

Cutler Bay

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SERVING SOUTH DADE

'Can we talk?' — A restaurant review

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I am not a professional restaurant reviewer as you probably know but here I go anyway. (Watch how I twist the story to get in what I really want to say.)

I recently went to Joe's Stone Crab on Miami Beach for my daughter's birthday. I didn't

have to wait the normal two-and-a-half hours because I have been going there for over 40 years and they kind of know me.

I go there and spend all that money because I truly believe that their stone crabs are juicier and sweeter than any other place that I have tried. Their coleslaw salad is a mystery to me but it tastes fantastic and their "low fat" pies are the best.

We had a great time even though my 4-year-old granddaughter Natalie annoyed the heck out of the gentleman at the next table. He didn't seem to mind too much, but I felt responsible.

Now the twist — while enjoying our meal, I noticed another family nearby; a father, mother and pre-teen daughter I assume. What was unusual to me is that the young girl was totally involved with some sort of electronic game, the mother was "texting" someone on her Blackberry or whatever and dad was looking at something on his iPhone (or whatever).

During the entire time I was there, they never spoke to one another and only raised their eyes when the food was served. I guess I really am OLD when I think that families dining together are supposed to talk. Gee what a weird idea from a weird old man.

I grew up the old fashioned way where my mother prepared a meal every day and we all waited for "Pa" to come home from work so we could all eat and review what took place during the day. No more. I doubt that my grandkids ever eat at the kitchen table. Whenever I see

them, they are camped out at a little table by themselves or sitting on a sofa with one of those lap trays always focused on the TV. What used to be the kitchen or dining room table is now the storage place for today's mail, the desk for one or two laptops and whatever else has no special place.

I guess I have to accept that. Women now work and who feels like preparing a meal after working all day and fighting traffic to get home, and who says that dad is coming home at 6 p.m. like my father always did? We have no kids living at home anymore, but my housekeeper/cleaning lady/shopping companion and I have the same dialog every night.

Me: "What did you make for dinner?"

She: "Reservations."

Me: "I don't really feel like going out."

She: "Then open the freezer and see what you like."

Me: "Aww shucks (or something similar)."

I do admit that when we go shopping I walk by the freezer section and select several frozen meals just in case. The pictures on the carton look pretty appetizing but once you open the box...well you know what I mean.

I like to think that things will change for the better, like going back to the old days when mom stayed home and dad went to work, and there seemed to be plenty of family time together. Of course, in those days you didn't have car payments for two or more cars, cable TV bills of over \$100, plasma TVs in every room and pre-schools that cost as much as Harvard University.

Some states, hopefully ours included, are passing laws against cell phone use while driving. Perhaps the next step will require you to check your phone at the door in restaurants and leave the phone number of the restaurant with any emergency contacts you might have.

Will this force people to begin talking directly to one another? I don't know, but it is worth a try.

Other articles of national importance can be viewed at Ernie's website at <www.sochin.com>.

