



## **laptop-free weekends...what's the deal, yo?**

### **Q: Why do you hate my laptop?**

#### **A: We don't hate laptops.**

We think they're really useful tools. We also think they can dominate a room when they get to critical mass. We're sure you've walked into a place like ours when every single seat is taken by a laptop user. When this happens, conversation becomes difficult. If you walk in with a friend and want to have a beer and chat, it's understandable that you might feel self-conscious if you're the only ones in the room talking.

Just to be clear, we're not anti-technology, or anti-technologist. You're always welcome. But on the weekend, we like this place laptop-free, and so do our weekend customers.

### **Q: What about reading books, or knitting? How are they any different?**

#### **A: Using a computer is a uniquely isolating experience.**

It's different from reading a book, or writing, or knitting, or you name it. It's incredibly immersive and distracting – it's difficult to experience the reality surrounding us when we're engrossed in the virtual reality we've built for ourselves. We frequently see customers buried in laptop screens, with headphones on, and we find that it's difficult for us to get their attention when we just need to wipe the table down.

When doing virtually any other activity, other possibilities exist. Participation in the current place and time is more likely. And maybe we're a tiny bit old-fashioned, but we think that human beings need to experience real, face-to-face interaction. Virtual friends by themselves just don't cut the mustard.

### **Q: But what I'm working on is important...!**

#### **A: We understand.**

On the other hand, we think that we've allowed technology to enter and dominate our lives in a way that can be a little unnerving, and really disruptive. Just a few years ago, when only a few of us had cell phones, and our computers were less portable, those things didn't play a part in our public lives. We would get a message from someone when we got home, or check our email in the morning. The very fact of becoming more interconnected through technology is that it is constantly interrupting our connection to here and now.

We also like the idea of taking a break from all this stuff, and would love it if you'd enjoy yours here.

For those folks who do need to work on their laptops, and must do it on the weekend, there are other places in the neighborhood which will welcome them. We think it's great that each of the neighborhood businesses has a different character, and we hope that all small, local businesses in the neighborhood are wildly successful. Please patronize us all.

Oh, and there's always the library.

### **Q: But there are plenty of open seats...what harm does it do if I use my laptop?**

#### **A: It's a cumulative effect**

One of the reasons we started laptop-free weekends was that, by mid-morning on weekend days, most of our available seating would be taken by laptop users. This had a tremendous impact on the ambience of the cafe. It felt claustrophobic to us. People stopped showing up with their families, and several folks complained about lack of space.

A cafe full of laptops also hurts financially. During those early days, we spent our days hustling to serve \$2 teas, and watched as folks who came in the doors with family or friends intending to have a meal turned around and left because there were no seats for them.

Although there are responsible laptop/cafe users, there are also those who will buy the least expensive menu item and stay for hours. Because they're so immersed in what they're doing, they don't notice when we get busy.

This is a business-killer.

Just one laptop doesn't make this happen, but our laptop policy is an attempt to make space for those folks who want to take a break, and come in on the weekends to eat some brunch, see some friends, hear some music, meet new neighbors, or just watch the world go by.

The neighborhood coffee shop is endangered, at least partly because of this technology problem. We miss the places where we'd go to see folks we knew, catch up on the news from the town, and enjoy some food and drink. We want to be one of those places – a place that feels special. This is one of the ways we do that.

### **Q: But what if I don't want to talk to people? You can't make me!**

#### **A: You're right.**

We can't make anyone talk to anyone. We're not trying to force anything, and we're not trying to be a pickup joint. We just want to create a space where these things can happen. Because we think it's interesting, and different, and kinda necessary.

It's up to you what you do with it.