



Only Restaurant People...

I had the great pleasure of opening a restaurant for a client recently. It's been a few years since I have been so integral to an opening, and this was a particularly rewarding experience because I participated in every aspect of the development. I started the project working for the landlord, advising on practical lease terms, identifying the right tenant for the space, and assisting with the

lease negotiation. Once the lease was signed, I went to work with the tenant with the landlord's blessing, as their agent through construction, and as project manager through opening. My services included advising my client on everything from hiring the chef, the sous chefs, and the management team all the way through opening training, including the menu and wine list development and directing the opening schedule. I was particularly proud and happy with the eventual placement of a long-time protégé as the director of operations/GM. With the opening, I even got to work with other old friends and colleagues, both as teammates and as suppliers.

It reminded me how openings can be both wonderful and frustrating at the same time.

Most of all, this opening reiterated how terrific restaurant people can be. Anyone who identifies as a restaurant person or even a "reformed restaurant person" knows that we are a little different; idiosyncratic, focused, quick to decisions. More importantly, restaurant people are eager to please, flexible, and inventive. Most restaurant people get their "fix" from the immediate gratification of a perfectly cooked dish or a very happy table — and take it personally when the extra effort we provide isn't recognized. We are "special" in a way that only we can understand. So with the holidays upon us, it seems the timing is opportune to celebrate "Restaurant People" with a list of some of the things we do and how we behave that makes us so special.

use them to make stock — an act that rarely actually happens at home.

... can withstand holding a hot pan without dropping it because the pain is worth not dropping the dish.

... think that regardless of what time the day started, going home before the dinner rush makes it a "half-day."

... can serve 500 dinners perfectly, but overcook one steak and think the night was a failure.

... pick up paper towels off the floor and wipe down the sink in the restrooms of other restaurants.

... get as excited about the food in other restaurants as they are about the food in their own.

... really understand that technology is not nearly as important as a smile.

... know that it is their responsibility to treat you much better than you ever get treated at home.

... and your dog might be the only ones that really are happy to see you.

There are lots of other "Restaurant People" traits that I'd love to hear about. Please share. As for me, I'm just happy and proud to be in the ranks.

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