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Why the Most Successful Chefs and Restaurateurs Are Thankful for Their Failures



No matter where you're dining in the world, the sound of glass shattering as it hits the floor creates a universal reaction. A mistake happened, a staff member cleans up the mess, and life goes on.

However, most fails in hospitality happen without the guest ever knowing. Sometimes, it's because there aren't even guests there to begin with. No matter the type of accident or oversight, hospitality professionals are better off failing in the end.

So, what are some of the common themes chefs and owners share when it comes to failure? As I learned from a few chefs with thick skin, it's rarely ever related to just the food on the plate.

If People Don't Trust What You're Trying to Do, They Won't Eat Anything

Chef John Currence has experienced plenty fails in his storied career. From a disastrous attempt at foie gras powder during a Viking Cooking School dinner to closing his well received restaurants Lamar Lounge and Fat Eddie's, the James Beard winner isn't shy about discussing why things go wrong. "You need to be listening to what they want," Currence advises young chefs looking to leave a lasting impression.

Building trust with an audience takes years, but breaking that trust can take a matter of months. From poor management to trying to establish whole hog barbecue in a city that doesn't have a strong barbecue culture, Currence experienced the taste of failure in many different forms. "Parmesan, arugula, Kobe beef, I literally couldn't give it away," Currence recalls during his early days at [City Grocery](#) in Oxford, Miss. The chef couldn't even get guests to eat vegetables that came from his own garden.

However, by putting the food guests crave on a plate year after year, Currence has been able to authentically build Oxford's culinary reputation across America while expanding his restaurant empire. "I went from not being able to give away carpaccio to selling lamb testicles," Currence says. "That's the arc of success."

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