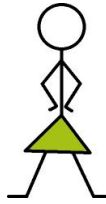


Useful Terms: What We Mean When We Say...

The Big Cheese	the person you report to; may or may not be stinky cheese
The Whine List	should never be served to any Big Cheese
Waiter	there to serve. Is best when silently observing, but is never dumb

**Chapter 12****Hail to the Chef***How to Move the Big Cheese*

Unless you are blessed with either a good-egg manager or a Teflon ego, understanding how to behave with a boss and how not to take her inscrutable behavior personally can be a dicey business. God knows when we first started out, we had only the vaguest idea how the whole boss deal worked. The one thing we knew for sure was that we did not want to come off as suck-ups.

It wasn't until we became bosses that we began to get it and realized that we had been expending too much energy in the wrong direction when dealing with our bosses—trying too hard, taking things personally, being frustrated, misreading

situations, missing opportunities to shine. Back then, we made everything ever so much harder on our hard-working, over-thinking selves than it had to be.

Ultimately, though, we discovered the care and feeding of bosses is not as mysterious as we once thought: everything we ever needed to know about handling the Big Cheese we learned in restaurants.

Bet you can't wait to hear this one. Well, be patient. A lot of what follows is about waiting—on the Big Cheese's table.

No Matter What Business You're in, You are In The Hospitality Industry

Picture this: you own a chic cafe. It's cool. It's gorgeous. It is your creation and a reflection of all your soul, all your training, all your experience. You are passionate about it, and you've named it "Ma Kareera."

You are not only the genius chef/owner of Ma Kareera, but also the hostess dying to make a great impression and the waiter with a vested interest in giving amazing service.

The Big Cheese is your area's most powerful restaurant reviewer. One scathing review (the soup was colder than the Chardonnay) and Ma Kareera could be Out Of Business. One glowing review (the Chardonnay soup was ingenious!), and you are set and on your way to a cookbook contract.

When serving the Big Cheese, your goal is to make him feel as important as he thinks he is, without melting and oozing all over him. You want him to respect what you can bring to the table and marvel at how effortlessly you serve him.

Be the Hostess with the Mostest

Think about this. You walk into a nice restaurant. You wait there at the hostess stand. Nobody comes to greet you. You shift your weight from leg to leg. You cross your arms. Still nada. None of the staff even look up or worse, they look right at you and *ignore* you. You start thinking, “What the hell am I going to spend my money *here* for?”

Ok, that right there, is *exactly* how the Big Cheese feels when you don't greet and attend to her when she wants greeting and attention. How many minutes does it take you in the restaurant to start to get *steamed*—about 5 to heat up and 7 to a rolling boil?

If you are one of those who thinks your boss is an irrational hothead, well, chances are good she's not any more of one than you would be in her Ferragamos. See how that works?

How often have you remarked on how great the service was in a restaurant? Or how miserable service pretty much wrecked what otherwise would have been a

perfectly good meal? No matter how great the work you do is, if your attitude stinks and your service is sloppy or inconsistent, the Big Cheese is going to have a major melt down. Ever been burned with hot cheese? Not pretty. Usually leaves a naaasty scar.

Serving vs Self Serving

One of the Girls Who Calls Us, Madeline, a media buyer, has a terrible relationship with her boss, and says she just doesn't understand it because she is a good worker. "I have been totally honest and upfront with my boss," explains Madeline. "I confront him a lot because he doesn't admit when he is wrong and he never apologizes. It makes me sooo angry."

Now, think if Madeline was the waiter for your table and she snidely told you that you've made a terrible choice and no one orders Lobster Bisque with Creamed Corn. Would you apologize or admit you were wrong? No way, Sweetcakes'. You would walk out. What Madeline doesn't realize is that while she might be good at her job, her hospitality is suckola.

You are responsible for your relationship with your boss. And if you're not happy with your boss, we'd lay odds on the fact that she's not too thrilled with you either. It's probably NOT that your boss is a jerk, or that she dislikes you personally. It's far more likely that you need to examine your personal customer service policy.

