

the Kitchen ethos



If you are a chef,
or if you aspire to become one,
this manual is for you.

Not every Cook is a Chef. Not every Chef is a Cook.

In the culinary profession, the title *chef* is derived (and shortened) from the term *chef de cuisine*, referring to the head of a kitchen—typically, the chief cook in a restaurant or hotel.

Looking at the French origin of the word, a chef is a leader in their field—one who truly aspires to leave a powerful, positive mark on their vocation. A chef who applies ethics to their work, focuses on achieving and maintaining excellence for their team and themselves. Not every cook has the same drive—hence, not all can be called chef. And not every chef works in a kitchen.

French words using chef:

Chef de cuisine.....Head Chef
Chef d'orchestre.....Conductor
Chef d'équipe.....Team Leader
Chef d'état.....Head of State

Every great kitchen—from bistro to Michelin-starred—operates by an unspoken code of ethics. There is a mutual understanding among people on the team to operate with efficiency, impeccable technique and an esprit de corps. These are dos and don'ts, both philosophical and practical, for creating consistently excellent meals and experiences night after night.

Over years of speaking with chefs (of the kitchen) about these rules and their transformative importance, I began to recognize the universality of them. I realized I'd been applying most of these rules to my advertising and graphic design work in one way or another without knowing it.

Thus began my journey here, to *the Kitchen ethos*. With my own creative experiences and inspired by fellow chefs of the world, I've crafted this series of professional expectations, assumptions and pearls of wisdom. It is meant to apply to any business or endeavor that holds itself and its people to standards higher than the world expects or demands.

It's how we operate.

Christian Loos,
Founder, Kitchen New York.



The unspoken ethos of our Kitchen is a belief that hard work and diligence have a moral benefit and an inherent value to strengthen character and individual abilities.

This code of ethics makes our lives easier, not harder. It brings order and discipline to the chaotic environment in which we all work on a daily basis. It is neither philosophy nor religion; it is a practical method for merit.

Before we actually start anything...

Mise en place (meez) is French for "everything in its place." For those uninitiated in professional kitchen lingo, mise, as it's often shortened, is the work that happens before the work. It's the chopping of veggies, the measuring of spices, the careful arrangement of ingredients and tools, having a plan if it is expected to be a rough day. It's a philosophy of preparation integral to every well-run kitchen and any chef's professional practice.

A huge part of any chef's day is their prep because it sets them up for an entire service's worth of actual cooking. Ultimately, mise is about efficiency—each station being able to execute dishes flawlessly, in the least amount of time, with the least amount of exertion.

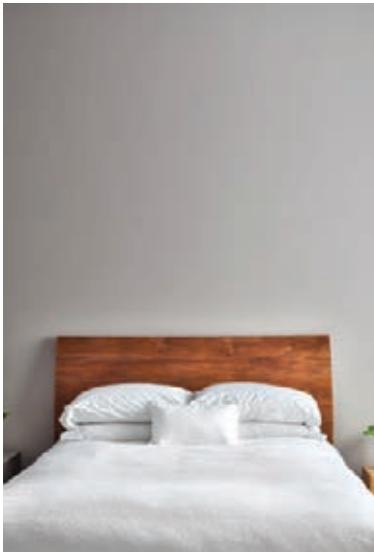
Whether it's baking cookies, creating a logo or piloting a jet, mise en place is a concept we can apply all over our daily lives before getting to the meat of a task, and we're always glad we did.

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01



↑ Preparation



Wake up and be ready early.

The best version of us is the one that takes that first brave step into the new day. We maximize our productivity by committing to the role of the proverbial early bird. Starting each day ahead bulletproofs our hard-earned serenity in these complex times.

If there's anything certain in life, it's that there's never enough time. So we approach each dawn determined to snatch up the opportunities reserved for the early risers.

We show up shaved, showered, brushed and all other measures required for being considered "kempt." Our personal appearance is a reflection of our respect for ourselves and everyone we encounter over the course of a day, so we keep ours pristine (and free of any traces of last night's activities).

Bring your appetite.

Ironically, we feed off of hunger. We're attracted to your zest and your zeal. We want to be inspired and to inspire others. We want to take big bites out of life and to obliterate the status quo. If you can bring that, your excitement will spread and make for the kind of work and times that people remember.

(a) Virgin boss Sir Richard Branson enjoying the party on the airline's inaugural trip to Las Vegas in 2000.

(b) May 12, 2013. Sir Richard Branson dressed up as a stewardess during a flight from Australia to Malaysia after losing a bet to his friend, Fernandes, AirAsia's Chief Executive.

03



Never stop learning, regardless of how much you think you already know.



Be a sponge. A sponge is someone who is tirelessly driven to seek and absorb new information. A sponge learns from mentors, advisors and peers, studies heroes and reads voraciously.

