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Restaurant Experts Give Insider Tips

WASHINGTON -- It's never a good sight. You walk into a restaurant only to find you're in for a long wait if you want to eat there.

You give your name and wait, and wait, and wait. But what if there was a way around all that waiting?

Some restaurant insiders have agreed to give NBC4 reporter Eun Yang their tips on how to avoid waiting lists in restaurants.

Oren Molovinsky, the general manager of the Mie N Yu restaurant in the Georgetown section of Washington, said make a reservation, any reservation. He said make the reservation a few hours later than the time you want to eat and then show up early.

"If the reservationists or hostess knows you're there, they'll give you a table whenever it becomes available," Molovinsky said.

Ordering a drink at the bar and then letting the bartender know you're interested in getting a table could also be a quick way to get to the dining room, Molovinsky said.

And Bezawit Mane, the floor manager at the Mie N Yu said repeat customers have a priority over walk-ins. "We tend to use all the possibilities in order to accommodate all our VIPs and repeat guests," Mane said.

VIPs could include others in the service industry. Our experts also said they hold tables for last-minute reservations made by hotel concierges.

Mane said, "Restaurants like us have a special relationship with concierges and we'll accept a reservation from them and hold slots and tables for them."

Whether you're looking for a table for that night or for next month, our experts said the Internet may offer the easiest way to get a reservation. Opentable.com interfaces with reservation systems in more than 200 local restaurants.

Opentable users Chris and Janet Carnicchia live in Germantown and like to eat out.

"You log on tell them the time you want, where you want to eat, and you have many choices to choose from," said Chris Carnicchia.

And Janet Carnicchia said, "The best part about it is sitting down and looking at the choices. You can choose your cuisine right away and how much you want to spend."

Eun Yang watched Chris and Janet look for a restaurant one Friday evening. They searched by neighborhood and by price and ended up with dozens of choices, all listed in one place.

Dan Festa manages Morton's, one of the many restaurants on Opentable.com.

"Opentable is great. It gives the guest the opportunity to make reservations anytime of the day or night," Festa said. "It's basically one-stop shopping and takes all of about 30 seconds to make a reservation."