Bad service comes in all flavors: have you ever sat in a restaurant and NOT been able to find the waiter who is being paid to serve you? How about the waiter who says: “Sorry not my table” when you ask for a little more butter? Then, of course, there’s the waiter who is sooo anxious to please, he’s practically sitting in your lap. Don’t you just want to slap these people?

Right. Now let’s translate that to your relationship with your boss.

Taking Orders From The Big Cheese

A boss’s job is to give orders, yours is to take them. If you want a smooth and successful relationship with The Big Cheese—or at least one you can live with—you have to give the same kind of amazing service you expect from great professional waiters when you are the boss sitting at a table in an expensive restaurant.

Here are 21 ways to please the Cheese:

1. **Don’t keep the Big Cheese waiting.** When the boss calls a meeting, be on time.
2. **Don’t show up unprepared.** That’s like those aggravating waiters who realize that they forgot to bring a pen just when you are ready to order.

3. **Know the menu.** Know what needs to be done in your department, and be prepared to give the boss the menu of what's cooking whenever she asks for it: *"The Kirk campaign is in its final round of proofs, the Huber slogan still needs to be written, and the Sickle copy is still waiting for client approval."*
4. **Never tell the boss what to order!** You may, however, influence the Big Cheese by making knowledgeable suggestions: *"I suggest that we include that tasty data we found in this year's forecast for the purposes of comparison. Does that sound good to you?"*
5. **Engage in personal chitchat only if the boss invites it.** Never view the boss's friendliness as an invitation to pull up a chair and start a gabfest. Always turn the conversation back to her: *"Yes, I do take the train into the city. It's a lovely ride. Do you find it difficult to find parking for your Mercedes?"* Hint: do not tell your boss anything you wouldn't tell a complete stranger.
6. **Never make the boss feel that she is wasting your precious time.** So you never say: *"Are we done here? I really have a lot of other stuff to do. I do have a life, you know, and I'd like to...blah, blah."* You have all the time in the world to wait on the Big Cheese and you cannot rush her.
7. **Patiently answer your boss's questions, no matter how ignorant—and never make him *feel* ignorant:** *"Great question. Our company makes money by selling stuff."* Keep the answer simple and direct and don't editorialize.

8. **Never interrupt when the Big Cheese is ordering.** Never say: *“Do you really think that’s a good idea?”*
9. **Don’t keep reconfirming the boss’s order:** *“Are you positively, absolutely sure it’s ok with you if I go on that sales call?”*
10. **When the boss is finished ordering, ask only the questions you really need to know in order to serve her correctly:** *“How would you like me to prepare that document, in Excel or PowerPoint?”*
11. **Commend the Big Cheese for her decision with a snappy, not sappy opinion:** *“Excellent choice.”*
12. **Never tell your boss that you think she can’t afford her order:** Make sure the boss knows what things cost, by providing price lists so she is aware of how big her bill could get, but don’t say: *“My God! Do you know how much that will cost? You can’t waste that much!”* Just take the order.
13. **Never leave the boss’s table until you are sure she is finished ordering:** *“Is there anything else I can get for you?”*
14. **Be flexible.** If your boss decides to change his order, that’s perfectly fine with you. So it’s NOT: *“Are you crazy? I just finished calling all of our vendors to tell them the deal is off. You can’t change your mind now!”* The correct answer is: *“No problem, I’ll get right on that.”* If The Big Cheese wants butter—even if it’s not your in job description to fetch it—fetch it. It won’t kill you to make the copies, keep a visitor busy, or man the switchboard for a morning.

15. **Let the boss know what's cooking.** Generally speaking, you want to let the boss know what you are up to, rather than having him wonder—especially when he's out of town. Pithy, slightly vague emails are great for this, as in: *"I contacted Mr. Johnston, and he's happy to file the claim for us."* Plus, updates send a subliminal message to the Big Cheese: I'm on it. Stuff is getting done, and I'm working for you oh chief fondue.
16. **Don't deliver bad news without simultaneously presenting a buffet of palatable solutions:** *"Unfortunately, the new back-end system won't be up and running until Tuesday. But we will be able to run the site on the old servers through the weekend, or we can use Servers R Us Co-hosting service instead. Which would you prefer?"*
17. **Drop inside information to your boss as subtly as a napkin.** So it's *"I heard from Joe in accounting that the CEO is thinking of clamping down on business-class travel."* NOT: *"Well, I know what the CEO wants and no one can fly first class, not even Youuuu!"*
18. **Accept praise graciously.** If the Big Cheese tells you how much he enjoyed what you dished up, DON'T say, *"Oh it was nothing,"* or *"It could have been better."* If he said it was good, it was good—validate his opinion, don't contradict it. Say: *"Thank you so much. I'm glad you enjoyed it."*
19. **Don't hover.** You cannot stand over the boss while he's digesting. After you hand him a memo to review, DON'T be lurking around saying: *"Do*

you like it? Huh? What do you think?" Just because he never says he likes it, doesn't mean he doesn't think it's delish.

20. **Do NOT touch the boss.** J once thought she was doing her boss a favor by straightening his tie before he went to a meeting. He slapped her hand and said, "Please don't ever touch me."

21. **No matter how R-U-D-E, gruff, picky, indecisive the boss may be, you are the professional waiter.** Stand neutral and non-reactive, patiently waiting to serve.

Whine Does Not Go With Cheese!

No Big Cheese ever wants to hear about your whines.

The Whine List

I can't...

I wouldn't...

I don't have time...

Shouldn't we...

I demand...

It's not my fault...

Unfixable...

I don't think it's a good idea...

It will never work...

I would love to BUT...

I surely will, BUT first I must....

COCKTAIL LIST (that Compliments Cheese)

What the Big Cheese does want is a thirst-quenching cocktail that will help her get a happy buzz on:

Thank you!

Great idea!

Can do!

Will do!

Sure. No problem!

I'll get right on that!

Do As I Think, Not As I Say...

One of the frequent complaints from The Girls Who Call Us is that they feel that their bosses expect them to be “psychic.” We sympathize; it took us forever to realize that we didn’t always have to wait to be told every single thing. We learned to put our focus not only on our immediate to-dos, but to anticipate what the Big Cheese would need to do her job.

There’s nothing supernatural about it. It’s just like those waiters who seem to be mind readers. You’re sitting there thinking, “Gee, I’d like some more water...” and before you even turn your head to look for her, there she is filling your half-empty glass. Great waiters are watching the glasses from a distance; they keep tabs on certain things going on at the table. They read all the signals so they know when they need to ask “Would you like more...” or when they can just go ahead and top you off. They are invisibly visible. This is exactly the illusion you should create for your boss.

For example, our friend Ginger, an executive assistant at an environmental engineering firm, has a boss who is constantly misplacing his paperwork. Ginger keeps copies of everything right where she can grab them, and the second she hears her boss say: “I can’t seem to find...” Ginger has the exact proposal he was looking for ready to drop into his lap so he’s not late for his meeting. See? Magical, but not mystical.

Timed to Perfection

You need to adjust to the Big Cheese's needs and speeds. In Ma Kareera the timing of the meal is nearly as important as the quality of the cuisine.

Figure out the points during the day when your boss might be looking for you, or when she needs to be left alone to dig into her work. Most of us are crabby right before lunch, for example, and backed up after, so avoid making requests or asking questions during those times of day. What day of the week does the Big Cheese crave the challenge of tackling a Porterhouse-sized problem? For most people, it's not Monday morning and it's not Friday afternoon.

Does your boss like to linger over a discussion as one of J's bosses did? Then do as J did and sit and listen to his droning no matter what you've got on your plate. Does the Big Cheese need to get in and out in a hurry? Think fast food: speak fast and write short. Be constantly on top of the pace of things, and just because you brought out the drinks on time, doesn't mean you can wait 95 years to bring out the salad course. Keep up with Cheese, please. You're on her clock.

