



Counter Service.

Volume 2.

Issue 2: Service

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Editor in Chief:

Joshua Hamlet

Editorial Assistant:

Sarah Boisjoli

Designer:

Matthew Feddersen

We take submissions of any kind, really. Counter Service is a platform where we like to talk about what happens around the table and the edges of the food world. That doesn't mean you have to talk about food, but most likely it will come up in your submission at some point. We look for fiction, nonfiction, personal essays, poetry, playlists, photography, graphic design, vignettes, obsession pieces, illustration, and profiles of people/places/things/ingredients/etc.

Each issue does revolve around a central theme, but largely this theme is a guideline and not a rubric. If you feel so inspired to write/photograph/design something and it doesn't fit our theme, let us take a look anyways and we'll make it work some way or another. For examples, peep us on our website for the latest issue.

hello@counterservicemag.com



Cover image by Erika da Silva

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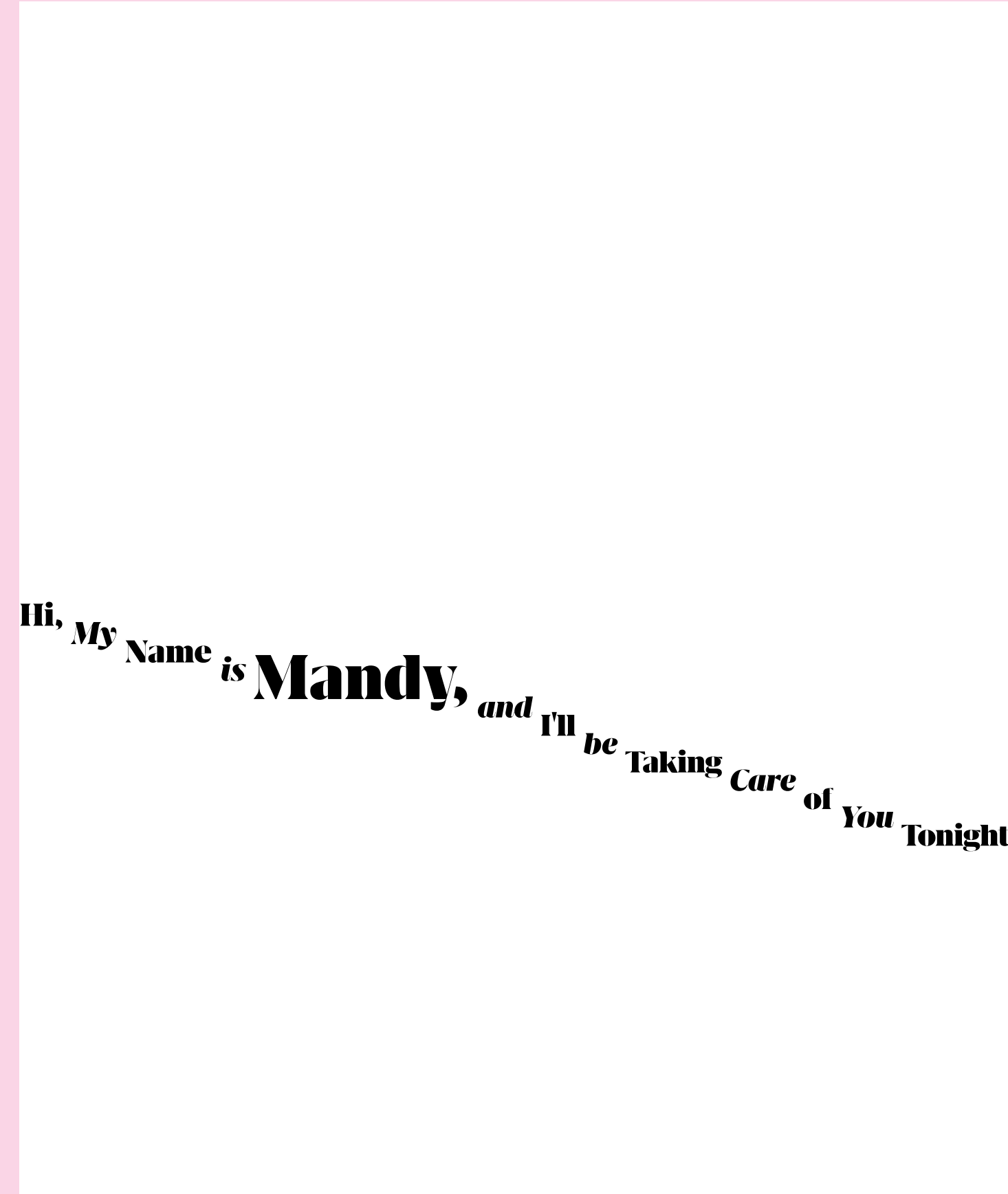
A note from the editor

For a while now I have held the belief that everyone, at some point in their life, should work in the service industry and be a teacher. To me, these two jobs are real life training on how to communicate, sympathize & empathize, compromise with and listen to other people in your community. These two industries teach you compassion, how to prioritize and act quickly on your feet; they help you learn delegation and can be a crash course in all different sorts of personalities.

In this issue writers, painters, poets, photographers, and illustrators help shed a little more light on what SERVICE can mean. We talk about styles of service, being in service of, and the different between service and hospitality (and there is *certainly* a difference). We write about their interactions as a server and hierarchy that we today work so hard to break down; in Jasmine's piece she so powerfully notes this in a simple sentence: *I am at your service, but I am not your servant.*

We talk about service as guest, and as host in our own homes. Those quiet moments where an entire day exists before you even get to work and those quiet moments when you might be in service without a soul to serve but yourself. Chefs and Somms touch on how service starts in the kitchen, in the cellar, before a captain or waiter or assistant might even greet and water the table.

I am so desperately proud of the work these artists put together for this issue. I hope you enjoy.



Lyz Pfister

I was out to dinner not long ago with friends visiting from the States. I’d taken them to Henne, one of my favorite restaurants in Berlin – a frill-less local place where the kitchen serves half of a perfectly crisped chicken with a slice of thick bread, coleslaw, potato salad, and that’s it. The décor is rustic, the checkered tablecloths draped over hefty wooden tables, and the dark green walls are covered with animal heads and dusty photographs. This is still old Berlin, where service is slow and somewhat surly. There’s no patience for dietary restrictions or substitutions or dawdling over the menu when a waitress is waiting to take your order.

In the US, it’s passé to call someone a waiter or waitress. They’re “servers,” whose purpose is to “serve” you. They’re attuned to your every need. They’re there to fulfil your wishes, make sure you’re happy; they want to “*take care of you.*” But contained within the word is also a sense of volunteerism; “service” is “an act of helpful activity” – it implies a choice. Because

This also seems like a particularly American concept

a server has chosen to guide a diner through his or her eating experience, there’s less of a hierarchy. This also seems like a particularly American concept.

