



# BROOKLYN\_BORN

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## Lessons from the Food Network Channel – not always what they expected

Thursday, July 18, 2013

Cooking to me has always been simply a necessity. Cookbooks and TV shows that have “The Joy of” in their title are meant for someone else.

I remember buying the “I Hate to Cook Book” and “30 Minutes Meals” and just accepted the fact that this was something I had to do. I kept DH and 3 kids fed and healthy, so to me that was enough.

Now that I’m retired there’s time to expand my horizons. I watch the Food Network Channel and even record several of my favorite shows.

Yesterday was a rough night. I wasn’t able to sleep for assorted reasons.

I turned on a recording of “Restaurant Impossible” where failing restaurants are saved by an expert and \$10,000 for renovations.

Impossible and cooking are two words I would often put together myself. I like stories of reinvention and success.

Last night’s show was a little different. The kitchen was the “worst he had ever seen” and the graphic images were out of some horror story.

It started me thinking about all the places I’ve eaten.

Except for fast food restaurants, you can never see the food being prepared.

On our cruises a “kitchen tour” has always been included and I remember gleaming stainless steel and a head chef describing their stringent health practices. Yet horror stories still make the news in that industry occasionally.

What about local eateries? I know there are inspections, but how did that place highlighted last night not get closed down?

Then I started thinking about the employees. It’s not a highly paid industry. Do they have paid sick days or do they have to come to work in any condition?

I remember a national pizza chain owner describing how he would cut hours to avoid providing health coverage. So his employees NEVER HAD health insurance? Yikes! So if a cook or server can’t afford to go to the doctor, what might he be passing along to me? Hepitatis? TB? I like to save money, but not at the expense of health.

Last night’s story had a happy ending as usual, but the questions raised for me didn’t help me relax and

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get to sleep. I turned on a travel documentary and next thing I knew, it was morning.

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**MISCHAKEO**

We had a waiter drop a fork and then pick it up and put it on our table. Who knows what the kitchens are like in many restaurants. If you watch that show too often you will not want to eat out!! LOL Hopefully most restaurants follow the health guidelines.



2886 days ago



**NELLJONES**

There is a book called "Kitchen Confidential" by Anthony Bourdain, written before he was a "star". He talks about what went on in the kitchens he worked in on his way to being a Chef. It's an eye opener. My kids all worked in restaurant kitchens at one point, one of them still does (he is a Registered Dietician and also the Food Service Director at a hospital.) Oh the stories! Remember the food inspection budgets of local governments have also been cut back, and there is no way they can all be inspected that way we think they should be.



And I do remember Peg Bracken's "I Hate To Cook Book". That was written in 1960 take out and carry out and prepared foods in the grocery store, when "convenience food" meant TV dinners. I also have one of the old "White Trash Cookbooks", a combination of fresh and canned food that was available to very poor Southerners back before the cheap calories of the Big Corn era. Your library may have them.

2887 days ago



**MARYJEANSL**

Well, I rarely if ever eat out, but it is because I can't afford to, not because I have suspicions about the cleanliness (though perhaps I should). Neither I nor any of my family have ever gotten sick or gotten food poisoning from restaurant food. But one place that really does have everything out in the open for everyone to see is Chipotle. My son loves the food there. It's too high in fat and calories for me, but they do make everything right out in front of you, and nothing is hidden.



2887 days ago



**WATERMELLEN**

I don't eat out very often and restaurant kitchens (I've seen a few) are one of the reasons!!



Thanks so much for sharing your garden veggies with me!

2887 days ago



**SHEL\_V2**

Such a great way to pull together the personal and the public. So much of the typical food day for Americans is processed food or food ordered out. We don't see what's going into it, on every level, from the plants in the fields, to the animals, to the processing, mixing, transit, storage, and preparation. And we don't see what it did to the people along the way. The "consumer's prerogative" push for the most stuff at lowest cost is devastating us all.



2887 days ago



**COCK-ROBIN**

Restaurant Impossible is my favorite, and it actually started me on my journey to health. Chef Irvine is just DEATH on canned/frozen/processed foods, saying "fresh is always better!" And it IS! Goodbye Chef Boyardee!



2887 days ago



**ONEKIDSMOM**

Those nights when you have trouble sleeping? The pits!



Hope you get a better rest tonight, to make up for it.

2887 days ago



**DESERTJULZ**

Dirty Dining. ICK! One of our local TV stations does a weekly report on restaurant health inspections. They tell you the ones who had poor grades that week, what was wrong, and finish the report by scrolling a list of restaurants that had perfect scores. You can also obtain the information & history on their website. It's enlightening to check before you go out and see how well a potential place did on their latest health inspection. :D



2887 days ago



**CD14034154**

Brooklyn,



I was like you, I cooked because I had to. I never enjoyed it, and I also bought the 30 minute meals cookbook. Along with that, I bought a cookbook that only used 5 ingredients for the meal. They were really good, and I loved the fact that it only took 5 ingredients.