Don't bring the boss any dishes too soon. Bring them when he expects them. If you finish a project too early and turn it in, he then has time to pick it apart and make you redo it. You don't, however, want to make every project you work on a

la last minute, either. Do the work, then keep it on the backburner. That way, if he asks for it prematurely, voila, it's well done.

If you are going to blow a deadline, don't wait until the project has reached a complete crisis. You can't go in to your boss's office at five p.m. on a Friday night and tell him that the brochures that were supposed to be delivered to the tradeshow over the weekend won't even be printed until the following Tuesday. As soon as you know a deadline is in trouble, make it known: "To hit the deadline on the Greenky account, we are going to need more resources than we originally projected." NOT: "I'm just freaking out, there is nooo way to get this done. I'm gonna diiie."

Don't make excuses. Just promote the future benefit to him in exchange for his patience now.

When The Shiitake Hits The Fan

Think of yourself as the ultimate waiter: "A fly in your soup! That's outrageous," Share the fury of the Big Cheese. Do NOT say you don't see the fly! Take full responsibility, but none of the blame. Accept the duty for resolving the problem, but none for causing it.

Appease The Cheese like so. “I apologize for this, and I promise I will find out how that happened and make sure it never happens again! Is there anything I can do to make up for this terrible oversight? A brandy, perhaps?”

Be Discrete for the Elites

People love to criticize the critics. You will hear other people slamming the work or the style of The Big Cheese. Do NOT agree with anything negative that someone says about The Big Cheese, and don't elaborate with your own stinky stories.

If you take not one other word of advice from this book, take this: never, ever, ever say one bad word about your boss to anyyyyone. Ever. Your friends don't really want to hear it anyway, and your colleagues can't wait to repeat it. It's a hard habit to break, particularly because boss bashing is more contagious than chicken pox.

Among our very worst job faux pas was boss blasting. It's such a cliché: we actually believed, “Oh everybody bitches about work and their boss.” Well, take it from us, not the people who move up in companies.

It's not that we sliced up every Big Cheese. We've had bosses we absolutely worshiped, who taught us more skills and gave us more insights into corporate psychology than we could have ever thought we could learn from one person.

But, in those jobs where we had bosses we thought were major Turkeys, we roasted them but good. Later, we invariably found that it was precisely those moments of indiscretion that ultimately got us skewered. And we've heard about the same phenomenon over and over again from The Girls Who Call Us.

Suzanne, a media buyer, went to a boss once with a bereavement-leave request for an out-of-town funeral. Suzanne had used up her allotment of personal and vacation days, but because the deceased wasn't a blood relative, the boss denied her the extra time off. Suzanne was incensed, and repeated the boss's incredible insensitivity to everyone in the office. Two months later, this same boss told Suzanne he was moving on to a new position, and added (nasty): "I have strongly recommendation that you NOT be promoted into my place." He continued on with more vicious comments before he left, and Suzanne just couldn't understand why. Later came out that word had gotten back to him that Suzanne had bad-mouthed him.

What you might see as idle kitchen gossip about your boss, she might see as a cleaver in the back. You are dead meat if it gets back to her—which is as inevitable as dirty dishes. Keep your hands clean.

What Moves The Big Cheese

It's not easy being the boss. The Cheese truly does stand alone. When you are the boss, subordinate coworkers tend to leave you out of social events and

ignore your role as a human being because you are the “authority figure”—not one of the gang.

So many of the Girls Who Call Us have those Fear of Ass Kissing Issues and avoid opportunities to express praise. But most bosses can see through sycophants as easily as they can a Pyrex pie plate. If you are not a Brown Nose Betty, you'll not be mistaken for one. Sincerity shows.

Providing great service means making a person feel welcome and recognizing special occasions. Know, for example, when the boss's birthday is and don't blow it off. If you have a great relationship with the Big Cheese, go ahead and leave a little vase of flowers on her desk or a book you think that she'll devour. If your relationship with your boss is rocky, and you get the urge to improve the dynamic, don't ignore his birthday, acknowledge it with a cigar or something equally simple.