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Albert Einstein—a perfect example of a non-kitchen-bound chef—said, "once you stop learning, you start dying."

Hoping to forestall death, we try to stop and look around us to see what others are doing, how they're doing it, and how we might draw inspiration from one another. Whatever we've accomplished or have yet to accomplish, we want to stay curious and open about new ideas, techniques and tools that can help us be better.



a

Know-it-alls: not for us.

We're not big on generalists or people who bite off more than they can chew for the sake of ego. We believe in teams. The people who interest us—who we want to be around—are those who understand and perform their role expertly to achieve a greater goal together. We're proud of what we're good at and happy to work with people who bring different skills to the table.



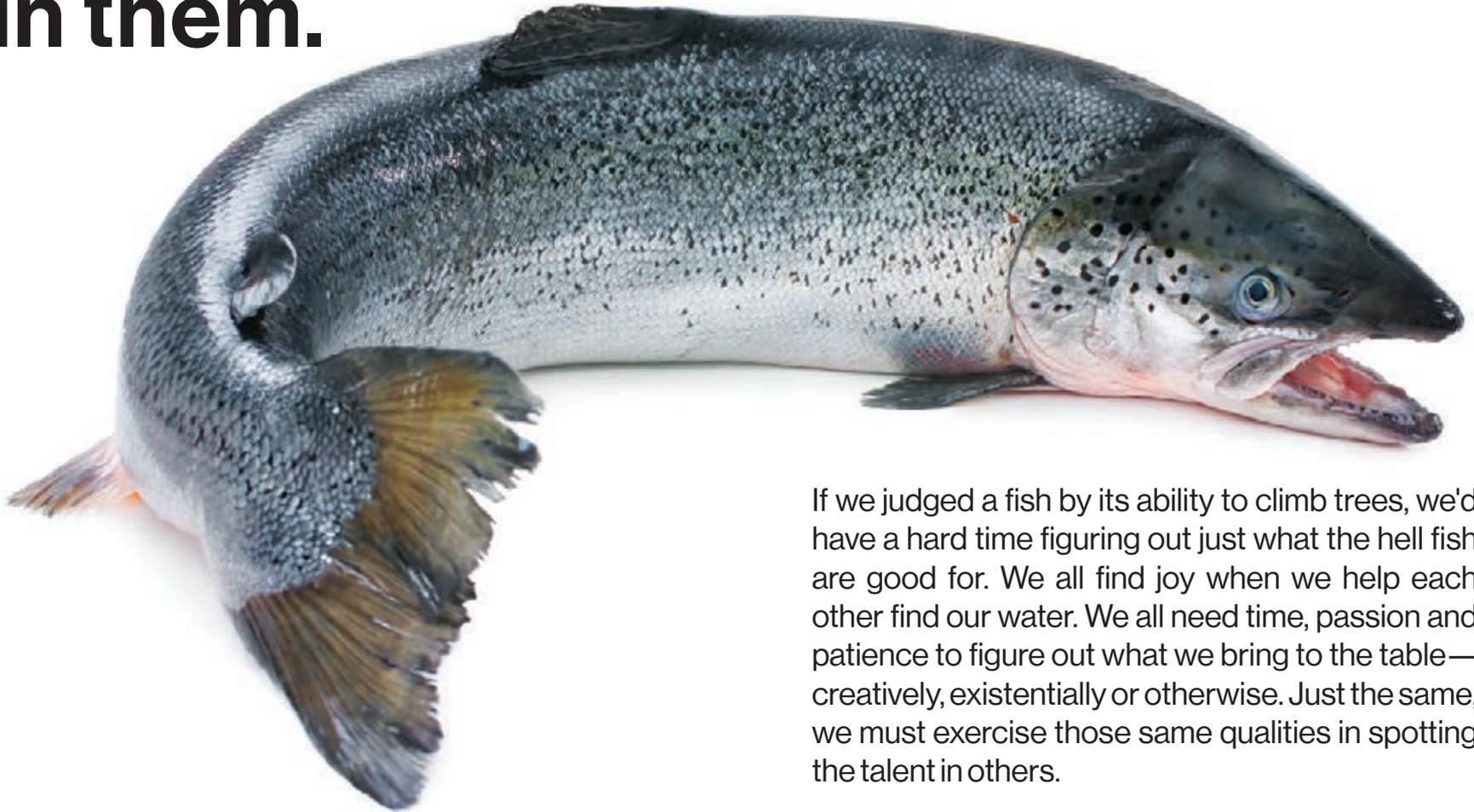
b

(a) Someone who is allegedly good at everything. Albums sold: 0.

(b) A band of talented individuals: The Red Hot Chili Peppers. To date, the band has sold over 80 million albums worldwide.

Everyone has some genius in them.

