

Fact and Opinion: Working Around Career Barriers



75 MINUTES

Students read an article on formerly incarcerated individuals working in the Restaurant and Food industry (part of the Hospitality, Recreation and the Arts sector) and practice determining an author's primary purpose and differentiating between fact and opinion.



Cite evidence from the text to support your analysis



Paraphrasing

PREP

- Read *A Good Match: The Restaurant Industry and Formerly Incarcerated Workers* reading.
- Be prepared to explain vocabulary terms: **incarceration/incarcerated**, **criminal justice system**, **therapeutic**, **gravitate**, **meager**.

MATERIALS

- *A Good Match: The Restaurant Industry and Formerly Incarcerated Workers* reading
- *Fact and Opinion: A Good Match* worksheet

EXPLAIN

- 1 Personal factors can influence what industry a person chooses to go into, such as their interests and the amount of time and money available to invest in training and education. Past experiences, both positive and negative, also factor in, making someone more or less employable in a given field. Today we're going to read about how the Restaurant and Food industry has become a leader in employing people who are formerly incarcerated and are re-entering their communities after completing a prison or jail sentence.
- 2 Distribute *A Good Match: The Restaurant Industry and Formerly Incarcerated Workers* handout. Ask students to annotate anything that seems important, interesting, or confusing. They can also circle unfamiliar words and write any questions they have in the margins.
- 3 In a class discussion, ask the students to describe the reading focusing on the author's primary purpose in writing the article and on differentiating between fact and opinion. Discussion questions can include:

VOCABULARY

incarceration/
incarcerated

criminal justice
system

therapeutic

gravitate

meager

What are some benefits to formerly incarcerated workers of working in restaurants? Put class responses on the board.

- › *Steady work, restaurants are willing to give them a chance, many entry-level jobs, potential to advance.*

What are some of the advantages to restaurants of hiring formerly incarcerated workers?

- › *Dedicated, hard-working staff, appreciative of the opportunity and interested in keeping stable work.*

Does the author present the Restaurant and Food industry in a positive light for hiring the formerly incarcerated? Does it present restaurant work as a good option? Have students give examples.

- › *The passage presents the Restaurant industry's actions in a positive light when it gives examples of people who got a chance through the industry and have advanced. The article also presents the hard reality of restaurant work when it describes the working conditions including long hours, low pay and physical labor involved.*

Why do you think the author wrote this article? In other words, what was their primary purpose?

- › *To inform readers about the relationship between the Restaurant industry and formerly incarcerated workers.*

Some of these things are facts and some are opinions.

What is the difference between a fact and an opinion?

- › *A fact is a statement that can be proven true or false. An opinion is an expression of a person's feelings that cannot be proven. Opinions can be based on facts or emotions.*

Look at the list of your responses on the board.

Which of these are facts and which are opinions?

- › *Answers will vary.*

- 4 Explain to students that they are going to re-read the article and try to underline anything they think is a fact and circle anything they think is an opinion. It could be the author's opinion or someone else's. Practice finding one or two of each together as a class. Then ask students to do the same thing to the rest of the article.
- 5 When students are finished, distribute *Fact and Opinion: A Good Match* worksheet and ask students to use the information in the passage to complete the worksheet.
- 6 After students have completed the worksheet, review the answers with the entire class.



A Good Match: The Restaurant Industry and Formerly Incarcerated Workers

“It’s really hard when you are trying to change your life and have no place to go.”

That’s Shannon Wilson, business manager at Hot Chicken Takeover, the fast-casual restaurant in Columbus, Ohio, that trains and employs those who have been affected by the criminal justice system. “I feel like we’re ostracized.”

According to a study by the Ella Baker Center for Human Rights, 76 percent of formerly incarcerated individuals call the search for work “very difficult or nearly impossible,” and two-thirds remain unemployed or underemployed a full five years after leaving prison. Wilson, who was incarcerated for four years at the Ohio Reformatory for Women after a drug and alcohol addiction she battled starting when she was a teenager, is one of those individuals. After leaving prison and starting to look for work, she, like many other formerly incarcerated individuals, had trouble finding someone to hire her. “I got shut down every time.”

