

# Setting The Mood For Diners Over Fifty

Skye E. MacBroom

**H**ow many times have you seen a gray-haired couple sitting at a table, quietly squinting and pointing at the small scripted font on the menu? They're embarrassed as they ask, "What are the details of this dish? I can't read the tiny italic letters." Or perhaps you notice that a sixty-something grandfather hands the bill over to his granddaughter to read the receipt for him at the end of the meal.

Here's a different scenario: Have you overheard a diner ask their friend beside them, "Gee – do you think this dish has a lot of sodium in it? Should I bother the waiter, and ask if the chef can prepare the meal without the seasoning, and salt? The doc is after me about my blood pressure."

"Oh yes, you should ask, but who knows if they'll do it or not," another tablemate wonders. "I need whole grain wheat pasta because of my diabetes."

"WHAT?" yells the first friend, blood pressure climbing, "I can't hear you above this music and the noise from the bar. That ceiling is tin, and although it's very pretty, it sounds like there are a million people in here, yet there are only two couples sitting at the bar." Frustrated, all the diners agree – next time, let's try another restaurant.

There are over 78 million Baby Boomers in the U.S. today who were born between 1946 and 1964. The Boomers are a force to be reckoned with as marketers scurry to figure out how to target this segment of our population – the "Boomers" have more discretionary income than any other age group in the country. So, what are restaurants doing to accommodate the Baby Boomers and meet their needs?

Dr. Dorree Lynn, psychologist, author, and founder of [www.FiftyAndFurthermore.com](http://www.FiftyAndFurthermore.com), is an expert in the aging population and co-host of a segment called "On The Couch" for an AARP TV show, "My Generation."

"Restaurants today need to think about the diners who are age fifty and over who are frequenting their establishments," Dr. Dorree Lynn explains. "We, as a group, are looking for many unique amenities and dining options at the restaurants that we spend our

money at. Not all business owners are quite hip to our needs yet however. If there is one thing about Boomers though, it's that we are a noisy group, accustomed to instituting change. The entire food and wine industry will have to continue to evolve to satisfy our growing demographic."

A noticeable trend in restaurants which are gaining popularity among the Baby Boomers is nostalgic establishments. Dr. Lynn is a fan of a quiet sea-inspired restaurant in Washington, DC. "Quiet restaurants are a plus for Baby Boomers who may have hearing difficulties," Dr. Lynn says. "We want to be able to hear each other talk and not be overwhelmed with loud music or clanging dishes and pots and pans."

The Oceanaire Seafood Room is a national fish restaurant with over fifteen locations. ([www.theoceanaire.com](http://www.theoceanaire.com)) Oceanaire has a vintage ambiance and atmosphere allowing diner to take a step back in time. The dining room is reminiscent of an old-fashioned ocean liner or cruise ship, complete with dark wood paneling and leather horseshoe-shaped booths.

The feeling is romantic and serene, with fresh fish, classic Sidecar drinks, and nostalgic big band music. Even the restroom amenities are geared toward the older generation. The classic black and white tiled restroom boasts a wide, square, deep basin sink with vintage looking silver faucets and real terry cloth hand towels for each guest. No noisy hand driers or scratchy paper towels in this restroom!

Do you have any ideas about what restaurants are doing, or should be doing, to cater to the needs of the Baby Boomers? Write us your ideas at [Darci@mymfn.com](mailto:Darci@mymfn.com).

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