



# AT YOUR SERVICE

## THE SIGNATURE ST. REGIS BUTLER

BARBARA MALY GREW UP IN THE HOSPITALITY SERVICE INDUSTRY, FIRST IN BERLIN AND THEN IN NEW YORK. SHE JOINED THE ST. REGIS NEW YORK AS A BUTLER IN 1995.

### TELL US ABOUT THE HISTORY OF THE BUTLER SERVICE AT THE ST. REGIS.

The St. Regis has prided itself on exceptional personal service for guests for over 100 years. The 24-hour butler service is a signature element of this unparalleled dedication. In 1991, the service was incorporated during hotel renovations. Today, The St. Regis New York has over 30 butlers, who combined speak over thirty-eight languages.

### WHAT DOES THE SERVICE INCLUDE?

Impeccably dressed in tuxedos, we greet arriving guests, brief them with an orientation on their room, unpack their suitcases when required, and make sure all customized room preparations are satisfactory. Every morning, we serve coffee and tea, arrange wake-up calls, and facilitate any and all requests: from arranging room service and running a quick errand, to organizing a cocktail party or acquiring theater tickets. If you are under the weather, we will arrange for our house doctor to call on you. You can get your shoes shined at 1 a.m. in the morning, or call for a fax to be sent at 4 a.m. We are available 24/7.

### HOW IS THE STAFF TRAINED?

One of the criteria to become a butler at The St. Regis New York is having a secondary degree. Training takes place over a certain amount of weeks, during which each butler learns everything about the hotel's history and inner workings. We then spend a period of time in each department seeing how it is run, so that we can field questions from guests as accurately as possible.

### WHAT ARE THE MOST IMPORTANT QUALITIES FOR A BUTLER TO POSSESS?

Probably the ones that cannot be taught. I would say "how to read a guest" tops the list. When you first greet your guests, it is important to immediately recognize and anticipate their needs, whether they want service or need privacy. It is also extremely important to check your own emotions at the door. And of course, discretion is key.

### WHAT ARE THE AREAS OF EXPERTISE OF THE ST. REGIS BUTLER?

Management provides us with training in every department. For example, our sommeliers teach us about the wines so that we are confident in the selections we suggest to our guests. We are also always up to date on the Adour menu items. Our guests expect us to know everything about The St. Regis, and so do we. We are also expected to speak at least two languages, given our international clientele.

### ANTICIPATING A GUEST'S NEEDS IS AN ART FORM. HOW ARE THE ST. REGIS BUTLERS ABLE TO ANTICIPATE THE MANY DIVERSE NEEDS OF GUESTS?

Know your guests. For returning guests, we keep diligent profiles of their needs and likes, which are constantly updated. Before the guest even arrives, the room is set up according to that profile, and then we go over each customized request to make sure it is current—from choice of bottled water to bedding service. For new guests, we focus on everything from body language to what they say or don't say; and as you go over the service items you provide, we keep a mental checklist.

### HOW DO THE ST. REGIS BUTLERS FIND THE BALANCE OF PROVIDING EVER-PRESENT, UNOBTUSIVE SERVICE, WHILE ANTICIPATING THE GUEST'S EVERY NEED?

This is very important: we want our guests to know we are always available to them, without getting in their way. Our aim is to make them feel completely at home. Sometimes the guests make the level of service they expect clear to us when we first meet them—they might engage us in a conversation about some aspect of the hotel, or immediately retreat into their room. Regardless, we make sure that they understand they can page us for any immediate requests. We also liaison with every other department in the hotel, from housekeeping to concierge.

### IS THERE ANY PARTICULAR USE OF TECHNOLOGY THAT HAS ENHANCED THE SERVICE?

Yes, pagers. Every room has a phone with a button that immediately pages the butler. This keeps us constantly available to the guest. The pager also feeds us information on check-ins, check-outs, room-service requests, etc. We also have business cards with email addresses that enable returning guests to reach us about any changes in the services that they might require. In addition, The St. Regis has recently introduced a new E-Butler service, where each butler carries a wireless handheld device so guests can e-mail their wishes straight to their very own personal butler anytime, whether on hotel property or away from the hotel.

### ARE GUESTS ABLE TO REQUEST THE SAME BUTLER UPON RETURN VISITS TO THE ST. REGIS NEW YORK?

Of course. Sometimes guests are just more comfortable with a butler they have had before, and the hotel does its best to accommodate. We want their experience to be completely comfortable.

### WHAT IS THE ULTIMATE COMPLIMENT A GUEST CAN GIVE A ST. REGIS BUTLER?

When a guest thanks you for the service and expresses a desire to come back based on that experience. I thoroughly enjoy my job, and have never had a bad day at work. It's a wonderful feeling to have someone tell you that your service made them feel completely at home.