06



If we judged a fish by its ability to climb trees, we'd have a hard time figuring out just what the hell fish are good for. We all find joy when we help each other find our water. We all need time, passion and patience to figure out what we bring to the table—creatively, existentially or otherwise. Just the same, we must exercise those same qualities in spotting the talent in others.



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Be coachable, even if it makes you feel vulnerable.

No matter our experience level or the size of our ego, we must remain open to changing how we do things. We make room for the possibility that—gasp—we don't know everything yet! This means understanding our places in the pack, listening up, and respecting the wisdom, skills, and knowledge others have earned so that our own inevitable journey to greatness might be that much smoother.

Sled dogs begin their journeys to the tundra as puppies, first running with the bigger dogs to learn social skills and commands. By the time they hit the snow they're well versed in their roles as swing dogs, teak dogs or heel dogs, each with a vital and unique task on the team.

Whining will get you nowhere.

Last-minute customer requests. Onerous changes in direction. Late hours. Rainy days. Some things cannot be controlled. So what's the point in complaining? That's not a rhetorical question—what is the point? While we ponder the whys and what fors of unpleasant situations, others will take advantage of the time and get great things done. So instead, we choose to skip the bellyaching, put our heads down and keep plowing ahead. We're all in this together, so let's go out and enjoy singing in the rain a bit.

Negative people have a negative impact on others. An apple that is infested with mold will contaminate other fruit it's stored with as the mold seeks additional food sources and spreads. We don't allow molded apples in Kitchen's bag.

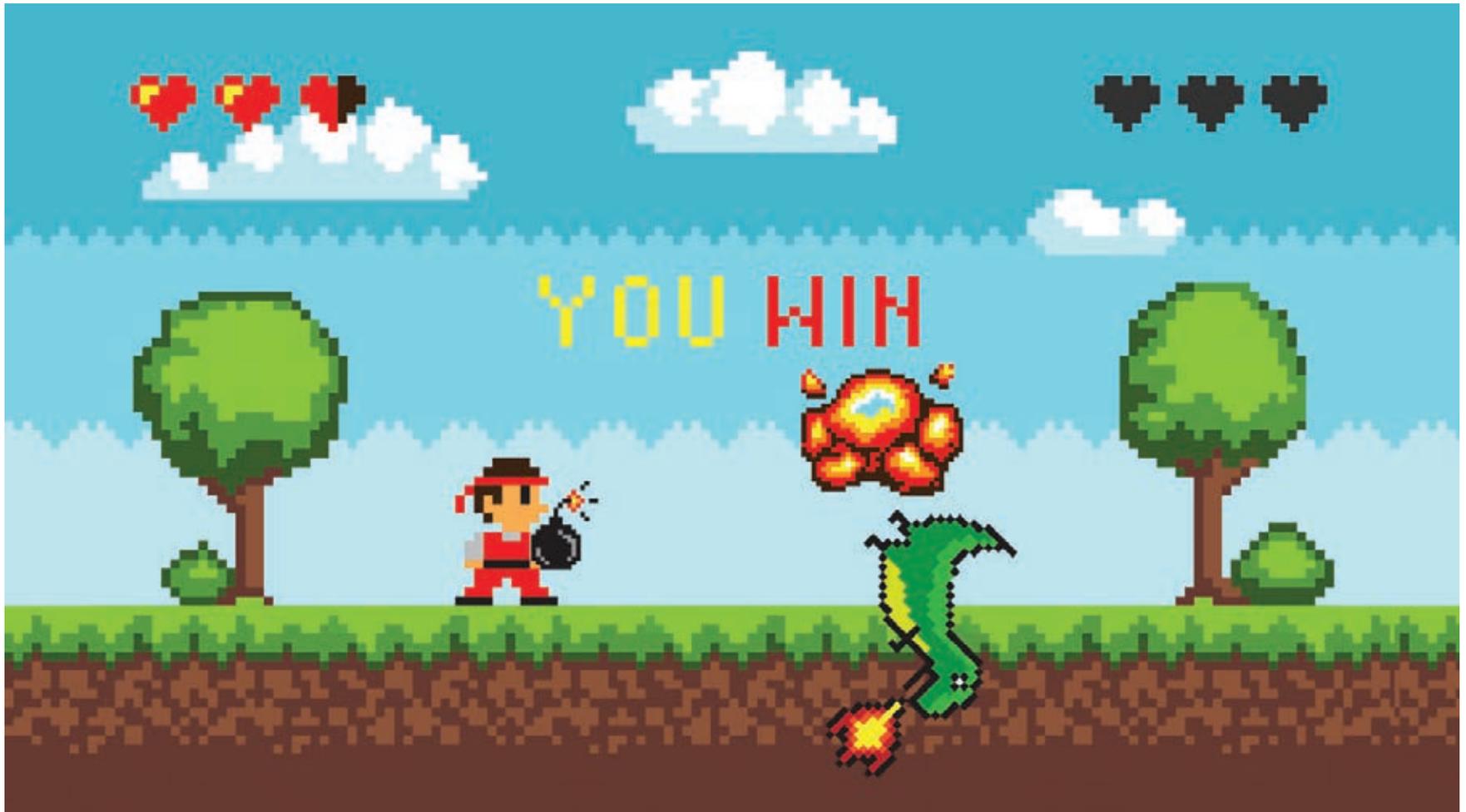


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Every level has its challenges.

