



MY HUSBAND WAS A COOK AND I was a waitress for 15 years, and we vowed that when we opened our own place, we would not treat our staff in the negative ways we had been treated. We just had our best year and are opening our second and third units. We've had exceptional retention. Our policy is to hire those with no restaurant experience—and no bad habits to break. Everyone is called a “participating manager.” We provide full medical, dental and life insurance after a year of service. We give three weeks paid vacation and have sales-based contests and bonuses. Our morale is so high, and our reputation so respected, that we have a waiting list of applicants. My husband and I take the time to train at all levels, paying attention to the details in a kind and respectful manner. We allow input on scheduling. We promote from within: To be a prep cook, first you have to do your time on the dishes. To be a waiter, first you have to bus. We encourage our crew to buy homes and set them up with a financing company. It gives them something major to show for their hard work. I remember being on their end of the stick. We are firm believers in investing in our crew.

***Karen Jesso***

Cafe Borgia  
Lansing, Ill.

