

Are You The Type of Person Who Should Open a Pizzeria?



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The following is adapted from Unsliced.

Did I always know that I wanted to own a pizza shop?

No. Don't get me wrong. I LOVE PIZZA, and so do you; so does everyone. Anyone who doesn't love pizza is a garbage individual who should roll themselves up in a carpet, like the trash sushi they are, and commit an act of Bushido. All this should be done in an effort to rid their family of the dishonor they bring upon their kin's name when they conversationally say, "I'm not into pizza. I don't know why, I just don't like pizza."

Loving pizza doesn't make you special. Loving it from a young age doesn't qualify one to own a pizzeria. If that were the case, Charles Edward Cheese, DBA Chuck E. Cheese, would be producing a long line of pizzeria owners.

To succeed in a restaurant takes a lot of failures, a lot of trials and tribulations, a lot of eating crow, for very little thanks. You will never take a bow in front of an audience. You will never get a standing ovation after a hard night of work on the pizza line. If you're lucky, one day, you might get an award, and you might have a few people that acknowledge it. That's the best case in terms of accolades and appreciation for your efforts.

The subtle joy of seeing a kid ask their parents to go to your pizzeria, a date night choosing your pizzeria, or a graduation party choosing your pizzeria to enjoy their special moment is as good as it gets. Don't get me wrong, that's pretty good if you're into that type of thing, which I am.

What You Get from a Pizzeria

What's in it for you, then? What you could achieve here is a lasting contribution to your local culture. You can have the knowledge that no one owns you. You probably won't get a mansion, or five-star vacations, or yachts, or new Corvettes—maybe a convertible, but it will be a Mazda Miata before it's a Corvette. You won't have the corner office, but did you really want that? You'll miss out on a bunch of '90s furniture with motivational posters or worse, landscape paintings from Hobby Lobby on the wall as you listen to the Muzak version of MacArthur Park on your walk to the drinking fountain in a JoS. A. Bank suit that doesn't fit right.

Did you want to wait in line to eat lunch at the corporate café or bring your lunch to work in a baggie like a fifth grader, or do you prefer making your own lunch in your kitchen? Do you want to drive that nice car in bumper-to-bumper traffic at 5 p.m., or tired after working for yourself at 11 p.m. with no one on the road? Maybe it's me, but when I think of the 9 to 5 world, I get the heebie-jeebies. All I can hear is Ray Liotta's line from *Goodfellas*, that 9 to 5 people are saps, dead already, no balls. (I legally can't quote it verbatim, but it's at the 17:45 mark in the film.)

So, for all my warnings, I will say this; this job is pretty cool. When Cubicle Gary dies, only his immediate family will notice because corporate cog life doesn't contribute to the culture. That's not the case for restaurant owners. If affecting culture and making an impact gives you the yawns, then once more, this isn't for you. It's not going to work out because you don't care about impact, your priorities lie elsewhere, and THAT IS FINE; do something else.

There's No Faking It in the Pizza Business

The restaurant and pizza industry is not filled with Fyrefest and Theranos CEOs faking their way to the top. It is impossible in this industry to fake it 'til you make it, or in their case, fake it 'til you fail it. You fail at the beginning. You get fired or you close.

If you're really, really good at making pizza, and you think you have an amazing pizza recipe, then goooood for yooooouuuu. That doesn't matter. Why? Great food is only the price of entry. The HR, the marketing, the sheer agility, and the marathon it takes to run a restaurant will destroy your love of pizza-making unless it's hard-coded into your brain.

After fifteen years of this, I know now that I should have failed. I should have failed multiple times. Here's why I and WE didn't. Because when everything falls to a complete mess, I don't. I nut up, and I say, "OK, world, let's do this."

I am not a genius; I am not God's gift to pizza-making. I'm just a guy who doesn't like to fail out of spite, and my brother and business partner Jim is the same way. If you're stupid for this industry like we are, welcome aboard, let's get to work.

For more advice on opening a pizzeria, you can find [Un sliced](#) on Amazon.

Mike Bausch is an industry leader whose restaurant, Andolini's Pizzeria, is a top ten pizzeria in the US, as named by TripAdvisor, BuzzFeed, CNN, and USA Today. Andolini's began in 2005 and has grown to five pizzerias, two gelaterias, two food hall concepts, a food truck, and a fine dining restaurant by 2019. Mike is a World Pizza Champion, a Guinness Book world record holder, and a writer for Pizza Today. Mike is part of a Marine Corps family who has lived across America from New York to California. Mike calls Tulsa home and lives with his wife, Michelle, and son, Henry.