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Just as the flame-spitting, armor-clad video game boss is defeated only to give way to...an even bigger, faster flame-spitting, armor-clad video game boss, our latest victory is merely an introduction to our next challenge. It will never stop. It's not supposed to.





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If given lemons, make... something else.

There are literally millions of recipes we can make with lemons; why would we ever settle for lemonade?

Ask questions.

Leaders and learned people respect those who show the kind of interest and curiosity that broaden our horizons. Still, too many smart people stunt themselves with a fear of appearing uneducated by asking questions.

Self-starting is an admirable quality, and firsthand knowledge is invaluable, but it's foolish to think you can get by entirely on your own. Show up as prepared and educated as you can be, but allow yourself to wield the wisdom of others to help drive you further.

Do not ruin a cut of Kobe Wagyu beef because you are too afraid to ask how it should be handled.



Ask for help.

We all need it occasionally, and we gain nothing by keeping silent. But we also understand assistance isn't always available on demand. In that case, we don't give up or walk away. We break out a shovel and dig our way out.

Know how to handle your tools.

A master chef and their santoku. A graphic designer and his Creative Suite. A surgeon and his flexible endoscope. Nothing sets us apart from the herd quicker than our ability to use our tools expertly, and nothing exposes an amateur like fumbling with their instruments. Know and respect your tools, and make sure never to touch anyone else's.

Nunchaku (a) are reserved for advanced self-defense students and radioactive turtle ninjas because of how easy it is to injure oneself through fear or disrespect of the weapon. Only those who've purged themselves of both timidity and hubris can properly wield the tool. And we hope the same goes for the endoscope (b).

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↑ Technique



The term “pachyderm,” used to refer to both rhinos and elephants, comes from the Greek words for “thick” and “skin.”

Take critics seriously, not personally.

When someone is difficult or impossible to upset, we say they've got the hide of a rhinoceros (or, where we come from, an elephant).

As creators, it's in our nature to be sensitive or even defensive about our work, but there's much to be gained by taking a breath and considering others' perspectives on it...to a point.

Respect what others have to say. Listen. Be open. But try to maintain that rhinoceros hide.

You get out of it as much as you put into it.

We put the necessary work into each and every assignment, because we know dreams don't become reality by magic. We use hard work and endurance as bait for the reward we seek.

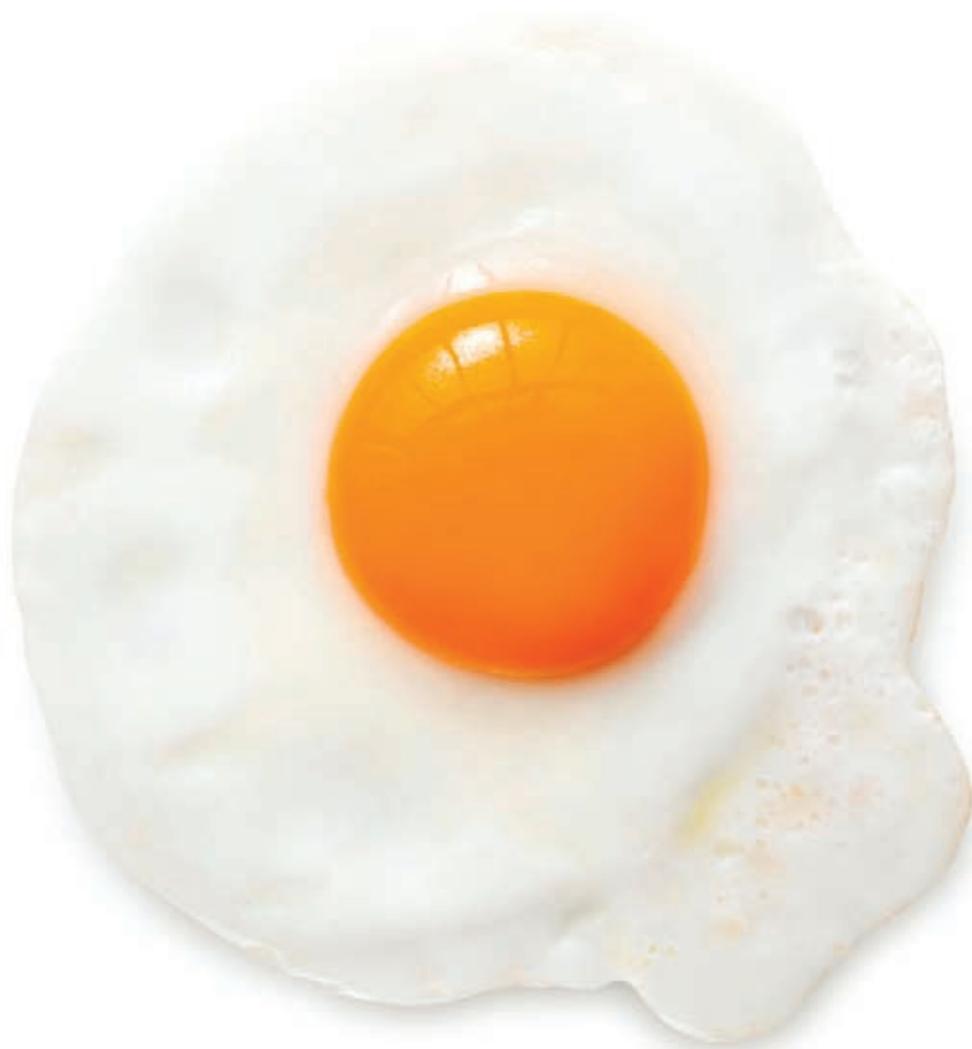
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Whether it's exciting or not, it must be impeccable.

