Making Meals in Restaurants
- Daily Practices and Professional Ideals

av

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Akademisk avhandling

Avhandling för filosofie doktorsexamen i Måltidskunskap, som kommer att förvaras offentligt fredag den 15 december 2017
Gastronomiska teatern

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Abstract

Thanks to the gastronomic development in recent decades in Sweden, the restaurant industry is growing significantly and has opportunities to attract new and wider groups of labour. However, despite media images of successful chefs and culinary creativity, there is a common perception of tiring working conditions and low wages that prevent restaurants from attracting staff.

The overall aim of this thesis is to elucidate how professionalism is done and reproduced inside the restaurant industry by means of practice theory and the Five Aspects Meal Model. By an empirically grounded understanding of daily practices in small restaurants the thesis will show and explain how professionalism including leadership, is formed and understood among restaurant practitioners. Additionally by conceptualizing professionalism in restaurant work the thesis will provide a solid basis for the discussion of how knowledge transfer in the restaurant industry can develop. The scientific methods used in two studies were qualitative: interviews with owners/managers/head chefs of small restaurants in a tourist resort and in four major cities in Sweden, and in-depth workplace observations including talks with the owners/managers/head chefs and their staff.

The results show how daily work in restaurants contain conflicting practices, such as time-consuming workload and slow knowledge growth together with lack of control and planning that collide with expectations of creativity and development. Leadership in restaurant kitchens is dependent on knowledge of materiality and ability to show and guide staff as well as having overview and foresight in the daily work. The results also suggest that professionalism in the industry entails practices of mastering the materiality, observant management and, time use including loyal perseverance. The thesis contributes to an in-depth discussion of professionalism in restaurants and the industry’s ability to develop time-use, leadership, and new ways of learning, in order to attract and retain staff.

Keywords: craftsmanship; FAMM; leadership; hospitality; practice theory; workplace training

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