In Berlin, we have waiters and waitresses. They’ll wait around long enough to take your order, but then they’ve got other things to attend to. Being a wait(er/ress) is a job. Fawning is not a part of it.

Going out to eat in Germany can be unnerving for Americans unaccustomed to these norms. Here, no one will ask if you want another beverage or if you’d care for dessert.

They won’t even bring you the bill unless you ask. And service is slow. It can be a long time before anyone comes to take your order. If you don’t signal for attention, no one will approach you. The assumption is that if you need something, you’ll ask.

In Berlin, there’s also the “Berliner Schnauze” to contend with. Inseparable from the city’s local dialect itself, the phrase literally translates to “Berlin muzzle” (as in a dog’s snout), but means something along the lines of “Berlin sass” and characterizes the gruff, coarse, give-and-take sense of humor that often seems more like rudeness than banter. Being able to

understand – and repartee Berliner Schnauze is what marks the true Berliners from the fakes and often feels like a test you have to pass to earn respect.

It isn’t as common to hear Berliner Schnauze anymore. The young, the wealthy, the newly arrived out-of-towners are pushing old Berliners into the city’s outskirts. The lace-curtained smoker’s pubs are being replaced by natural wine bars. Small plates are everywhere; restaurants require reservations; the average price of a meal has doubled in the last ten years. So many of these new establishments are being opened by internationals, who have a

different idea of what service should be and are more attentive to their diners’ unspoken needs and desires.

These days, I find I alter my expectations depending on where I’m going. Is it an old Berlin place? Round the bill up to the nearest euro or two to tip. Is it a new Berlin place? Ten percent is a given. At an old Berlin place, when you sit down at a table, it’s yours for the night, no matter how much or little you order – with no tipping culture, there’s no need to turn tables. At a new Berlin place, you’ve probably got your seat for two hours before the next reservation lunges in. What hasn’t changed

is that service is slow, that no one comes to check in on you, that you, the diner, are the orchestrator of your own experience.

But look how I’ve digressed. I was at good, old-Berlin Henne ordering three half chickens, a few orders of coleslaw and potato salad, and a round of beers for our table. When the waitress left, my friend looked at me and said, “Was the waitress giving you trouble?”

“Yes,” I replied, “But I gave it right back, and now she likes us.” Not that it made the service any faster.

There's Something About Bloody Marys

Kristen Tauer

Bloody Mary
Bloody Mary
Bloody--

Oh, shit.

To this day, I partially -- mostly -- blame the highball glasses at The Dutch. They were top heavy and angled; shaped like an Olympic swimmer’s back, wide mouth inverting down to a small circular base. Usually, they worked out fine. But I always said they were an accident waiting to happen.

An innocuous day, not unlike any other: a corporate group of Millennials came in for a work lunch. Like usual, it was busy; space was tight everywhere, but particularly at the three two-tops pushed together and inconveniently jammed into an elevated penned-off corner.

The first person ordered a Blood Mary, setting off a chain reaction: eight Bloody Marys, and off to a good start.

One of the bartenders arranged each drink, topped with a skewered pickled Okra, in a circle atop a large matted tray, delicately placing the final drink in the center.

“You got this?”

Looking back, I wish I had known my limits; I wish I had broken service rules and placed the tray down on a neighboring table and served each drink one-by-one. But by then, the points of finer service had been drilled too deep into my psyche. Placing trays down on tables was for mall restaurants (love them); delicate and precarious balance was for an elevated level of service.

Where does dropping a tray of bloody Marys onto a guest fall on that spectrum?

As I removed and placed the drinks, the center of balance of the tray shifted. Eventually, I was unable

to recalibrate in time to stop the tray from collapsing off the side of my palm. I caught it, but not before the remaining glasses had fallen over and rip-tide poured onto the crisp white button down of seat five.

It was my worst nightmare. My first instinct was to hide. Instead, I convinced a colleague to take their food order.

For some, working in hospitality is a lifelong career; for others, it’s a comma en route to something else. At the time, I didn’t know which camp I fell in, but I cared deeply about the process of hospitality. I drew maps of Bushwick for foreign tourists who wanted to feel the pulse of New York culture; I gave away poetry books to regulars who read Bukowski at the bar. Marinating a guest in tomato juice and vodka was the opposite of what I set out for; it was a “Carrie”-esque humiliation, for both of us. A juiced up work meeting cut short. No amount of soda water would undo the mess.

The victim was surprisingly chill about the whole incident. I mean, can you imagine? Being drenched in Bloody Marys? Maybe he felt bad for me; genuine remorse goes a long way. Maybe he was secretly relieved at being given an out, an opportunity to go home. And surely it made for a great story back at the office:

Where’s Steve?

Oh, the waitress spilled a tray of Bloody Mary’s on him.

Hopefully he grabbed a slice on the way home. And who knows, maybe he met the love of his life en route. *Wanna grab a drink sometime?* I’d like to think so. Either way, I served him a memorable experience. Isn’t that ultimately the point?

The rest of the group gave me something, too.

They still tipped me twenty percent.

The Service Monologues:

Lessons Learned & Knowledge Gained from a Woman in Industry

Jasmine Senaveratna

Service as performance.

In 2012, I used to call it “Tears by Ten.” I could handle verbal abuse, but usually broke by 10pm during service. In my mid 20s, I regarded my manager title as one would a medal after battle. I would take on with pride (and, in retrospect, with a high threshold for bullshit) every harsh criticism spat at me by superiors; over-the-top flirtations by guests; repetitious disciplinary action upon servers and bartenders with whom I treaded the precious, slippery, territory of friendship post-service. It was an endurance sport on all fronts.

Emotional and physical endurance was indeed a self-medicated sport; A childhood based upon my merits, and my acceptance of that game, explained the love of the sport. My parents wanted so much for me, of me, and for good reason. My mother was a mixed southerner growing up in South Boston, Virginia, during the late 1960s. My father was a Ceylonese man growing up during the late 1940s in a former British colony, was named after Winston

Churchill and endured more than I could fathom. They equated education and achievement as armor protecting me from discrimination and disregard as a second class citizen. Most of all (and silently) they hoped a good education and the fruits of it would keep me far and away from what they saw while raising me during the heroin crisis in 1980s Baltimore. And so I followed their instructions. And while a good college landed me in New York City and a fair stint in healthcare kept me there, the beautiful loopholes of the city led me to hospitality. I found my vocation, but needed to excel and ascend just as I did within the walls of academia. So jumping from the frying pan into the fire at 25, I associated the physicality and immediacy of the industry with the notion that the more I suffered emotionally and physically, and the more I endured, the more I would succeed.