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Every project, no matter how large or small, demands the height of our abilities. 90 percent is not something we know how to give – only 100. We judge a completed project on whether it's impeccable or not. There is no "good enough." There is no in-between.



Can you execute impeccably
on the least exciting assignment?

A close-up, profile view of a chef with dark, wavy hair and a light beard, wearing a white chef's coat. He is holding a silver spoon to his lips, tasting a small amount of yellow food. The background is a plain, light grey.

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Taste as you go and improve what you can along the way.

A dish is not finished until it's on the table/in front of a client. So before calling anything a wrap, we taste, we sample, we fine tune, we tweak here and add finishing touches there. Along the journey of creation, we must taste everything to make sure it's to our standards of craftsmanship and quality. Consider it an exercise in staying humble while ensuring excellence.



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Have a sharp knife at all times.

Our work requires precision and accuracy. We're careful in selecting our tools, exacting in our technique. A dull knife is an insult to our process. The same goes for dull minds. Our heads must constantly be alert, aware and focused on developing and refining that perfect idea. There are no coincidences when you create—just readiness.

If you screw up, don't dwell on your mistake. Learn from it.

Mistakes are the foundation for innovation. Sounds great—pithy, has the ring of truth. But what does it look like?

Osteria Francescana, Modena, Italy: Taka, Chef Massimo Bottura's sous-chef, is making three lemon tarts for service when one crashes to the floor. Despite the accidental nature of the drop, Taka is devastated.

Enter Chef Bottura, who arrives in the kitchen to see the scattered dish and tart. Chef Bottura doesn't yell. He doesn't scold. He sees an opportunity. That day, the world-renowned de-constructed lemon tart is born.

We never take ourselves too seriously. When screw-ups happen, we look for our moment to transcend.

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"Honey, I dropped the lemon tart," one of the amazing desserts at Osteria Francescana, the three-Michelin-Star restaurant of Chef Massimo Bottura, and the Best Restaurant in the World in the 50 World's Best Restaurants of 2018.



Pic@ManfredinTavola



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Work for the good of the team.

We're part of something larger than ourselves, and we need each other to succeed. We don't throw each other under the bus. We respect each other and we step up when one of us is in trouble. That's how we build.

Don't forget that clients are part of "the team." While two people may have conflicting goals, a team has one, and now you'll both be working toward it.

The castellers of the Jove de Sitges build a human tower known as "castell" in the streets of Sitges during the Festa.



Do it right the first time.

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We focus on doing things the right way, shortcut-free, even if it's a tedious pain in the ass, because we know cutting corners will only leave us spending even more time cleaning up messes afterward. This is called professional discipline.



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People cannot read your mind.

We thrive on clear, honest direction to accomplish things together. What seems obvious to you may not be to everyone else, so use your words and keep them constructive.

If it's bad, throw it away.

We kill our darlings all the time. Sometimes, things suck. Ideas don't pan out. Executions go awry. It happens. It always will. It's part of the process of creating something worthwhile. No bell, whistle or clever workaround will disguise the cracks in work that is fundamentally flawed. Even the most savory sauce will not mask an overcooked pasta. So we deal with it, and we get on to the next thing.

The word “sauce” is a French word describing a relish to make our food more appetizing.

Because of the lack of refrigeration in the early days of cooking, meat, poultry, fish, and seafood didn't last long. Sauces and gravies were used to mask the flavor of tainted foods.



