



RACHEL VANNI FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

'Nobody likes tipping. It sucks. It's a stupid practice.'

ERIC HUANG

out. And we really got pay equality from front to back locked in. Nobody works more than 45 to 47 hours a week.

SHENARRI FREEMAN I thought people would be a bit more understanding, but it seems like we're just right back to where we were before. They just want their food. They want their drinks. They want their vibes.

REYNA DUONG Hate is a strong word, but I hate Yelp. I despise the entitlement. If your feedback is bad, let us make it right. Give us an opportunity, have the conversation.

JEFF CHANCHALEUNE I hate reading Yelp. I despise it. Because there's not that much else online here if people go looking for reviews. It will say: "I went to Ma Der Lao and I had some dish I never had before, but it's not like the Thai food I've had in the past, so I didn't

really like it. One star." But you don't know anything about the food. How can you review the food, the culture? That's what hurts the most.

SHENARRI FREEMAN I've gotten to the point where I don't really care. It doesn't really matter to me, because at the end of the day, I know that everyone on my team did everything in their power, what they were supposed to do.

ANA CASTRO I actually have a little bit of a bad rap for being a little mean to customers sometimes. Someone compared the duck that they thought was undercooked to a Jeffrey Dahmer experience. And I schooled this woman like I've never schooled anyone. I got a note from Resy, because I think she emailed about it. But I don't care, honestly.

GEOFF DAVIS I think guests have become a lot less kind and understanding of the inevitable mistakes. People are very entitled and upset when things aren't going their way. I want to say: "Do you remember 2019? This is normal. A small group of human beings is trying to provide service to everybody, not just you."

Looking Forward

CHEETIE KUMAR Together we employ millions and millions of people. You love unemployment being low? Well, we're the ones who are breaking our backs to keep people hired.

REYNA DUONG You know how they say, the kitchen is the heart of the home? That's where everybody migrates to. Well, that's what it is with independently owned restaurants for our country. Let's be honest: When your friends and fam-



JUSTIN PICHE
Piche Food Group
Fruitland, N.M.



MICHAEL RAFIDI
Abi
Washington



RYAN RATINO
Jont
Washington



HAJIME SATO
Sozai
Clawson, Mich.



ELI SUSSMAN
Gertrude's
New York City



RENEE TOUNPANCE
Port of Call
Mystic, Conn.



DAVID UTTERBACK
Yoshitomo
Omaha



AARON VERZOSA
Archipelago
Seattle



KELLY WHITAKER
The Wolf's Tailor
Denver



TANDY WILSON
City House
Nashville

MASHAMA BAILEY I didn't want to step on anyone's toes. And that was the fear, because people were straight up not showing up for stages and straight up walking out of kitchens. I couldn't crack the whip because I didn't want to lose people.

Guest Relations

GEOFF DAVIS You want to control someone's pay because you didn't feel like your water got filled fast enough or your food took a long time to come out? It should be just like anything else: The price is the price.

MICHAEL RAFIDI The job of a cook has always been really low-paying. A server could be making double the amount of a cook and working the same hours. I just wish that would change, but it's very, very complicated. How would that happen? How do we not take from one to give to the other? How do we please everyone in the business, including the guests?

HAJIME SATO People talk about how being wait staff is so hard, it's so degrading. Don't get me wrong, kissing people's ass and getting that money from customers, there's a ton of a skill to it. But at the same time, why is that more work than being in the kitchen?

'We started the first drag shows in Mystic, where there wasn't the gay bar, the queer restaurant for the community.'

RENEE TOUNPANCE

TANDY WILSON Tipping we can't really change. It's an established business. If we stopped and went to pooling, we would open ourselves up to litigation.

KRIS KOMORI We went to our front-of-house staff and said, we have a strange proposal for you, which is that we're going to put you on salary. You're not dependent on how much business we have coming in. Basically, don't worry about paying your rent. We worry about paying our rent, but we will figure that



ALECKA ANDERSON

ily come to town, you're not going to be like: "Oh, I know this restaurant nearby. It's a huge chain." You're like, "I know this gem, and it's a little bit of a wait; they make everything from scratch."

MARY ATTEA There used to be a path for cooks: You come in, you work all the stations and you move on to somewhere else. But the money is pretty good now, and we have the Michelin star and nobody's leaving. The age-old story is that the chefs get all the glory, the awards and the accolades, but we are nothing without our teams. Now I think they know that. And with that shift, I feel like finally the work of nurturing careers and helping people excel and grow is paying off.

DAVID CHANG We're about to discover a lot in the next 10 years. Because this is such a new industry, even though it's an extremely old business.

'You can't leave the industry and expect the industry to change. You have to be here. And I think that now finally people are coming back to it because they love it.'

MASHAMA BAILEY



ADAM KUEHL FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES