

THE 86

A FoodSheikh Food Journal



FOOD SHEIKH
Where Humans and Food Connect



IN THE BEGINNING

The Origins Issue

Issue 2
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*A potpourri of local culinary wanderlust, essays,
art & photography.*

*Complimentary / Not for Resale



Your Name: Michele Johnson

Your current title or position:

Co-Founder & Managing Partner at Pitfire Pizza

Your very first job/titles

When I was in high school, my mom got me a job in the office where she worked, a small company called F&W Construction. She was the Finance Manager, and my title was Admin Assistant.

How long did you work there for?

About a year and a half in total... I started working there for 3 days a week on my summer break, and when I got my driver's license I continued in the afternoons after school. I would leave school at around 2pm and drive my crappy car 30 minutes to the office, and I would work until 5.30 or 6pm.

Where was it, and what did you have to do?

Lots of typing...stuff like invoices, letters, memos, proposals, and construction specifications which I actually found interesting...to this day I am fascinated with how building sites work, in particular infrastructure like roads and bridges... and I later went on to work for several other construction companies during my "corporate life" pre-Pitfire.

What was the one thing you disliked most about the role?

Apart from my mother bossing me around, I couldn't stand filing...ugh. Still hate it.

What was the biggest/most important lesson you learnt from this first job?

I'll pick two things, one related to EQ and one related to IQ. Probably most useful to what I do now (as half of a husband and wife team) was learning how to work with my mom.... which to my surprise was a whole other kettle of fish to just being her daughter! It took a lot of tough love, but in the end she taught me how to not only survive in that situation, but to thrive. The other thing that job taught me was the basic mechanics of how a business works, and some of the tactics required to make a profit. At that time I had plans to follow in my mother's footsteps and study Accounting at university....I later changed my mind but that early "on the job training" was extremely valuable and I was lucky to get that opportunity.



Your Name: Bill Johnson

Your current title or positions: Founder & Co-Owner, Pitfire Pizza

Your very first job/titles: My family moved from Washington DC to Albuquerque, NM when I was 11. My Dad worked for a guy that was into horses and rodeo and got me my first summer job working at a western horse ranch where he kept his horses.

How long did you work there for?

Two summers, my dad would drop me off on his way to work at 7:00am and my mom would pick me up at 6pm.

Where was it, and what did you have to do?

Two miles up a dirt road in the Sandia Mountains about 30 minutes from where we lived. I worked for two cowboys (I still remember their names, Roy & Dale) doing all horse ranch-hand duties such as feeding, cleaning, tacking-up, unloading feed. One perk - riding daily. Over the two summers I worked there I rode probably fifty or so different horses and was exposed to that western cowboy subculture at a young age. I never did take a liking to country music, though.

What was the one thing you disliked most about the role?

The long hot mid-days and the sun (I'm a ginger and sunscreen didn't exist then). There was no AC there and I had to find places to be still for two hours until it cooled off.

What was the biggest/most important lesson you learnt from this first job?

One of the jobs I initially disliked most was mucking (cleaning) the stables. When I first started there was literally a half meter of thick, wet manure smelling of bleached urine in all the 24 stalls, it was in bad shape. At first I'd just lay fresh sawdust down across the top making it look clean and tidy but knowing full well they were filthy with the horses hooves submerged in the wet nasty stuff. One day I went to work and shovelled out one stall down to the hard dirt - about 30 full wheel barrels of disgusting, concrete heavy manure that had to be wheeled 50 meters out of the stable to a dumping area behind the stable. Over the course of the following week I got them all cleaned out and the place looked and smelled great. The horses were way more comfortable, the daily job was easy thereafter and I enjoyed working in that stable the most after that.

My lesson learnt at 12 years old was get the job done right the first time no matter how daunting and difficult it may be. Otherwise your only cheating yourself.