We're not talking showering gifties and glory all the time here. An appropriate gesture at an appropriate time will be long remembered. M still keeps a pretty paperweight on her desk that was given to her along with a touching note of appreciation by a great, hard-working editor she managed three companies ago.

Don't be afraid to drop a little praise, either. Not just the nice tie, nice shoes, but something heartfelt about the work, the leadership. Try: “Hey, you handled that

really well,” or, our favorite compliment: “I’m learning so much from you.” Trust us, many may never show it, but everybody wants to feel genuinely appreciated—even Le Grand Fromage.

All Fired Up

Your job is to serve the Big Cheese. If you are a R-U-D-E and surly waiter, you will get F-I-R-E-D. It’s that simple. A boss is not going to *tolerate* being treated like that by a *waiter*. It’s a matter of self-respect.

We can’t tell you how shocked we’ve been at the behavior of some of the people we’ve managed, or at some of the stories of The Girls Who Call Us who got fired, and they freak out at the injustice of it all, when it sounds to us like *they* were 100% responsible for their own undoing.

Once J was at a political convention interviewing celebrities. She told a subordinate to go conduct an interview with a non-celeb while J, herself, interviewed Aretha Franklin, who was standing right there. The guy flat-out refused because he wanted more Aretha exposure: “No,” said this suicidal subordinate. “I won’t do that.” Bad move. Later that day, J called him in and practically sung: “You, are sooooo fired.” And that was that. Dissing your boss in front of the queen of R-E-S-P-E-C-T—ding! ding! There goes the Irony Alarm!

A leader can NOT allow herself to be publicly challenged. So many of the Girls Who Call Us don't get this part, they think, "Well, I was just angry and acted out. I'll apologize and we'll move on." Nuh huh. It's called flagrant insubordination,

No Shirt, No Shoes, NO Service

We're not saying that you always hafta suck it up. Hey, if you are fed up, you are fed up. If the Big Cheese is clearly way out of line, and you are prepared to leave your job to defend yourself and hold on to your self-respect, go for it. When you feel you must go and take a hunk out of the Big Cheese:

X Do it in private. Do not contradict your boss in public, even if she pins blame on you that you don't deserve. Wait until you can confront her in private, let your feelings be known, make a specific recommendation about how you would like to see this type of incident handled in the future, but don't demand an apology.

X Present your side calmly. If you disagree with a decision that The Big Cheese makes, you can go in her office and discuss it. BUT if it becomes a power struggle, 99 percent of the time, you will not win. To avoid the power issue, present your information in a way that suggests that you accept her decision, but that you have more information that you think will benefit her. If she will not listen, drop it. For more on confrontation techniques, see **Held In Contempt**.

The Waiter's Revenge

You can only eat just so much crow. If the Big Cheese is unusually cruel or critical, or otherwise abusing his power, it might be time to consider calling his boss. However, girlfriend, you have to know that you should only go above your boss's head when you have nothing to lose—we're talking tossing in your apron, here.

Expect that high-level execs will send you right back down to the original problem person and have you work it out with her. That's what good managers should do. However, your boss will know that you've gone "over her head," and, unless she is willing to admit she was wrong, she will never trust you again, and the relationship will deteriorate from there.

If you see NO ALTERNATIVE, but to go over the boss's head:



Address the issue with your boss first. Assuming this gets you approximately nowhere, have your facts completely documented and dated before you go to her boss.



Unless your problem with your boss is legal in nature, such as sexual harassment, HR will not be helpful. If you go to HR, chances are that unless they already know the manager is a problem and are working on getting him out, you have now identified yourself as a problem. HR is really not on your side, unless the Most Uppity Uppers want them to be.



