

Work Experience – Little Italy

In March 2007, I underwent a two week period of Work Experience in an Italian Restaurant in the bustling streets of central London. 'Little Italy' became the core focal point of my life for a fortnight as I put the pressures of coursework and exams behind me. My job was to be a waiter in a busy restaurant catering for hundreds of people every day.

On the first day, I awoke early on a Monday morning as per usual, despite having the luxury of an extra hour in bed. I had a simple 15 minute bus journey from around the corner which dropped me off in clear proximity of my workplace. I walked in to a familiar restaurant, as I had been given the placement by my uncle who owns various chains across London, and was welcomed with open arms by the manager Dana who guided me through procedures throughout my stay. My first job was to meticulously set the tables, with cutlery, wine glasses and serviettes. I then had to sweep the floor and wipe the windows before the opening time of 12:00pm. I carried out this morning procedure with the other waiters for the remainder of the two weeks I worked there.

Working at Little Italy was such an eye opener for me since I made plenty of friends that I will perhaps keep for life. As a waiter there is nothing better than seeing customer satisfaction on their faces, and whenever I was to serve someone I would always receive a large tip in cash simply because they had enjoyed their meal. Naturally, I made some mistakes in the first few days, however I grew into the job and it began to feel ordinary to me. I also recall one day when the barman was ill and I had to step in for him. At the time I didn't know a lot about being a barman and the skill it requires. On that day I enjoyed working at the bar as it was a new and fascinating experience, I was also able to help the manager out as she had failed to find a suitable replacement. I clearly remember her saying "Karim, thanks to you our customers were kept happy today, I don't know what I would have done without you". This shows that I had had a major impact on both my peers and customers, and my willingness to undertake a difficult job under pressure paid off as it was recognized by my boss. The hard work that I put in during my time at Little Italy was rewarded as I was offered a part time job every summer, as well as being fully paid for the two weeks as a trainee waiter.

During my two weeks as a trainee in Little Italy I learned so much about the restaurant business and how it works. I witnessed at first hand the effort that goes in to providing quality food for the working public or tourists whether it is the head chef or waiter. Whilst there I was able to work hard, act reliably and cope well under pressure. I had good relationships with my peers and developed excellent communication skills. I also adopted many techniques, such as working at the bar, or working at the pizza parlor. Working in numerous place sin the restaurant helped me gain a full understanding of how every one in the small environment needed to co-operate in order for it to run smoothly. I was also taught that the customer is always right, whether they were or weren't right was not up for debating. On many occasions food was needlessly returned as it wasn't up to their standards, in these situations I was told to try my utmost to rejuvenate a good relationship with the customer. I did this by referring to the individual as sir and madam with a constant smile on my face.

I believe I can build on my experiences of working in this industry in the future. Not only have I made fantastic contacts and friends, I have also given myself a summer job. I worked at the restaurant during the summer that preceded my work experience and have been told that once I

have finished school I will have a part time placement as a waiter. I have informed them that I am totally willing to take them up on that offer seeing as I enjoyed, loved and relished the opportunity a great deal. It is also evident that the experience has increased my communication skills as I find it easier to approach people about certain issues and have taken these skills into my everyday life.

Overall, I enjoyed the job and I am very pleased that I was initially accepted to work there. I was particularly happy because I made new friends who always made me feel part of the team. The experience has given me confidence in expressing myself more and has seen me benefit a large business as well as consumers. I am extremely glad that I have been offered a job at Little Italy and I know that I will be working there for many years to come.

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