**When you're
having
a great day,
focus, prepare
and present the
work properly
throughout your
entire shift.**

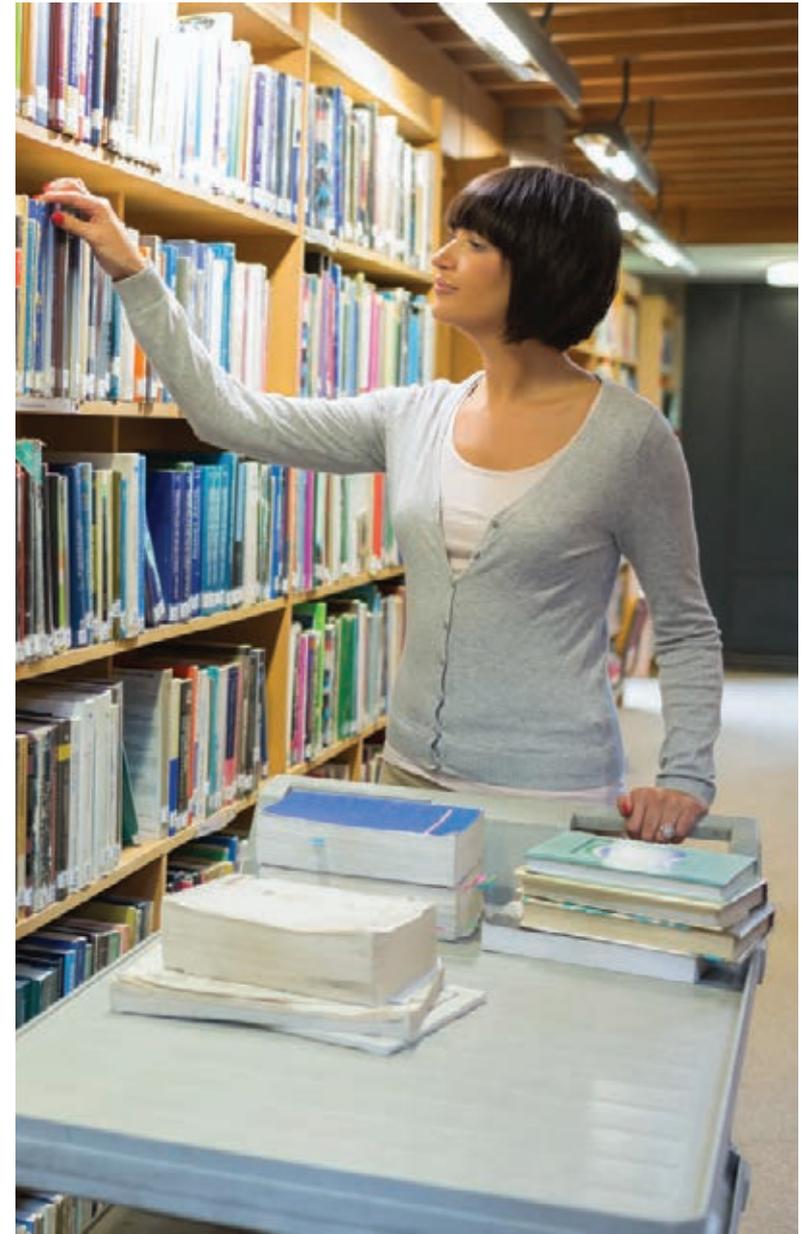
**When you're
having
a shitty day,
focus, prepare
and present the
work properly
throughout your
entire shift.**

Work neatly and clean as you go.

Doing things well in life requires discipline—and developing discipline in one area almost always brings benefits to the rest of our lives.

And so we keep things tidy, always. Cleaning as you go is less about cleaning itself and more about the discipline inherent in the act. It's a marker of someone who holds himself to a higher standard in all areas of life, keeping himself efficient, organized and ready for whatever comes.

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→ Orderliness

**Maintain
a sense
of urgency.
Be fast,
but never
sloppy.**

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We do not sacrifice quality for speed.
We do not sacrifice speed for quality.
We stay prepared to deliver both.

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→ Time management

You are in charge.

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When we take on an assignment, we are in charge. We are accountable. We call out and count on our team to provide help when needed, but the buck stops with us.

The pilot is responsible for the operation and safety of the aircraft he commands during flight time. Pilot time commences when an aircraft moves under its own power for the purpose of flight and ends when the aircraft comes to rest after landing.



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Sweat the details.

A flawless dish can be ruined by poor plating. The ultimate judgement of our work will always rest on the details.

A sniper in full ghillie suit is lying on the ground in a forest, with a rifle resting on the ground next to them. The scene is set in a wooded area with many dry leaves and twigs on the ground.