So here I was, a few years later in South Williamsburg, feet shredded by high heels,



emotions shredded by high volume service and trying to stay afloat, thinking I made it. What did I do? I carried my childhood, need to be rewarded, aim to please, and inner panic (Is this pain normal? Why am I putting up with this? Will I cover rent? If the F/G takes forever, how am I going to get home at 3am?), put it behind me, and served my guests. And when the basement flooded that night, I tied up the bottom of that Anna Sui dress (sample sale, \$50; retail therapy), took off my black heels, and mopped the hell out of that floor. A little later I went right back upstairs, sweat and tears wiped away, and made sure everyone had a great time.

Service unto others.

In 2015, a server and bartender of mine, Sarah, was very quickly becoming a dear friend. It was late spring/early summer, and FOH was getting ready for service.

The air was different. Sarah always kept the room and team alive with an admirable humor and liveliness. She is a New Yorker through and through -- a complex, thoughtful firecracker and artist with a big heart. So her quieter disposition threw me off, but I decided to wait a bit before approaching her.

I treaded upon this connection, though inevitable. Empathy is a common denominator among service industry, and a choice is made to wield it or not,

and when to do so. I use it as a balancing act with guests; empathy reminds me that nothing is about me, and more about detecting what immediate need is at hand, how I can relate to that need, and how to attend to it directly, naturally, organically, without feeling any personal slight in regards to what seemed to be missing in the first place.

This utility to connect, if not skill, becomes tricky when falling into your lap personally on the clock. Sarah was a server I came to care for as a friend, and after learning the slippery slope of such a relationship in the gig prior, I was a bit nervous about losing a friend if and when manager/server politics stepped in. But a bit helplessly and selfishly, I didn't want to lose the inklings of a sisterhood. I believe that in this particular job in Union Square, having gained a number of dear friends there, I learned the importance of not only serving guests, but also serving the needs of your team as people. It is a precious opportunity that when taken can be immensely rewarding on both ends.

And so I leapt forward and allowed myself to serve to Sarah's needs as a friend and not a manager. Come to find out, there was something she wanted that she did not get. I felt it, she felt it, we felt it. And through acknowledgement and affirmation, which we all need on the brightest and darkest of days, she got through her day and her shift.

And I breathed a sigh of relief professionally and personally, having learned a bit more about my fragility, humanity and sense of service.

Service versus servitude.

I am at your service, but I am not your servant. We have all contended the spans of service, its boundaries, its gray areas.

I serve. I have spent and intend to spend more time learning about my guests, their needs, grapes, plants, cuts of protein, lighting, music... I'm not done and there lies the beauty and craft.

Service is skilled labor. It is intense on one's limbs and mind, and unpredictable. And even then, elements can be intangible, immeasurable. But where's the physical boundary? What's the emotional tipping point? When does what is asked of you, demanded of you, cross the line?

I learn answers to this every day. I understand that in order to pour from my own cup into yours, mine must be full. I love fanciful high heels during service, for my own pleasure. When I was 25, I would have kept them on through closing. Now, clogs are on by 9pm, 9:30pm. If not, I can't serve you because my feet are in agony. I can't be fully present. You don't need to know that, but I do.

I learned to not cower away from misinformed remarks about my role. Because I am female, because I'm wearing a dress, because I look young, etc. I am not correcting a guest, per se, when called the hostess, or plainly, girl-- but illuminating the situation and affirming that I am the manager and happy to host you. Because that is my job; that's my hired purpose here, and it's a detriment to you-- hell, to me-- if you don't know who's held accountable for your service.

In grim situations, where male guests conflate hospitality and my gender with female servitude, the curtains are raised and alarms rung. No performance for you if you can't respect the players; staff are notified, the governance in charge alerted and made aware I won't put up with it. For too long I took others' misogyny home. Played the moment in my head over and over, regretted not standing up for myself or being stood up for, felt less of a human being, felt disempowered. Those moments drained my cup of the humanity I had in myself, in order to see the humanity in others.

At the end of the shift, at the end of service, I have to sit with and respect myself. That entire reality began years ago. It continues today, from the moment when I walked into the restaurant. How I see myself, is how I see you. How I serve myself, is how I serve you.

Andie Dinkin

Illustrations: Andie Dinkin
Foreword: Josh Hamlet

Andie Dinkin, in my humble opinion, is an artistic force. I had the pleasure of meeting Andie a few years back, when I served her and a group of celebratory friends oysters and extra champagne on her birthday. Two years later, I ended up at a dinner party in the backyard of her LA apartment. Flash forward three more weeks and I was at her opening in Manhattan for *Fish Served in Satin Slippers*.

Along with luckily knowing Andie personally, I'm lucky to know Andie artistically, and can properly gush over her pieces. Her paintings, drawings, etches, are all remarkably about food, service, community, separation, and a damn good party, while also being so conscious of current affairs and playing hard with absurdity.



Detail of "Beatrice and Mildred"



Disasters in Central Park



Dali's Holiday Feast



Beatrice and Mildred



Red Dinner Scene III



IL BAGNINO

C. Jason Moran

I squint against the glint
And the gleam of the summer sun,
Which hums high above the pines.
It's ivory-dry beneath
The cliffs this morning.

The beach stones bake
Between the sdrai.
And bathers stagger to the water,
Chalky dust spinning spirals
Around their feet.

The bagnino passes.
A fanny pack,
Red like an apricot
And plump with euros,
Hugs his barebone hips.

He's got these
Bandy, tennis bowlegs.
Buzzed, wheaty hair.
A gold chain traces
His tanned collarbone.

Lost in his silhouette,
Cast white in the hot sky,
I can feel the sea
And salt and sweat
Clotting on my brow.

He passes again.
Our eyes meet like
A house and a wildfire.
He crouches beneath my umbrella,
Lifting its edges into the sunlight.

Cosa posso portarti?
Cold beer. Please.
Mozzarella. On lemon leaves.
Please. And thank you.
Prego.
He jets off,
Ass wagging
In his scarlet shorts
As he saunters back
Over the pebbles.

Three Italian girls,
All lean and lank and
Looking like boys,
Jump big into the water:
A glimmer splash.

What's the word for the glimmer
Of sun on the water?
And, like that, the bagnino's back.
My smile snarls high into my cheek
Like the hound I am.

Distracted,
He clacks the beer bottle
Hard on the table. An apology.
He empties the tray,
He jets off.

Eau de sunscreen.
Brassy-green eyes.
Flat chest slabs.
Neon disco wristband.
Stop. You're on the ropes.

You know how this ends.
Your obsession cleaved in two
Pretty halves on the floor.
It'll feel just like skin on ribs.
Drink your damn beer.

