

CASE STUDY

PITCH-PERFECT STAFF CULTURE:

HOW A PIZZERIA NURTURES PRIDE IN PERFECTION AMONGST EMPLOYEES

As increasing labor costs and tight labor markets put the squeeze on restaurants of all types around the U.S., just about every restaurant operator agrees it's harder than ever before to find and keep great people. That hasn't stopped Pitch Pizzeria. In fact, Pitch has doubled down on what makes them different: their people. With a strong leadership focus on the unglamorous parts of the job – maintaining supremely clean spaces – Pitch has built a supportive, team-first culture of accountability that drives its success from the inside out.

The Pitch trilogy

Dean Leisman, one of Pitch's owner/operators, says their "trilogy for success" isn't that different from most restaurants: "great service, unbelievable food and clean restaurants." The difference, says Leisman, is having people committed to excellence across all three goals: "I think we're unique in having people that are invested in the business. People that say, 'I'm going to make this perfect,'" says Leisman.

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Clean is the foundation for success

How has Pitch successfully nurtured this "pride in perfection" amongst its staff? Leisman says one big factor is emphasizing "clean" as the foundation for success in service and food execution. "You don't get credit for the basics," says Leisman, "No one's impressed that your food is hot; it's supposed to be hot. And no one's impressed that your restaurant is clean; it's supposed to be clean." Compared to sending out a beautiful dish that gets 1,000 likes on Instagram, or providing spectacular service that gets you a big tip, there's nothing glamorous about cleaning. That's what makes it such a critical foundation for Pitch culture. "Everyone takes pride in the details – in making things perfect," says Leisman. That attention to detail is contagious – from employee to employee and from task to task. "If you know everyone else is performing at that high level – whether it's cooking on the line, or cleaning a bathroom – then you step up your game," says Leisman.





No time to clean? Pitch has no time for excuses

Leisman has heard all the excuses for letting cleaning drop down the priority list. Cutting back on cleaning to boost the bottom line? "You can't cut your way to profitability," says Leisman. No time to clean? "There's always downtime—it's just about getting it done," he says. Pitch doesn't schedule extended cleaning periods at the beginning or end of shifts. Instead, "We're cleaning non-stop, everyday," says Leisman. Pitch employees take frequent short breaks to wipe down tables, mop floors and even clean small details like table legs and light bulbs. "We call it Two-Minute Towel Time," says Leisman. The constant, collective effort ultimately eases the overall cleaning burden on Pitch staff. "If everyone does something, it makes a big difference," says Leisman, "We never step over anything; we spot clean constantly. We scrape plates to make life easier for the dishwasher. We put chairs up at the end of the shift so the floors are ready for cleaning. If there's a problem in the restroom, everyone knows how to handle it. It's all about ownership and accountability."

"A melting pot of great food and great people"

Leisman says Pitch's relentless focus on cleaning creates a cycle of success. "Everyone gets to enjoy the product of their collective hard work," he says, leading to high staff morale, lower turnover and a consistent, reliable team. This, in turn, drives the excellent service and outstanding food for which Pitch is known. "We call Pitch 'A melting pot of great food and great people' on our website," says Leisman, "And while we're mainly talking about the vibe in our dining room, this is also a great way to describe our staff and our culture. We deliver great food and great experiences because we have such great people."

**"EVERYONE GETS TO
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HARD WORK."**

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