So individual restaurants don’t have to take the high road alone, advocate for statewide and federal policy solutions that guarantee sustainable wages for all restaurant workers. When local politicians use restaurants for their events, tell them you favor laws that support restaurant workers.

Think more deeply about tipping; consider no-tipping models or creative approaches like profit-sharing or job-sharing that reduce disparities between front- and back-of-house.

To avoid wage-theft issues, ensure that your restaurant’s technology and accounting systems are robust enough to accurately capture workers’ actual non-tip credit hours; ensure restaurant managers understand policies on paying overtime, improper distribution of tips and other common issues that lead to wage-theft lawsuits.

Consider adding a surcharge to cover full healthcare with real mental health coverage.

Consider instituting “open-book management,” which fosters a culture of ownership throughout the restaurant, from GM to dishwashers, and enables everyone to understand the company’s financials and their personal role in the company’s success.

Make real dollars available to workers for education and training to move into higher-wage restaurant jobs; hold regularly scheduled performance reviews and explore with workers what they want out of a restaurant career.

Proactively identify diverse talent and, with workers, identify the skills they need to move into higher-paying jobs; consider creating mentoring programs for women and people of color.

Identify the places in your community where workers can get training (culinary, bartending, sommelier, etc.) and make that information readily available to all employees.

Create training materials for various jobs within your company and make them available to workers who want to move up.

Create a “climate of accommodation” that proactively helps people with personal challenges make it in the workplace and move up; reconsider “no call, no show” policies.

Even if your state doesn’t mandate it, provide paid time off/maternity leave, retirement and other programs that incentivize savings. Consider child and family care needs of staff when building the framework for scheduling and job requirements.

Don’t contribute to restaurant industry associations or policy organizations that advocate against state and federal policies that would mandate fair and reliable living wages for all restaurant workers.

Work with restaurant industry associations or groups of restaurants to create shared resources for training workers.
#RestaurantsCould

Take Leadership on Gender Equity & Sexual Violence

DRAFT: Add Your Ideas!

→ Start from the top: Owners make clear, proactive statements on restaurant’s policies and protocols on sexual harassment and gender equity – not just once, but regularly.

→ Conduct regular pre-shift messaging/training on these issues; reinforce when topics are in the news; bring in organizations that do bystander training for all employees; prominently post the Cherry Bombe sexual harassment poster.

→ Don’t take a “cover your ass” approach. If restaurant has an HR director, they should have a company mandate to support workers first, or if no HR director, employees should be provided info on a neutral third-party they know to call on these issues. Never use nondisclosure agreements, mandatory arbitration agreements or retaliation to keep harassment claims secret.

→ Lift up workers who speak out on harassment experiences – don’t participate in blacklisting.

→ Engage men as part of the solution; recommend “That’s What She Said” book about being a workplace ally; discuss power dynamics and what constitutes abuse of power; have clear policies on sexual and social relationships between supervisors and subordinates.

→ Have a clear policy for how to handle sexually harassing customers that supports workers.

→ Take leadership in articulating the connections between “bro culture,” gender equity and LGBTQ issues.

→ Analyze staffing to understand if you have less than 50% non-cis men in various positions and actively work to fix that. Pursue hires and move women/queer people into leadership/management positions.

→ Welcome trans and nonbinary people, ensure dress codes don’t assign specific genders, ensure all single-person bathrooms are all-gender usage. Learn about NY’s Gender Expression Non-Discrimination Act (GENDA), and make sure your restaurant follows the law.

→ Give employees the opportunity to register what pronouns they prefer to use when they start employment, and positively acknowledge later requests to change pronoun preferences.

→ Make employee benefits fully cover sexual and reproductive healthcare, provide maternity leave; but don’t make assumptions about any employee’s desire to have children or interest in taking on additional responsibilities based on parenthood status.

→ Audit payroll by gender and other demographic categories to make sure people doing the same basic job are being paid comparably, and if they are not, that there is a rational business reason that can be attributed to the disparity. Audit should examine shift assignments for tipped workers to ensure the best shifts aren’t going disproportionately to privileged demographic groups.

Hospitality Industry

→ Contribute to policy organizations conducting research on pay differences by gender.

→ Invest in women, trans and nonbinary owned businesses.

→ Support organizations that do bystander training, like OutSmartNYC
Seek out implicit bias training for all workers. Owners, managers and other leaders especially should actively seek out bias training and encourage all to engage.

Take time to learn about race and immigration issues, help create an atmosphere of dialogue where addressing race head-on is an opportunity for introspection rather than a threat of being branded racist.

Actively recruit for all positions in places where immigrants and people of color are, don’t guide anyone toward stereotypical jobs.

Authorize managers to pause hiring process until there is a diverse pool of candidates; develop a standardized interviewing Q&A scoring system specifically researched and developed to reduce bias; apply similar principals to all advancement evaluations.

Have policies on how to address usage of racist language or experiences of micro-aggressions, seek out racial equity/implicit bias training for all levels of workers.

Do not cooperate with ICE, the Immigration and Customs Enforcement agency; never threaten or joke about calling ICE on an employee.

Do not discriminate against people with an accent, or steer them from jobs interacting with the public.

Be understanding of commuting issues for people who are literally pushed to the margins.

Don’t exploit the undocumented, don’t pay people under the table.

Identify immigrants and people of color doing good work and nurture them to more advanced jobs.

Reconsider criminal background checks, or ask about the context of past interactions with the justice system before rejecting a candidate.

Think about how welcoming your restaurant is to guests of color, because that will set the tone for how welcoming it is to workers from those communities.

Collect data on racial/ethnic/immigration status and audit your restaurant’s pay equity performance.

When considering customer complaints about employee performance, management should factor into their assessments the implicit biases held by customers.

Have employee resource recommendations on local training to improve reading and writing in English.

Support industry-wide efforts to produce training materials for all jobs in non-English versions.

Think more deeply about the organizations you support with charitable time and dollars, do those nonprofits apply a racial equity lens?

Support organizations that provide direct help to immigrant workers in the food system, like Brandworkers and Restaurant Opportunities Centers United.
Start by creating a caring atmosphere – where insults and abuse are not tolerated – and people feel safe to say when they are struggling because they will be offered kindness and help, not risk losing their job.

Look for programs like NYC’s Mental Health First Aid trainings, which provide proven practices to help recognize the early signs and symptoms of mental illness and substance misuse. Have a list of local resources on mental health and substance treatment readily available to workers.

Provide health insurance that actually covers real mental health and substance abuse treatment.

Ensure managers understand anxiety, depression and substance abuse issues and have strategies for creating a workplace that doesn’t contribute to them; consider trainings for all staff on spotting common MH/SA issues, don’t ignore them.

Talk about “workaholism” and make time off a realistic possibility for workers at all levels; create a system for real-time tracking of work hours of high-stress-job employees to flag when time off should be discussed, encouraged or mandated.

Be clear and consistent about your organization’s drinking-on-the-job policy for all positions, reconsider what a “no tolerance” policy means for either cycling people through the industry or actually helping people with substance abuse issues get treatment; directly address the culture of post-shift drinks and partying.

Consider recruiting formerly addicted people and nurturing a community of sober people in your restaurant; think about how you can help sober people feel included and cope in stressful situations without substances.

Consider creating resources for peer-to-peer mental health support groups within staff.

Contribute to the development of substance abuse and mental health programs tailored to restaurant workers.

Encourage initiatives that support workers in healthier options or sobriety, like The Pin Project and After Dark.

Support research on the prevalence and contributing factors to restaurant workers’ mental health and substance misuse issues.