Artwork by Erika da Silva



Negative Space

Clothes: Jessica Pike
Art Direction & Photography: Mallory Melander
Mannequin: Marion Beaudiquez

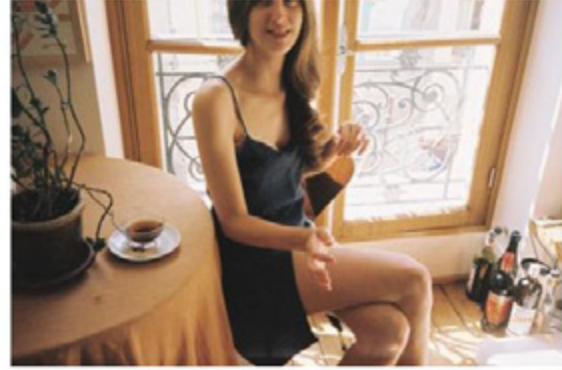
I moved to Paris in February of 2015 and immediately started working at Clamato in the 11th Arrondissement. On my first day I met Jess, a new bartender who had started just days before me. She had recently moved to Paris from London and was working on a line of clothes while also tending bar. We quickly became friends and found ourselves talking about how different the work in restaurants in Paris was compared with our previous posts in New York and London. I left Clamato only after a few weeks but Jess and I remained friends and decided to make a loobook for some of her clothes. We didn't have any money nor did we know any models so we asked another server at Clamato, Marion, to model for us.

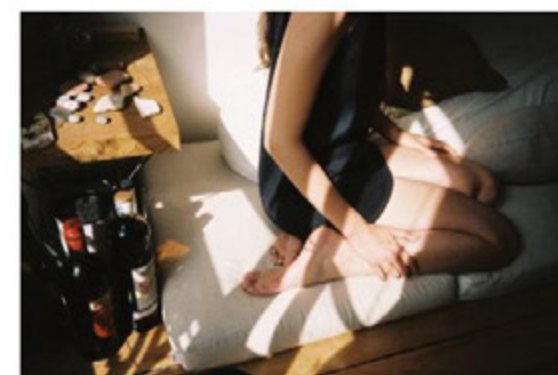
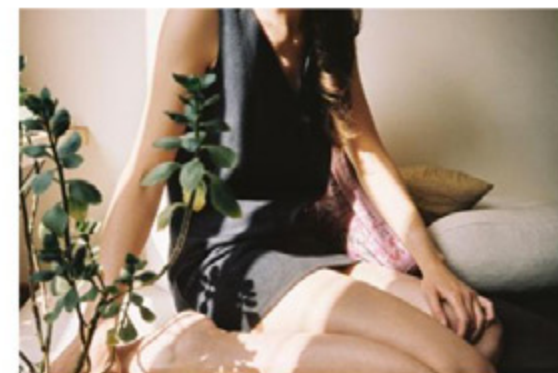
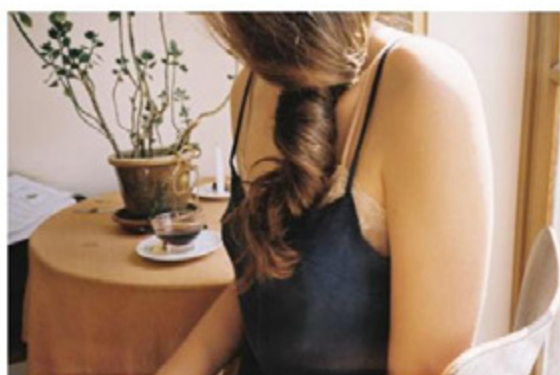
I transposed what I missed about my life while working service in New York into my small apartment in Paris; long moments alone, napping, planning trips. Mornings with nothing to do but read a good book, drink too much coffee, and become all too familiar with the mid afternoon shadows around my apartment. Jess's clothes and Marion were the focus of the shoot, but so too were the geometric shapes I knew would appear at roughly 9:43 AM or the amber-colored half-full bottle of Suze I forgot was in the corner of the room until the photos were developed.

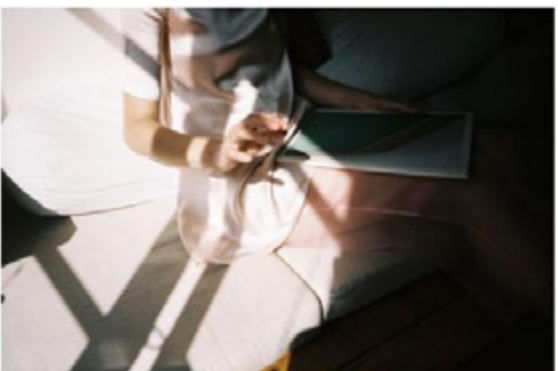
I'm still nostalgic for the shapes my service life took in New York and find these pictures are a sweet reminder of sweet negative space.

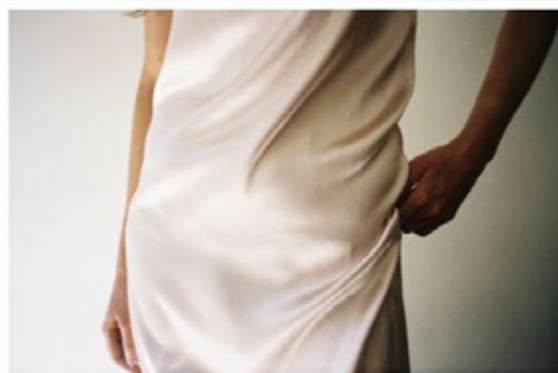
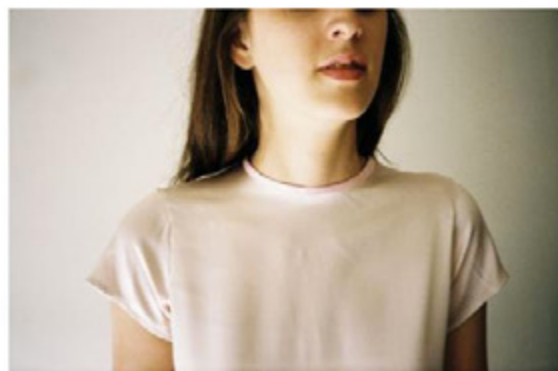














What's new? What now? What else? What's next?



Mid Service Snacking

Rae Kramer

One of the luxuries of being in a kitchen as a professional cook is the snacking. The long hours, the hot kitchens or the tedious projects get in the way, really, of the snacks. Happen to work a high-end wedding? Just pair that with leftover caviar on the few remaining pommes gaufrettes (AKA potato chips); the most extravagant chips and dip that make even the most type A event planner worth the while.

With so many snacks to be had, we all find ourselves creating new combinations for one another on the line. It's all about finding your favorite bites and making them portable and fast. These bites happen all over the kitchen, the remains of a salad in a mixing bowl, the resting pans of meats and the crispy edges that just aren't beautiful enough to make the plate.