**Being quiet
can be
powerful.**

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Silence is not always the absence of words.
It can also be the presence of focus.

Sometimes, what you're looking for is right in front of you.

It's not always about reinventing the wheel.

People often look far afield when the idea they're searching for is right at their feet. Sometimes, the most useful creative exercise is to innovate—to put our own spin on a classic idea. We play around. We fantasize. We experiment with what we know and push it the extra mile.

This ad, for one of the best socks in the world, Falke, made by Kitchen's Founder, Christian, was celebrated by the client and honored by the professional industry with many international awards, including a Cannes Lions for Press & Poster. A Cannes Lions is comparable to an Oscar or a Michelin Star. It is the most prestigious recognition in the advertising industry.

Because the sock is so beautiful, it is pulled over the shoe instead of being put in the shoe. This idea often provokes the thought with colleagues: "why did I not think of this?!" The answer is simple: "because you did not look close enough."



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You are only as good as your last dish.

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Our great work from last year is irrelevant now. Last week's full bellies are this week's hunger pangs. You've got to keep being great. Every moment offers a new choice: to shine or not.



Let no idea be stolen.



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We deal with lots of confidential materials from clients every day, as well as our own. We consider it a duty to take good care of them, which means sharing secrets can be as bad as stealing. Be careful.



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... and steal no idea.

It's easy to copy a proven success; if people liked it then, they might well like it now. But that's not how we operate. We're always looking for the twist that no one has thought of before. Something that shows our personality and reflects our journey to the creation of something different and perhaps even new altogether.

Looks like Elvis Presley. But is not.
The original will always be better than the copy.

Manage your dark side wisely.

We all have a dark side. Many talented people's are pronounced. As long as we keep things balanced—as long as we maintain mastery over it, it's okay. Use it. Channel it. Make something great out of it. Just keep it in its corner.

"Uma Thurman as Mia Wallace in "Pulp Fiction." Wallace is an iconic example of a thoughtful creative with dark-side management issues."

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→ Self-mastery

Be like water.

Bruce Lee once said: "When you pour water in a cup, it becomes the cup. When you pour water in a bottle, it becomes the bottle. When you pour water in a teapot, it becomes the teapot. Water can drip and it can crash. Be water, my friend."

Every team plays a bit differently. Joining a new one means adjusting to a new situation and a new way of working. Making those adjustments—dedicating yourself to that way of working—is what makes you part of the team.



Our job is to spread happiness.

Elsa Schiaparelli, Italian fashion designer, Coco Chanel rival, legend, once said: "A chef is like a sorceress who dispenses happiness."

Our job isn't just to achieve customer satisfaction. Even those two words strung together sound alien and impersonal. We want people smiling. We want them overcome with delight.

Make this world a better place,
however you chef.