Enter: the Restaurant industry.

While being one of the fastest-growing sectors of the economy, according to the National Restaurant Association, it’s also an industry having trouble filling entry-level positions. “People are really struggling to find reliable, engaged team members,” Joe DeLoss, founder of Hot Chicken Takeover, says. “It’s a pretty pervasive problem.” This translates to an incredible opportunity, financially and socially,



A fellow at Drive Change

Photo: Jeyhoun Allebaugh at <https://www.tastingtable.com/dine/national/restaurants-formerly-incarcerated-drive-change>

for both formerly incarcerated people and food businesses.

The Restaurant industry is currently the “top employer of former inmates in the United States,” Saru Jayaraman, cofounder and co-director of Restaurant Opportunities Centers United (ROC), says in an article for Fast Company. Indeed, the culinary world across the board—from fast-casual joints to fine dining spots, bakeries to food trucks—is stepping up to the plate.

More than just a “fair chance,” these restaurants provide training and skills that ideally help launch careers and fight

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Adapted from Tasting Table: New Beginnings: How the formerly incarcerated are finding hope for a new life in kitchens across America, <https://www.tastingtable.com/dine/national/restaurants-formerly-incarcerated-drive-change>
<https://www.bayarea.com/eat/new-and-noteworthy/cala-sf-hires-ex-convicts/>
<https://www.eater.com/2017/6/23/15771762/recidivism-restaurants-hiring-practices>
<https://civileats.com/2016/07/11/how-the-food-industry-is-providing-second-chances-to-the-formerly-incarcerated/>



unemployment. The restaurants, in turn, don't see the high turnover rates that plague the rest of the industry. "We're at 70 percent retention," DeLoss says of his fast-casual spot.

Take Wilson, who moved up the ranks at Hot Chicken Takeover from Dishwasher to Business Manager, for example. As she explains, "The fact that they gave me a chance has made me extremely devoted and loyal."

Roy Waterman, who spent the entirety of his 20s in prison, is the Owner and Head Chef of Caribbean Soul Caterers in New York City and the Director of Engagement for Drive Change, an organization that teaches job skills to young people with criminal backgrounds via a food truck. "Food is therapeutic," Waterman says. "A lot of people in prison, they gravitate towards food because you can get lost in the dish you're making... and the power of a shared meal."

The Restaurant field is quick to acknowledge that restaurants aren't necessarily an easy career path. Hard work, as any Chef will tell you, is essential to long-term success in the industry. The hours are long and nontraditional, the pay can be meager, and, in most positions, there's a fair amount of physical labor involved. "This is a tough industry and if you don't really love it, you're just not going to last no matter what," says Aviva Paley of Kitchens for Good, a program providing culinary training and job placement for the formerly incarcerated.

However, restaurants are often ideal places for someone with a record to start, according to Geoffrey Golia, Program Director at Getting Out and Staying Out (GOSO). The 16- to 24-year-old justice-involved men he works with can see an ad from a restaurant and be



Employees at Dave's Killer Bread

Photo: <https://civileats.com/2016/07/11/how-the-food-industry-is-providing-second-chances-to-the-formerly-incarcerated/>

assured that there will be real work for them the next day. The Food industry may be uniquely set up to help former inmates change their lives because there are many points of entry involved in both Food Manufacturing and restaurant work and many ways to move up. "You can start off as a Dishwasher and work yourself up to a Prep Cook, to the Sous Chef, to the Head Chef, to the Owner," said Roy Waterman at the Second Chance Summit.

"We're happy to have a job that starts out at a living wage and to be afforded the same opportunities in the company as everyone who doesn't have a criminal background," explains Ronnie Elrod of Dave's Killer Bread. After his second stint in prison (which was 15 years long), he was hired as an Oven Operator in the bakery and has worked his way up to Director of Manufacturing, his current position, in just six years.

As Wilson puts it, "I had worked so long when I was in prison to overcome and change and be a different person." Then DeLoss invited her for an interview, and the rest is history. "Joe told me, 'We're not gonna judge you by your past. We're going to judge you by your future.'" •