

# Is 'The Restaurant' really real?

We ask people who've launched local successes to rate Rocco DiSpirito's show





**P**eople who love to watch train wrecks will no doubt tune in to see the final episode of *The Restaurant* at 10 p.m. today on NBC (Channel 5). For the last six weeks, the reality show has chronicled New York celebrity chef Rocco DiSpirito (left) opening and running his new Manhattan restaurant, Rocco's.

So far, the specialties of this restaurant have been snippy servers, snarly cooks, slippery floors and down-home Italian food that's always served cold.

We asked people who have opened successful restaurants in Greater Cincinnati to watch and tell us what they think.

Chuck Martin

	On a 1-10 scale, how realistic is 'The Restaurant' compared to opening your own restaurant?	Grade Rocco A-F on his abilities as a chef-owner.	Grade Rocco A-F on his abilities as a customer schmoozer.	Who is your least favorite character on the show (other than Rocco)?	What advice would you give Rocco to make his restaurant more successful?	Do you think the show has made the public more understanding of the restaurant business?
 Richard Brown, maitre d', Jean-Robert at Pigall's, downtown	10. "I have seen places that work like that, but I walk out in 20 minutes."	"I'd give him a D as chef, because you can't consistently turn out cold food and not get yourself in the kitchen. As owner, I'd give him a E It's his responsibility. That place is a fish, and it stinks from the head."	A. "He's fabulous. But he spends too much time schmoozing."	"The one I pity the most is the manager (Laurent). Why do we have a French guy as manager in an Italian place? He's over his head. But really, no one is more despicable on this show than Rocco."	"It's salvageable if he put a real manager out front and he (Rocco) needs to get back into the kitchen. Maybe he should allow himself 15 minutes every night to go out and say hello."	"I have a panic attack every time I watch. I think it does give people an idea of what goes on behind the scenes."
 David and Liz Cook, owners, Daveed's, Mount Adams	3. "No training!"	D. "He's not worried about the logistics of the front and the back of the house."	A. "This is all he knows."	"Laurent (the manager). He shows he doesn't care. He doesn't breathe the concept of Rocco's. He is a statue!"	"He needs to be able to do most of all positions to gain respect. He should of had plate covers before opening and more heat lamps to anticipate the 300 covers (people) he will be doing on a Saturday evening."	"Yes, guests may realize there are a lot of odds against a restaurant opening their door every evening (David). But no, guests do not care what happens in between the service and food. (Liz)"
 Jean-Robert de Cavel, owner, Jean-Robert at Pigall's	5. "In the first show, when he was looking for space for the restaurant, I think much of that was really true. But it does make for good TV. There are things that really happen."	D. "Based on the show, I don't think he spends enough time in the kitchen or with his staff. I would give his mom (Nicolina "Mama" DiSpirito, who also works in the restaurant kitchen) a B, though."	B-. "I find him very good with the people he knows, especially when things go well. When things go wrong, though, he's not the same. When he met the woman (a writer) from the <i>New York Post</i> , he said some really stupid things."	"I didn't have a least favorite character. Laurent is just trying to do his job. And I'm not just saying that because I'm French."	"He needs to spend more time with his people. A restaurant should be like a football team. He (Rocco) shouldn't try too hard to be someone he is not."	"I think some people will understand a little more. But they don't see all the things that can go wrong. People who see the show maybe can now understand why it's not all about one person. It's not only about the chef."
 Julie Francis, owner, Aioli, downtown	8. "It's more than fairly realistic, in terms of what you see on the screen."	B. "He knows the ropes."	C. "I especially remember the show when he was with all the women up front."	"Caroline (waitress who quit in huff during episode No. 4). I think she had ulterior motives."	"I think he (Rocco) has to focus on the food. And the restaurant concept is not quite clear. I think the staff was right when they pointed out there was a problem serving food in paper baskets."	"Yes. People do get to see behind the scenes, the craziness. I think it shows more of the extreme exceptions, though."
 Pam and Paul Sturkey, owners, Sturkey's, Wyoming and Encore Cafe, West Chester and Mason	2. "For someone like Rocco, who already has two successful restaurants, the reality of being put into this kind of situation is a 2. From a TV standpoint, they had to sensationalize."	C-. "I think his name and reputation enabled him to have the financial support and the upscale finish of the restaurant. But a chef should know the most important thing is the food, tied in with the service and hospitality."	B+. "He's good, but I think there's a way to schmooze guests without sitting down with them. He shouldn't sit down at one table. What do the people at the other tables think?"	"Caroline. She poisoned the staff."	"Get in the kitchen and support the restaurant from his strength. Probably replace the manager with someone who has a personality and managerial skills. I would communicate more with all of the staff."	"Probably some. And probably some have seen through it as over-dramatized restaurant setting for the purpose of ratings."