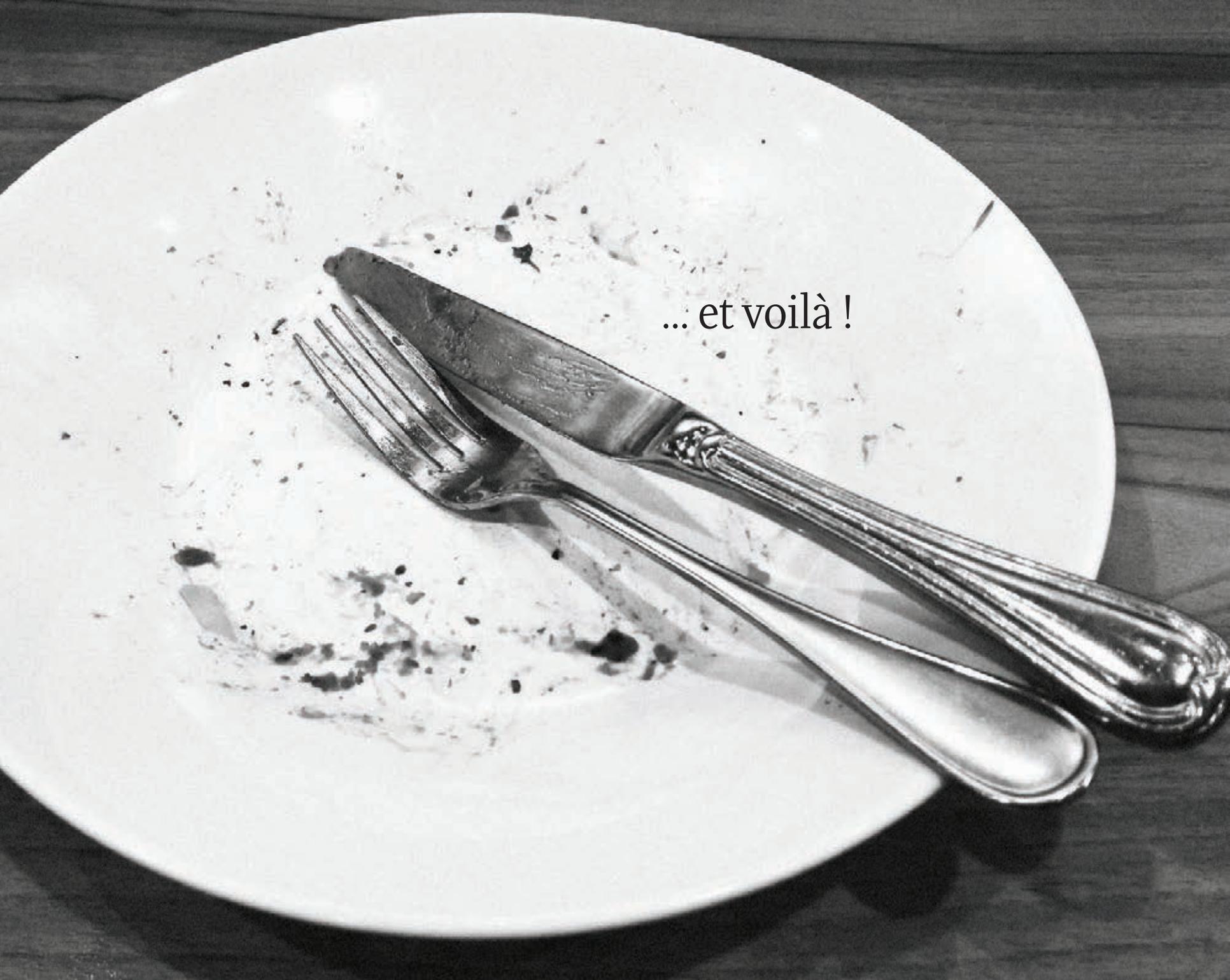


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The cream always rises to the top.

The perfect one to top it off.

A good idea or action cannot go unnoticed for long. Excellence always has its rewards. There are a multitude of gods up there who have rewarded our best efforts, and a multitude out to punish us for our lesser ones. We push ourselves and work to appease the good ones always, firm in the knowledge that accomplishment finds us most easily that way.



... et voilà !

Kitchen New York is a ~~restaurant~~ branding studio.

Kitchen New York was founded as a branding studio in 2015 by Christian Loos, honored one of Belgium's Best Art Directors, who arrived in the States in 2010 by way of Antwerp, Brussels, Doha and some of the world's most reputable agencies (DDB, Duval Guillaume, TBWA, Happiness Brussels...)

After nearly two decades absorbing and practicing the philosophies of the majors, Christian yearned to work in the intimate, exciting ways that drew him to the creative profession to begin with. The goal was to focus more intently on craftsmanship and doing things correctly with a smaller, more talented team, the client being part of that brand team.

Thus Kitchen was born. It would be an operation that got to the core of branding. All projects would begin by developing a deep, hands-on understanding of the client, to ensure any work created would be unique to them and their DNA. No bloated teams of intermediaries. No assembly line vibes. Just the

high standards and obsessive attention to detail that bring the creative chefs a sense of joy and produce consistently outstanding work.

Today, Kitchen operates under a common ethos: we believe branding transcends the simple creation of work for clients, much like cooking is more than just making food for a consumer. And so our name is more than a name; it represents the delicate balance of passion and discipline required to execute impeccably, all the time. It symbolizes how we work together and how we treat each other.

At Kitchen, we strongly believe in ethics—in great results coming from sound, persistent practices and conduct. This manual is an outline of the ethics we practice here.

Awards: Cannes Lions, NY Festivals, London International Awards, Eurobest, Epica, Clio, Creative Belgium,...

Clients: Brussels Airlines, Unicef, Oxo, Walkers Shortbread, Nestlé, Diageo, Global Poverty Project, AGFA HealthCare, Sanzaar, Legion Paper...

Pictured right: Christian, at his home office, during the COVID-19 Pandemic, where most of the Kitchen ethos was conceived.



Thank you to every single person whose path I've crossed. Friends, family, colleagues, partners, strangers... Our interaction has led me to this destination. You indirectly taught me how to do things—or how not to do things. Thank you for guiding me towards appreciating and promoting one of the most precious things in life—ethics.

Sounding board: David Buchanan, Chef's Resources

Published by: Kitchen New York

Copies may be ordered from: www.kitchen-ny.com

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www.kitchen-ny.com

A recipe for good work and happiness.

Whether you're a designer, a doctor, a president, a sales manager, an architect or a student, *the Kitchen ethos* is a practical method for improvement and achievement of happiness, professionally and personally.

We at Kitchen New York believe these ethics can influence everybody's life and work in a positive way, and our aim is to have them go beyond our team members, so please feel free to take the book to someone who comes to mind as you're flipping through.