What makes these the best bites? Easy answer: flavor. Our goal on a plate is to send a composed dish for the guest to eat and have an experience from start to finish. But after a salad has been seasoned and mixed, there is the bottom of the bowl with those extra chiles and oversaturated pieces of cheese that satisfy those distracting cravings for a salty, crunchy snack. Which also helps to answer the question, what are we craving?

I spent a few days asking around, finding out what we all like to munch on mid service. The consensus, protein. Not a lot people said sugar (my indulgence) and even fewer people referenced the goodness of whole fruits and vegetables. Like the oxidation levels in oolong tea, the most variance in mid service snacking, meat and carbs.

So there you are, on the line, mid-service, craving something salty and meaty and carby and fatty. What's next?

Most professional kitchens have butter or olive oil floating around on multiple stations, and nothing can beat a slice of bread and butter. But this is your snack, what else? Add that pickled thing from someone else's station and a slice of charcuterie from Gar Mo or a scrap piece of meat from the meat station. Finishing touches; maldon and a chili. Done. Quick. Portable, easy to smash, easy to pass and share.

Most Recent Mid Service Snack:

A popped Burrata: olive oil, chili oil, honey, maldon. BREAD!

Home-Made Service

Josh Hamlet

The other night, after many dm exchanges which lead to email correspondences, I finally set a date to go eat some of Cressida’s food. That is to say, I was invited to dinner at Greening’s Fine Foods. I can’t remember how I came upon Greening’s Fine Foods; was it Erika da Silva’s paintings that got me to Cressida’s catering, or was it the other way around? Either way, I was excited to go to a dinner party that had promoted a 5-course meal, with wines from Henry’s in Bushwick, in what I assumed was an insanely well curated space.

Around 7:15pm I parked my car on Flushing right across the street from what was an all but abandoned looking building, nestled in between some large grey-concrete monsters. I have to admit, aside from knowing Cressida Greening was great with food and that this was a dinner in a home, I did not know what to expect.

Cut to me standing, probably with mouth slightly agape, in Cressida’s loft-style apartment. After

walking down a narrow hall, the ground-floor space opens up into an open-concept apartment with just one half-partition wall dividing the living space and the backroom. Immediately to my right is this industrial style kitchen, where two cooks stood in aprons and hats embroidered with Greening’s logo. In front of me are two wonderful hosts, servers, offering me a cocktail and to take my coat. Beyond is this apartment that’s been divided only by furniture into three living spaces: the kitchen, the living area, and the bedroom.

I grabbed a cocktail, and went and grabbed a seat on the day-bed, draped with a sheepskin and took in my curated-meets-industrial surroundings.

The decor and atmosphere captured the design meets curator meets millennial meets Booklynite vibe. There was this very thoughtfully crafted environment that I had just entered: mid century modern undertones met with 70’s decorator with a dash of Memphis. What’s amazing about it was that



most of the art on the walls or the pieces creating this vibe were also from local retailers and artists; as I looked around the room I saw *Porter James, Adaptations, Coming Soon, Henry’s, Tilit*. Cressida was able to bring the creativity of Berlin and the expansiveness of LA and the grunge of Greene Street Lofts in the 80’s, to her Brooklyn home.

As we were ushered into the backroom, it was clear: there was going to be a through-line of thoughtfully curated experiences all night long. As I found a place at the long table set for 16 people bookended by a bar and a wine collection that small cafes would ogle over, I was overcome with happiness. It was the same feeling of when I used to hang back from a hike group to appreciate the view a bit longer. It was the same warmth I felt as I put my phone down and looked out on the glacier in front of me in Iceland. Or the when I grabbed a tartar and glass of Riesling at bar 1 at estela on a Thursday night and fell into the hum of the restaurant.

I was so happy because I was experiencing the best of both food worlds: I was at a restaurant, eating restaurant quality food, drinking wines curated for the five courses and me and the other guests too, and felt the hustle of the service around me. But, at the very same time, I was in someone’s home, invited over, able to move about the space and meet my fellow invitees.

I was so happy because this is what dining and hospitality and service are all about. What Cressida was able to do was establish a sense of place, distinctly New York with hints of other progressive food towns, and she was also able to interact with current restaurant trends and bring that all home. Literally.

As I mentioned, we ate incredibly delicious food, and what came out to being close to 10 courses, we opened countless bottles of wine, and left that evening knowing that in terms of “dining experiences”, this was the tops.

Half Baked

Quinn Rose Levine



As a high school stoner, I pretty much scored when it came to my first place of employment. *Cherry Garcia* as far as the eye could see, an unlimited supply of freshly made waffle cones and getting to zone the f out in the back making swirly decorations on countless birthday ice cream cakes. My friends would come in droves to hang out in the parking lot and smoke bowls behind the dumpster before heading off to their next stop. They would leave me behind with the manager Gabe whose neck was DRIPPING in hemp necklaces intertwined with glass beads that he scored at various grateful dead concerts.

There were also customers. That was the hard part. We would be so ripped, we had take turns standing in the walk in freezer to sober up. My 16-year-old self would stumble out to the front eyes blazing red with my pigtail braids ready to scoop some *Phish Food* for the next guest.

The tiny building was right on the main road in between two towns. We would get a variety of folks coming through to get their sugar fix. But, seeing that it's ice cream, we had mostly kids with their parents. After taking down a fresh packed bowl with my co-worker, we heard a kid say,

"Dad! It smells like a skunk in here!"

I peer out onto the floor and the Dad is staring at me with a grin. My head was screaming at

me "*HE KNOWS. OH GOD HE KNOWS!*" My hands were shaking as I scoop his *Half Baked* into a cup, avoiding eye contact at all cost. "I said a cone," said the Dad.

Shit shit shit shit shit. Keep it together. So, being in the state I was in, I transferred his ice cream into another cup and handed it to him with a confident smile.

"I SAID a CONE.", laughed the Dad.

I quickly made the switcheroo and gave him his cone and backed up against the counter smiling nervously. He handed us cash and looked at us for one last time, laughed to himself, then threw \$20 into our tip jar.

