



10 Interview Questions to Ask When Hiring Restaurant Staff



Be Sure an Applicant Is Truly the Right Hire

With hospitality industry turnover rates at 72.9%,¹ it's no surprise many restaurant managers feel like they're constantly interviewing and hiring restaurant staff.

Whether it's filling positions for kitchen staff, front of house servers, hosts, or managers, there are ten essential questions that can really help assess any applicant's fit for your organization.



1. Why us?

Why does your restaurant stand out against your competitors to this applicant? The answer can show which applicants are determined to make the most of the opportunity your restaurant is offering — and which ones only want to pick up a paycheck.

¹"Hospitality employee turnover rate edged higher in 2016" – Restaurant.org



2. What do you think will be the biggest challenge of the job?

Asking this question requires the applicant to speculate about your work environment in a safe way, showing how insightful they are. The applicant's responses will provide you with an opportunity to correct any misunderstandings about the responsibilities of the role.



3. Ever had a difficult customer?

If the answer to this softball question is "no," the candidate may be holding back about past work experiences. Being able to admit that some customers are challenging is never a bad thing, and can help show off the candidate's problem-solving skills.



4. Who was your best boss ever?

How a candidate answers will give you some great insight into the type of management they will need from you. It can also show how this job seeker would fit into your company culture — or change it for the better!



5. Why did you leave your last job?

This question isn't about getting an answer. It's about seeing how the question is answered. What you're watching for here is the attitude about a previous employer and the professionalism someone cares to show under the pressure of an interview.



6. Has there been a time you were frustrated at work, and what did you do?

Ideally, you want to hire someone who can identify, manage, and resolve frustration and conflicts in the workplace in a professional manner. This question will allow you to gauge the applicant's conflict resolution skills and determine whether those skills are in sync with your workplace and management philosophy.



7. What about working with people who don't pull their weight?

Every workplace involves teamwork, and another worker's shortcomings can have an impact on the team's overall performance. How does the candidate handle these types of situations? Make note of any creative solutions, developed interpersonal skills, and leadership potential right here.



8. What makes you want to come into work every day?

Not everyone loves their job. But as a manager, you should be striving to create an environment where employees actually like the place they spend the bulk of their week. Their insight can help you provide that.



9. What do you want to learn here?

This question assesses whether a candidate (regardless of age) believes they can always learn something new from their job, and whether they will be coachable. It reveals a level of intellectual curiosity and possibly even humility.



10. What was the best compliment you ever received?

This could throw them for a loop, but seeing what happens when you crack the veneer of a polished interviewee could put them over the top. It also sends the message that you value employees who pride themselves on their good work.

The 3 Cs

In addition to the ten big questions, there are three core traits you should be on the lookout for in applicants that, if hired, will help build your team into a powerhouse crew over time:

- They are solidly **competent** (as opposed to necessarily experienced).
- They exhibit strong **character** (don't judge anyone simply based on looks).
- They will represent your **culture** appropriately (i.e., that elusive thing called "fit").

It's important not to just start and stop with experience. The employee who has 20 years of experience in service or has made a career at big name restaurants isn't necessarily the best choice for you. Sometimes, the best choice is the unlikely one. Trust your gut and think about who's best for your culture and your team.



“[Rewards Network] provides us with great feedback. We can pinpoint certain times, servers, and managers at different locations. And if we don’t think something is up to our standards, we’re going to teach and coach those who might not be to get there.”

—Adam Bajko, Owner
Chip's Family Restaurants, Connecticut

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