

7 Tips for Making It In the Restaurant Business



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The following is adapted from Unsliced.

The restaurant business is a tough place to survive. [According to FSR Magazine](#), 60 percent of restaurants don't survive the first year, and 80 percent are gone within five years.

Those aren't good odds.

As one of the 20 percent that survived five years (fifteen, to be exact), I know that you can be a success in the restaurant business. All it takes is the right mindset—and lots of hard work. Here are seven tips for making your restaurant be an outlier and not one of the casualties.

#1: Find Your Voice

The first few years of running a restaurant are a lot like a stand-up comic's first few years. They're developing their act and learning their voice. You can serve people and be good at running a restaurant. But to last in the business, you have to be different. To be a great restaurateur means finding your own unique brand identity.

While you're defining your brand, you'll need to nail down questions such as:

- Is my restaurant the high-end choice?
- Are we the kitschy fun brand for families?
- Is our business model based on proximity?
- Is this the date-night place, the game-day place, or something else?

You should have considered these questions by now. After all, if you don't know what kind of business you're going to be, how will your customers know?

#2: Focus on Basics at the Start

Before you open your restaurant, you should have a robust business model that's been tested, reviewed, and evaluated thoroughly. You need to plan expenses and income each day, week, and month to determine your profitability.

This will be way off at first, but you need a starting point to work from.

Stick to basics on Day One. There's a lot you need to worry about during a new opening without getting fancy too soon. Many new owners come to me concerned about having multiple types of dishes on Day One, even though they have yet to produce one dish that is amazing. Once you get the basics right, then you can start branching off into other items.

#3: Confidence vs. Cockiness

There's a thin line between confidence and cockiness, but it's an important one:

- Confidence is saying you can do something, which is a healthy attitude.
- On the other hand, cockiness is saying you can do something, and it'll be easy.

Face it: You are not special. For you, that's actually a good thing. Once you realize that you aren't special and find some humility, you can make strategic moves needed to thrive. Leave your ego at the door and go into any situation motivated and stubborn.

#4: Remember, You're the Boss

Another thing to be aware of when you're running your pizzeria is that you are the owner. People care more about your presence than your appearance.

If you walk into a room meekly with no confidence, you will get owned. If you come in standing tall with a smile on your face, you'll gain respect immediately.

The way you treat other people matters. If you act like someone's friend, they'll treat you like their friend, not their boss. If you act like your employee's parent, they'll treat you that way.

You are their supervisor, and you need to be friendly and supportive, but in charge at all times. Be confident—not cocky—and let that confidence spread to your staff.

Customers will notice the difference.

#5: Remain Enthusiastic

Keep and maintain your Day One mentality. That means you don't know everything yet, but you're dedicated to learning it and growing. Tell yourself that people want to work for you because you care about this more than any other boss they've ever worked for.

To the people who say, "You're not going to be able to do this," so what? Telling them they were wrong or proving it to them is fun, but it's not the basis of why you're doing this.

You need to do this for yourself. This is for you and your family's future.

#6: Prepare to Be Let Down

People will fail you, and you are going to be disappointed. Friendly employees will steal from you, and people you trust will not show up. Just accept that. You'll be disappointed if you believe or trust too much in what others will or won't do.

Let that go and know that other people down the line will be reliable and loyal to you. Don't let the disappointment overwhelm you. Accept it as part of the inevitable rocky road that you encounter on your journey.

#7: Stay on Your Toes

Things in the restaurant business can change on a dime. Your best cook could quit in the middle of the dinner rush. A competitor could open across the street. The Health Department could issue a citation. You never know what's going to happen when you walk in every day.

If you can admit when things are going wrong, then you can also overcome it. I've changed ideas in midstream multiple times. Things we thought would be a massive hit just weren't. Sometimes, things that seemed like silly ideas became a customer highlight.

You just never know sometimes, which means you have to stay on your toes.

Hard Work Pays Off

This work will be a constant challenge. It will take every ounce of energy from you, and some days will feel almost impossible to get through. But it's your challenge, and you can do this if you choose to. It's on you to fulfill that promise to yourself with confidence and hard work.

Don't be one of the casualties. Be one of the 40 percent that survives the first year. Then make it to year five, and soon, you'll be celebrating fifteen years like me. And it will feel good.

For more advice on making it in the restaurant business, you can find [Un sliced](#) on Amazon.

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