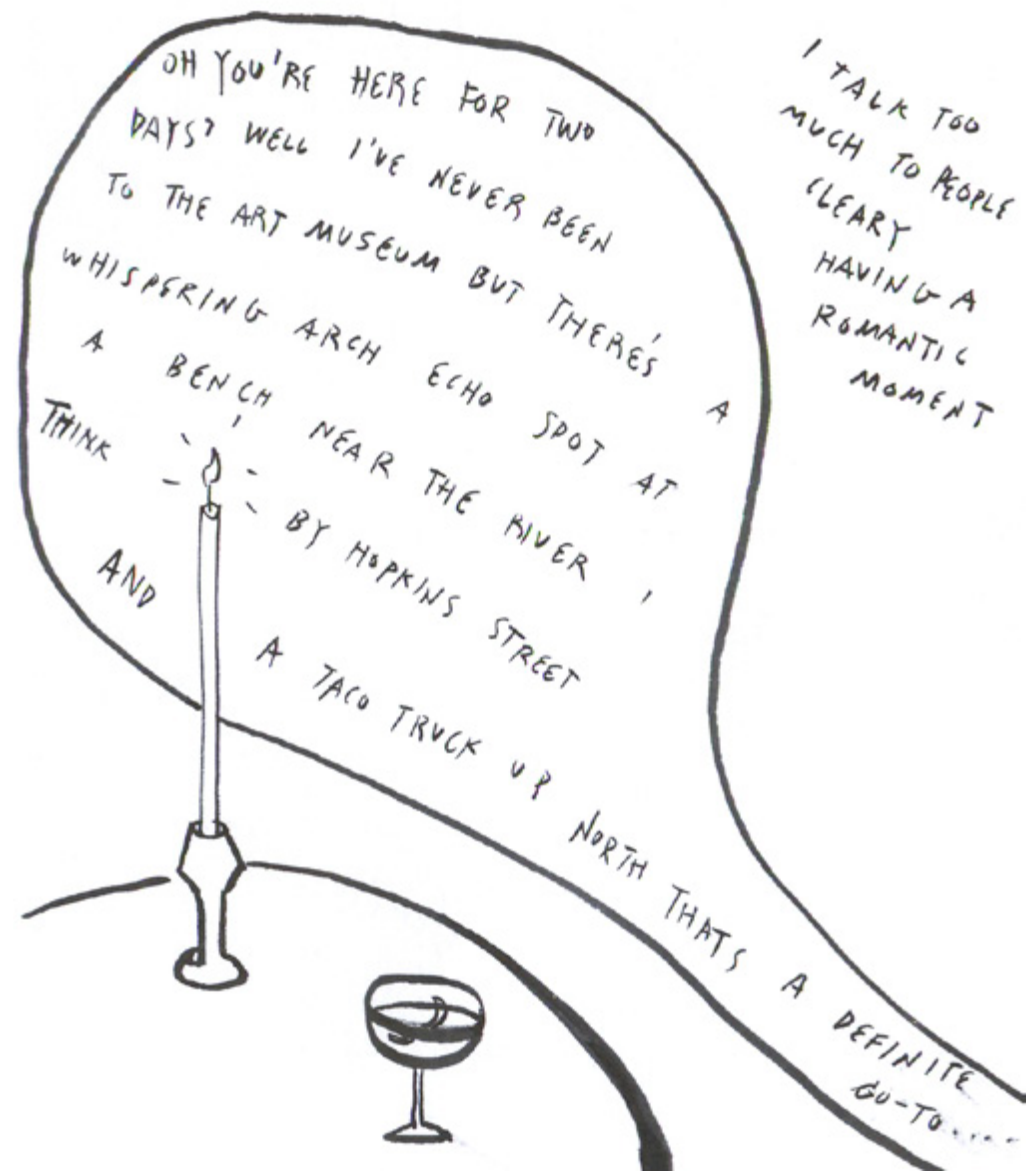
In between scooping and smoking ganja, my favorite activity was decorating the cakes. I didn't have to talk to anyone. I'd hang out in the back mixing the butter cream with food coloring to make groovy colors and designs. I'd layer *Mint Chocolate Cookie* with *New York Super Fudge Chunk* with extra cookie crunch in between loving the idea that I made this cake for some kid out there.

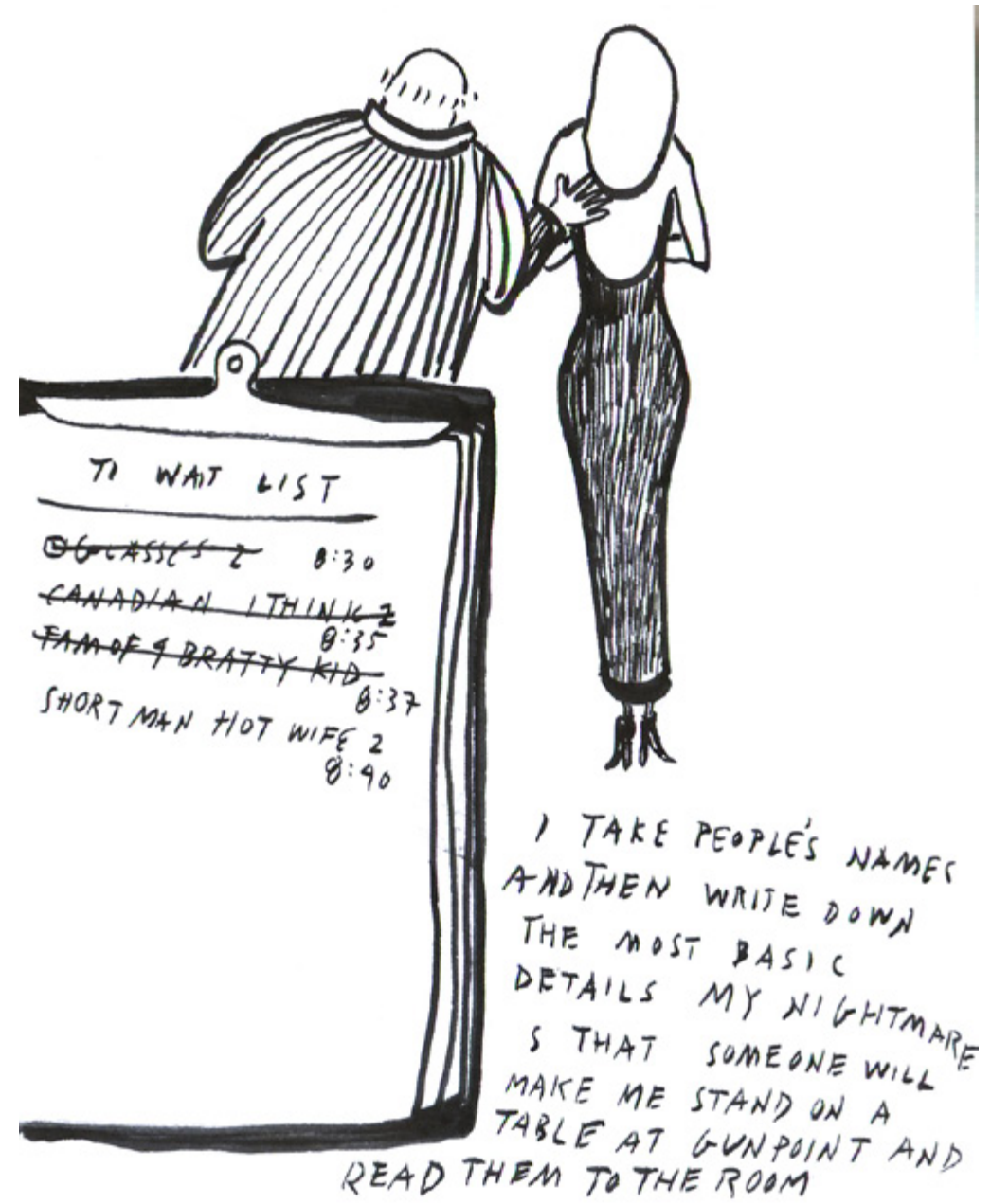
During the slow hours we'd sit on the coolers and eat straight out of the giant tubs of Vermont's finest. I'd pick out all the almonds from *Coconut Almond Fudge* and freely shovel *Coffee Coffee Coffee Buzz Buzz Buzz* hot fudge sundaes into my face. It was a good time to be alive & stoned.