Now, I have an entire different outlook on cooking. I ENJOY IT!!! I know that I'm cooking to benefit me, to benefit my health and wellbeing. It's no longer a chore, and I love making different meals. Now I do eat some of the same meals, quite a bit, but when I find a meal that really works for me, I just do that meal over and over.

I'm so blessed, that I only eat out maybe once or twice a month. I make sure to go into the bathroom first, as if the bathroom is clean, chances are the restaurant is going to be clean. I do glance around and look at things, for a spot check, and I've never had any problem.

Be blessed,

- Nancy Jean -  
2887 days ago



**LALAFLOWERS**

Having worked in a restaurant, I know that folks don't get sick days... and come in with what ever bug is going around. Both in the front & the back of the house. If you need the \$\$, you do what you need to. And, as most of the staff is young... do you think they choose to pay for insurance??

It's a scary though... but one that I've lived on all sides.  
2887 days ago



**LINDAKAY228**

It's really scary to think about what is going on behind the scenes when you eat out.  
2887 days ago



**BOOKAPHILE**

With the mental pictures you've just given me, I'm glad I don't eat out very often!  
2887 days ago



**OBIESMOM2**

re:cruise ships - never been on a cruise, but I read a hilarious Dave Barry novel "Tricky Business" about a gambling boat. The kitchen was spotless because the food was re-used every night...for months. The band referred to one of the dishes as "medallions of weasel". Any time I see a buffet, that term comes to mind...shudder



2888 days ago



**IFDEEVARUNS2**

Thanks for confirming why I don't eat out much!  
2888 days ago



**SUZYMOBILE**

You bet. Gordon Ramsey's "Kitchen Nightmares" has the same premise. One restaurant bedeviled with flies in the dining room turned out to have maggots growing in the kitchen. Ever since, I avoid restaurants that seem to be overly fly-laden.

Read Anthony Bourdain's books. He has real insights into the restaurant world, too. Like never order the buffalo chicken. That sauce covers up all sorts of ills. And Monday is a terrible day to eat out, because the supplies aren't fresh.  
2888 days ago



**NWFL59**



2888 days ago



**CD12146214**

I too hate to cook. I am very lucky that my DH loves to cook and is a great cook! I will do all the cleaning though after he cooks as that is more my thing. As a result, we eat out very very rarely but I do think of those things you mentioned regarding cleanliness when we do go to a restaurant!  
2888 days ago



**WILSONWR**

Those are some great things to think about! Maybe I'm not getting such a good deal when I get that large \$4.50 fajita plate...





2888 days ago



**TATERCAT**



Uncleanliness of a restaurant is always on my mind and I avoid the ones that I know are unclean. There is a Mexican restaurant nearby that EVERY YEAR it gets shut down, or hit with fines because they fail the inspections horrendously. Somehow, they still reopen and go through the process again. Needless to say I never went there - I mean how dirty can a place get, and how dirty are the proprietors to let this happen time and time again?! Oh let's not forget the bad reputation Taco Bell has!  
2888 days ago



**DR1939**



Perhaps we need to fund adequate inspection.  
2888 days ago



**CD12668628**



my husband and I use to enjoy watching that show- but one to many horrible kitchens turned me off. The show does certainly make you think twice about ever eating out again. When we do go out (rarely) we tend to pick apart almost all places we go and we play the "what would Robert Irvine" say and it takes a great meal & clean restaurant to make me ever want to go back! good thing I enjoy cooking at home!!  
2888 days ago



**SUNSHINE99999**



Yes indeed, my sons enjoy watching cooking shows, but some of those kitchens are a bit unclean. 😞  
2888 days ago



**CD13834395**



We NEVER eat out - when someone at work suggests a lunch, I simply say I'm a "non-eater." Too many restaurants have caused too much illness!!  
  
Thanks for shining the spotlight on this very real problem.  
  
Now, let's move on to hospitals!  
2888 days ago



**CELIAMINER**



This story makes me want to adopt Nell Jones's practice of never eating out. While her goal is to control every gram of fat and sugar, mine would be to never again experience painful GI issues from a something on a salad bar (has happened too many times). Ewwwww!  
2888 days ago



**CD10259955**



I think I watched the same show last night while Sparking! I love Robert, but yes, I am always a bit disgusted at the conditions. I'm also amazed that no one has gotten violently sick or died from food poisoning! Robert and his crew do amazing transformations, but you have to wonder if the owners and workers truly change their ways. Hopefully so!  
  
Best to stick to travel shows or grab a good book for tonight!  
  
2888 days ago



**RIDLEYRIDER**



Funny, I've been wondering lately about the safety and cleanliness of kitchen workers myself. With the overall attitude of "I'm in it for the paycheck", you have to wonder what condition the food is in when it arrives at your table.  
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