Every time the menu changes we have to learn what new items are on it,” Sally countered.

Janine added, “We really work hard on a weekend night, running around from table to table. The bus- boys and the bartenders don’t have the physical demands we do. We have to have both stamina and a constant, cheerful attitude with the customers.”

“Janine, I know you all work hard. So do the bus- boys and bartenders and they count on a share of the tips from the customers. The bus- boys have physical demands like you do. They are on their feet all evening and lift heavy trays of dishes. In this restaurant, we all serve the customers wherever we are, whether we are serving them at the tables like you do or from behind the bar,” said Bill.

“So you aren’t going to change the system?’ asked Lauren hesitantly.“Look, this is how all of Luigi’s franchises operate. The chain is very well run and management hasn’t received any complaints from other locations on this issue. I run this restaurant on the principle of teamwork and I think everyone should have a share of the customer tips if they contribute to the service. The bartenders and the bus- boys deal with customers too.”

**Job Description for Bus Person**

The individual job- holder will support a station in the restaurant, typically six tables, by setting tables with table clothes, silverware, and napkins. The individual will clear tables when customers are ﬁnished with their meal and deliver the dishes to the stations located on the sides of the kitchen. Bus- persons will be sure to keep salt and pepper mills full, ketchup and other condiments full and clean on the tables. They will clean tables with clean towels after they are cleared and before new customers sit down. As part of the restaurant team, bus- persons will also help out where needed. This may include ﬁlling water glasses when the wait staff becomes very busy or answering customers’ questions if they are asked. Because this is a visible position, bus- staff must be courteous and well- groomed, and strong enough to lift trays of dishes.

**Job Description for Wait Staff**

Wait staff will manage six tables in their station. They will take orders, answer customers’ questions about meal choices, and they will understand our various offerings. This includes everything on the menu, as well as evening entrée specials and desserts that change daily, and the bar and wine menu. Wait staff will periodically attend training sessions to learn about new wines on the menu and the various new offerings. They will handle customer complaints and special requests so as to minimize attention of other customers and to ultimately “take care of the customer” so he or she will have had a pleasant dining experience. As a team member, wait staff will support one another. This means on occasion taking customers in another wait staff’s station to relieve pressure or helping with large parties. This job position requires stamina, teamwork, diplomacy to handle difficult customers, an outgoing personality, and the ability to learn the technology we use to enter and transmit orders to the kitchen staff. Previous experience desired.

**Job Description of Bartender**

This job requires previous experience as a bartender and a complete knowledge of the range of drink orders, including types of wines, beer, and hard liquor drinks. The position requires speed and accuracy in handling drink orders, which may come from either the bar or from the wait staff when people order drinks from their tables during their meals. The individual must be able to work well under pressure and be a team player, as this position requires working with other bartenders and wait staff. Stamina is required as bar-tenders remain on their feet throughout their shift. The individual must be personable and well- groomed. Knowledge and enforcement of the law required; bartenders may not serve individuals who are underage or continue to serve individuals who have had too much to drink.