Pia Peterson







I'm Obsessed With Washing My Friend's Hands

Sophie Lipitz

Enter, your friends whom you love,
dripping in city grime and the stress
of the NYC winter slog.

Meet, you and a basin of aromatic
silken just warm enough water.
The apartment, hazy. Incense meets
the slow burn of Palo Santo sticks
in the last beam of sunlight all day.
Sumo plays on a record player, lazy.
And your hands are holding their
hands, outstretched. So you pour,
lovingly, carefully, over three shared
hands. Rinse twice and then rub the
floral water into the back of your
neck or down your face.

Ingredients:

- 1 basin, think cow-milking urn chic
meets anthropology chamber pot
- 1 large pitcher filled with water
- 1 tablespoon rosewater
- 2 teaspoons Argan oil
- 2 tablespoons orange blossom water
- A kettle

Love is washing a houseguest’s hands.
A pitcher of warm water with all of
the ingredients should be prepared
prior to your guest’s arrival. As friends
old and new fill your space greet each
with the offer of a hand washing.
Before each wash top of your pitcher
with hot water from the kettle to pour
at the optimal temperature.



Welcome to the Best Restaurant in Town: Your Dinner Table

Sharon Brenner

We all have ideas of what good service is, but sometimes it's what happens after the meal that reveals how we experience hospitality. How did you feel when you left the table, walked away from the restaurant?

Obviously food and company are key to a good dining experience, but it's good service that functions as the conduit between kitchen and table; it navigates the meal. When I leave a restaurant in a warm food-induced haze, a smile on my face, feeling like I was temporarily immersed in another reality, it implies that I had a good time, and that is often attributable to good service, whether it was at a taco truck or a world-famous fine dining restaurant.

So how do we translate that experience into a dinner party at home? Some people find hosting daunting, focusing on perfection or being concerned about their cooking skills, unfairly comparing themselves to a restaurant. But if we shift the emphasis of hosting from the idea of service to hospitality, the thought of playing hostess-of-the-year becomes much more achievable. Hosting a meal should be FUN, and unlike restaurants, hosts have a major advantage; they know their audience and they don't care about getting paid. This

home field advantage should imbue hosts with a real sense of confidence.

Hosting also gives us the opportunity to reflect on some of our favorite dining experiences outside of the house and to try to mimic them at home, incorporating a bit of our own personality along the way. Ambience, music at a pleasant decibel level, coursing meals (or not) in a way that feels good to you (and hopefully to your guests as well)...these are all ways that hosts can set the mood for a great dinner party. Home hospitality also offers intimacy that a restaurant could never rival, which is what makes home dining special. When the secret formula ultimately boils down to [food + drink + people = fun], it's hard to worry too much.

Yes, cooking well takes practice, but even the most introductory chef de cuisine can harness the idea of relaxed hospitality to throw a memorable dinner party without stressing too much. When your guests leave feeling like they've just been on vacation, nobody was looking at their phone and maybe people are a bit tipsy, well, that's a successful dinner party in my book...and none of that requires being a good cook.



Gay Restaurants in New York City

Jordan Shavarebi

Once upon a time in New York City, there were restaurants that were, for all intents and purposes, exclusively gay. This doesn't mean that straight people would be turned away at the door, but rather, that no straight person would go there unless they wanted everyone to think they were gay. That didn't stop brazen Roy Cohn, the wicked and closeted lawyer immortalized in Tony Kushner's *Angels in America*, from going to one such place called Uncle Charlie's. It was the '70s when he was surrounded by attractive young men in a booth, and a journalist named Doug Ireland practically congratulated him on being seen in a gay restaurant. "It shows you're really surfacing!" said Ireland. Roy replied, "This is a gay restaurant?"

I wanted to seek out these old stalwarts the moment I read about them. Many of these places, which existed in New York as early as the mid 1800s and lasted until the '90s, were shadowy little joints run by the mafia. And yet, they were often staffed by gay people or allies, who not only refrained from kicking gay patrons out of their establishments, but supported them as well.

Stewart's Cafeteria was a 1930s gay and lesbian hangout where late-night crowds on the streets of Greenwich Village could catch a glimpse of queer life through the plate glass windows. The San Remo Café was where beat poets, dancers, and actors mingled with LGBT patrons in the '40s and '50s. And Portofino was the Italian restaurant where Edie Windsor, known for challenging the federal Defense of Marriage Act, met her partner for life, Thea Clara Spyer, in 1963.

These were spaces where gay New Yorkers knew they could be themselves. They could show affection for one another there, and they could also, perhaps more importantly, talk about the issues that were vital to them and their community. They could speak openly and without code words or whispers.

The waiters didn't mind. And there were no bartenders who might refuse to serve them. Today, idea of gay restaurants have all but vanished. There are certainly still restaurants (even in New York) where someone identifying as LGBTQAI might not feel comfortable, but they're much fewer and further between than before. There's no urgent need for exclusively gay restaurants anymore.

And yet, when we find restaurants that feel intimate enough to have those private gay conversations, or loud and sloppy enough to sit on the same side of the booth and make out for a little, it still feels special. It's nice when a waiter compliments you on what she assumes to be a successful first date, or a bartender offers dating advice after overhearing a good honest vent about a relationship. Being accepted as you are is a novel feeling that hasn't worn off for myself or many gay people today, contrary to popular belief.

For me, there's the diner by my first apartment, where the elderly waitresses wouldn't bat an eye as my then-boyfriend and I discussed our sex life over post-coitus chocolate cake. There's Saraghina in Bed Stuy, where our server practically became a third wheel to a very special evening I spent with someone I would eventually say goodbye to. There's I Sodi, where I consoled a coworker who had just broken up with his girlfriend, and I Sodi again, where the coworker and I returned several times later as boyfriends—which was messy. But however messy it was, our bartender was steadfast. She didn't judge us when we cried, or left with our hands practically down our pants. And Rita Sodi definitely didn't give a fuck.