Think about your alternatives. Have a plan. Know what you are trying to achieve: do you want a transfer to a different division? Do you want to report an abuse? What's your Plan B if this blows up in your face? For example, if the execs make it clear that they can't resolve this problem with your boss for you, be prepared to request an exit "package"—meaning severance, unemployment, and, possibly continuance of health benefits. J once got a delicious severance package when she went above her new boss's head to complain about the revolving-door management of her division: she had had three bosses in four years. The execs at that company could not promise that the situation would stabilize, so J resigned and when she did, she got the golden parachute because she had the presence of mind to ask for one right then and there.



Clear off Your Computer beforehand. If you go above your boss's head, be prepared to vacate the building. Sounds extreme, we know, but we've seen it happen more than once when an employee goes to complain to upper management, or the Board of Directors, and they *never* return to their desks. Copy your contact file, remove anything personal from your workstation—just in case. If the management thinks that you are upset enough at your boss, you might just get a personal escort from the building.

If you have strong allies in the upper echelons of the company who value your talent *more* than they value your boss, you might, repeat, *might* win. Most of the

time, however, if you go above your boss's head, you will either lose your job or it will become intolerable. That's just the way the biscotti crumbles.

No matter what happens, remember this: Ma Kareera is your restaurant. You are the boss of your own life. Have confidence in your work, take pride in the service you provide and your professionalism, and if that doesn't please The Big Cheese, don't let it eat you up alive, just make plans to take your pots and pans elsewhere.

Recipe for a Raise

You can't expect the Big Cheese to remember everything you've accomplished in a year. Whether your company conducts formal "reviews," tallying up the cost of all those moments of faithful service will be extremely valuable when it's time for the Big Cheese to pay his bill and throw some more dough your way.

A company might keep a detailed record of every time you screwed something up, but we guarantee that no one but you will keep a file of all the good stuff you got done and how much you contribute.

So what we want you to do is to create a spreadsheet called The Tab. Take ten minutes every Friday night at 4:50 to outline what you worked on during the week. Include all activities like meetings you ran, clients you contacted and the results. Fold in any dollar amounts of business you brought in, or how much you slashed from a budget. Quickly type up whatever you did, even if you think it's redundant or insignificant. Also include positive feedback you've received on your work from within or outside the company.

Your Tab file has three functions:



It will serve as documentation if someone challenges your contributions and/or tries to put you on probation.



It will be incredibly useful for doing the annual resume update and preparing for a job interview.



Seeing all you get done in a year will give you confidence to ask for a promotion or more money, take a vacation day, or, for some of you, to look for a position where you feel your skills will be more appreciated and better compensated.

If you feel you deserve a raise or promotion, don't wait until the annual review—by then the management has already figured it all out. Assuming the timing is good—the company is healthy and your boss is happy—go into your boss and say: “I know that performance reviews won't be for another two months, but I'd like to discuss my compensation package with you for next year, before it's all set in stone.” This is the only way to indicate to your boss that the company-wide 3% salary increase isn't going to make you happy.

Once you have a discussion date set, you will want to create a bulleted list of all the development areas in which you've contributed and improved. For ideas, go to the [about.com](#) career planning section and search on performance reviews. Find the [How To Do an Employee Appraisal](#) link, then scroll down to Discussion Topics for phrases

like “handling pressure and uncertainty” and “adjusting work plans to meet changing company needs.” Then take your Tab file and find specific examples of your work from the past year and list them under each of the development area bullets. You can either give this one-page summary to your boss, or use it for talking points during your meeting.

When it's time to talk cashola, express your desired increase in terms of percentages (as in 10%) instead of dollars (as in \$10K) because they sound smaller. When negotiating for a higher salary, never give a range like “A 6 or 8 percent bump would make me happy”; they will surely give you the lower number.

Threatening to leave if you don't get your requested increase is an ultimatum; it's a power play that most bosses are not willing to lose. It's a big, big risk: it could pay off, but it might not, at which point you will either a) get fired or b) have to deliver on the threat and vamoose.

Unless you are actually willing to leave the job if you don't get the raise you requested, don't threaten to. Even if you think you will quit, don't mention it because it will only make your boss, who probably can't authorize the raise herself anyhow, defensive and unwilling to fight for you.

