Restaurant Bills

30 Nov 2004 by JR

Whenever you pay a restaurant bill by credit card in the UK you run a considerable risk of having your card details copied and possibly forged. Because British restaurateurs have been unable to process your card at the table via a secret pin number - as they do in France, Italy or Spain - restaurants have provided easy pickings for the unscrupulous. As a result you must always make sure that you pick up all carbon copies of bills or slips that bear your credit card number and signature when you leave.

Matsu, a high tech company based in Godalming, Surrey, have now solved the logistical problems of tableside transactions and are beginning to get their hand-held processing machines installed in restaurants, initially across the south east of England and, they hope, nationally quite soon.

These new machines work as efficiently as the French versions but with two extra safety measures. After it has printed out a copy for the restaurant, the processor then prints out a second copy for you the cardholder but one that misses off your signature so that it cannot be forged and simultaneously omits four digits from your credit card number so that this too cannot fall into the wrong hands.

I am mentioning the system to restaurateurs and chefs such as Trevor Gulliver of St John, and Mark Edwards at Nobu, whenever I can as I feel this system is the way forward. But knowing that many in the restaurant trade have to be dragged screaming and kicking into the 21st century, every customer should encourage their local restaurateur to switch to this much more secure and user-friendly system. You deserve it!

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