So, although I wasn't able to sit down for a meal at Uncle Charlies like Roy Cohn, I suppose I've been to plenty of "gay restaurants" in New York City. And I don't take that for granted.



Pasta

Chloe Chappe

Lady

For the last year I was the pasta maker for a restaurant in Los Angeles. The long hours I spent on my feet, working on the noodles and dough brought my thoughts to the Italian grandmothers - the original pasta makers. In that way, my pasta making became an unspoken homage to those women.

Becoming the (one and only) pasta maker at this restaurant was a solo adventure in both learning and confidence. My station was in the wine room. It was just me, the wine and the pasta in that semi-secret place. When the health inspectors came, I would get locked in there. “It’s just an electrical closet,” they told the inspectors. New employees who weren’t privy yet to my undisclosed office location would see me a few times a day: at line up, family meal and when I clocked out in the middle of service. “You’re still here?” they would ask.

In that pasta office of mine, I hand rolled cavatelli for hours a day. I stretched elasticky picci noodles with my fingers, floured them and froze them for service. When making pappardelle, a thick cut egg noodle, mornings began by cracking flats of eggs, separating and weighing the yolks and squishing them into the flour to make the dough. It was a sticky dough that adhered to my hands leaving them looking like a yellow swamp creature’s and I loved high-fiving people after making that dough. The dough got very long when laminated; I had to stand up on a bar stool to process it through the machine on the last step. It was meditative making the doughs each day, kneading them to their different needs, rolling, cutting and flouring them.

I was alone in my physical work space and one of only two women on the back of house team; I was rarely even in the actual kitchen. So when I think on my time as the pasta maker, the most salient -- aside from my friends -- things I saved, are the thoughts that kept me

company while back there by myself. I thought about what my coworkers were doing in the kitchen, what my friends were doing outside of the restaurant. I thought about the literal hundreds of little cavatelli that I made on the forks of who-knows-how-many guests in the dining room, which, in the ping-pong-like way that the mind works, led me to think about the history of pasta making and how I might fit into it.

After I got off work, I would often find myself reading or watching shows about food. It’s funny that being in a restaurant all day wouldn’t make me sick of food, but I really love food so it was natural. In the first episode of the amazing *Salt, Fat, Acid, Heat*, something clicked for me. In the “Fat” episode, Nosrat travels around Italy researching how the fats of the culture exemplify its history and flavors. She goes to make fettuccini with Benedetta Vitali, the “saint of sofrito.” While making the dough, Nosrat quips to Vitali that one of her jobs at *Chez Panisse* was to make the pasta. As fun as it was to see people’s reactions when asked what I did, I never had anyone to relate to about my work— not even at work. I was the sole pasta maker, the sole all-day occupant of the wine room with the occasional visitor. Watching Nosrat and Vitali make pasta, discussing the ways that women for years have devised maneuvers for rolling out the dough to conserve energy and take care of their bodies – I felt included in the fold.

It was difficult to get time off of work being the only pasta maker so I only took one trip - a short week in May to visit friends from college New York. During that trip I visited Bonnie Slotnick Cookbooks in Manhattan and found a book called *My Last Supper* - a collection of photos of famous chefs and interviews about their ideal last meals by Melanie Dunea. Nancy Silverton, the queen of



pizza, pastas, bread, and salads was a featured chef in the book. Although I was far from my seclusion in the wine room, reading about Silverton’s dreamy Italian gathering including pastas - warmed my heart a little bit. Just thinking about her, her haphazard group of loud Italian friends in her beautiful villa in Umbria, making pasta in the kind of setting that I’d hope to make it in one day, brought to light what my pasta-making really meant to me.

After I left the restaurant, I went to work at an inn in a small town in Loire Valley, France for a month. It had barely been a week

since leaving my job and the solitude of my pasta cave. After that year of working alone I had the confidence to teach someone else; I taught another chef working at the inn how to laminate the pappardelle dough with a small hand crank pasta machine, how to cut the noodles and flour them with semolina. The noodles were so fresh and only took a minute to boil. I never got to eat my pasta at work because it was for the restaurant – that night we shared a hot salty bowl of noodles with salmon, olive oil and wine.

CS @ Home

CS @ Home is a new dinner series doing something very old: inviting people over for dinner.

During this dinner series, we're trying to have a space where talented, thoughtful, creative, dope people come together to talk about food and hospitality and wine and Counter Service.

We set the table for 8, grab some wine, cook some food, and invite people over. The past month we drank some delicious wines from Leon & Son in Clinton Hill, ate a French-influenced small plates meal, and talked about this issue's theme: SERVICE (from being in, to providing to being of).

Later on the Counter Service website you'll be able to tune in, as we recorded the whole thing as a toe-dip into the world of Podcasts.

Thank you again everyone for coming through, and for those who are already excited about the next one. Also a big shout out to Mermaid's Garden on Vanderbilt, The Greene Grape and Leon and Son (both on Fulton!).

Please reach out any time to see if we have an open spot.
XO, CS



A CONDENSED LIST OF TIMES I’VE CRIED DURING SERVICE

Kelly Sullivan and Lillian Devane

- 1 I peeled my finger while making the garnish for a daiquiri.
- 2 I made an ex coworker cry by calling her a brat; later, I also cried.
- 3 Chef implied I was picky.
- 4 I had too many cocktails to make at once.
- 5 One time I worked a catering gig; it was while I was feeling really lonely at my regular job so I was trying to make friends with the bartender and he told me to leave him alone and burn the ice.
- 6 I went to work with a concussion and got confused.
- 7 I got in a fight with my best friend.
- 8 I missed my ex.
- 9 I had to work New Year’s.
- 10 I had to work Valentine’s.
- 11 I had to work my birthday. Actually that I genuinely didn’t mind but I did steal some flowers from a wedding that happened to be going on as a present to myself. Went out for one stupid birthday drink and left them at the bar. When I got home and realized, I cried.
- 12 The sous chef I had a crush on got mad that I re-fired a dish so he wouldn’t let me order my own food at the end of service.
- 13 When I was 23 I worked at a cool Bushwick restaurant and got pregnant. To solidify being cool, I told my then- best friend, a coworker, with little fanfare over text. When I saw her the next day she told me she had been so drunk that she didn’t remember our conversation. I didn’t know how to take care of myself or even that I should and missed only one shift to have the abortion. A few days later, a woman who identified as a ‘home chef’ made me cry. For whatever reason we couldn’t agree on what stracciatella is. (It’s not a dip.) As she reported to my manager, I was a bitch. We were both right.
- 14 The AM staff didn’t polish any wine glasses for dinner service.



Counter Service.