

## HANDING OVER THE LATEX GLOVES

*I REMEMBER WASHING dishes with my mother when I was six. I would climb on top of a chair to play in the sink. I took pleasure in filling it with warm fragrant soapy suds. I would make sure the water became full of fluffy cloudlike foam. A bubble would float away and I'd catch it. I was mesmerized with the colors it made and at how it stretched with movement of my finger. I prodded the small air filled orb waiting for it to pop. When least expecting it the bubble disappeared in front of me and all that remained were its sticky remnants on my fingers.*

Washing dishes for a restaurant is not like washing dishes at home. The only time you catch a glimpse of soapsuds is when they seep from the dishwashing machine due to a clog in the drain. A bubble-regulated machine runs the actual dish washing process nowadays.

Spray, load, open, close.

Open, repeat, inspect.

Still dirty.

Unclog the filter, open, close.

More bus tubs of filthy dishes: Lift tub, drop, sort.

Spray, load, open, close.

"Here's your apron and gloves."

A dishwasher is a key function of any kitchen. Any completion of work in the kitchen is dependent upon you, the dishwasher. Chefs depend on you to supply them with necessary utensils to produce their delicacies: "I need skillet! How am I supposed to finish this fettuccine?" Hostesses rely on you to supply them with the means to arrange their place settings: "I need silverware to roll napkins." You must be capable of multitasking for the success of others is in your hands: "We're out of plates and I can't cook this food without a skillet!" Breaks should be taken quickly because you are always needed, "I know you're on a break but we're out of glasses." Don't be hesitant in doing what it takes to get your job done. Productivity is valued more than quality: *"Wait! That is still dirty."*

As a dishwasher, your primary concern is assisting others so in order to achieve this vocation you must be a philanthro-

pist. The wash cycle of my Kenmore at home often brings back the memories of hearing the booming voices of cherished coworkers: "Damn it, where are all the salad bowls? I need steak knives! We're out of hot plates, I need them now!" You must be able assist others' needs promptly: "I need a pitcher of water, we got a fire!" You must be attentive to others' desires and take their words to heart in order to maintain this profession: "You're all worthless, you need to pick up the pace." You must always remember to treat your fellow employees with respect: "Are you deaf? Hurry up. It'll all be your fault if we don't get out'a here on time."

Strength is valued at this restaurant. In order to be a dishwasher you must have a tolerance for manual labor. Those who are sensitive to touch should quickly adapt to extreme discomfort, as your skin will be exposed to hot steam and scalding water. To this day, I experience a reoccurring skin allergy whenever I encounter Joy soap and latex gloves. You must be able to bear your injuries on the job as though they are medals of honor. These wounds are emblems of personal achievement showing that

though you were injured you maintained your hardworking position. My most prized battle wound, the one I worked diligently through, was acquired from a whimsical slip on spilled grease on the surface of the kitchen tile floor. *Oh my god, I think I just broke my tailbone.* You also need to be cautious of bus boys as they often present you with bus tubs containing hidden broken glass.

Endurance is vital to the dishwasher because few people can handle the responsibility it takes in this occupation. You must become accustomed to working long hours soaked in slimy grease and filthy water. Just because the restaurant closes at eleven doesn't mean your job is done: "I want *everything* washed before you can leave." Washing dishes is a full time job. In order to be dedicated to your position you must always be on call: "You *have* to come in tonight - Tiffany quit."

If you are in dishes for the money, you are on the wrong career path. Even after years of employment, few make over minimum wage. Though the labors of each day may drag you

down physically and emotionally, you must understand that you have a higher purpose as you are a main ingredient of the kitchen's recipe. You should feel pleased with your position. I, however, am unable to reach my potential as dishwasher. I am moving on to bigger and better things: food preparation.



*—Deanna Bachtell*