

GASTROBRATIA

RESTAURANT WITHOUT ILLUSIONS

A Practical Manual for Restaurant Management

NUMBERS / PEOPLE / PROCESSES / CONTROL

ŠTEFAN KRAJČOVIČ

20 YEARS OF EXPERIENCE IN REAL OPERATIONS

FREE SAMPLE

Selected pages from the international English edition

INSIDE THIS PREVIEW

- Revenue, cash flow and daily control
- Food cost as a management tool
- Menu, suppliers and portion control
- People, training and operational discipline

Imprint

Restaurant Without Illusions

A Practical Manual for Restaurant Management

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RESTAURANT WITHOUT ILLUSIONS

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ABOUT THE BOOK

No sugar-coating.

A full restaurant does not necessarily mean a healthy business. This book shows how to bring your economics, processes, suppliers and people under control - without theory and without fluff.

Štefan Krajčovič draws on more than twenty years of experience and real restaurant turnarounds. The reader gets specific questions, checkpoints and procedures that reveal where the business is losing money, time and performance.

This is not a book about the ideal restaurant. It is a working map for an owner or manager who wants to know what is really happening in the operation - and what to change first.

**Revenue without control
is only an illusion of profit.**

RESTAURANT WITHOUT ILLUSIONS

Introduction

SIMPLICITY / STABILITY / SYSTEM

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The Reality You Cannot See

You can have a full restaurant, excellent food, great reviews and smiling staff. You can feel that everything is running exactly as it should. And yet at the end of the month you discover that the result does not match what you see during the day, that you earned less than you expected. Or that you merely made up what was missing from the previous period.

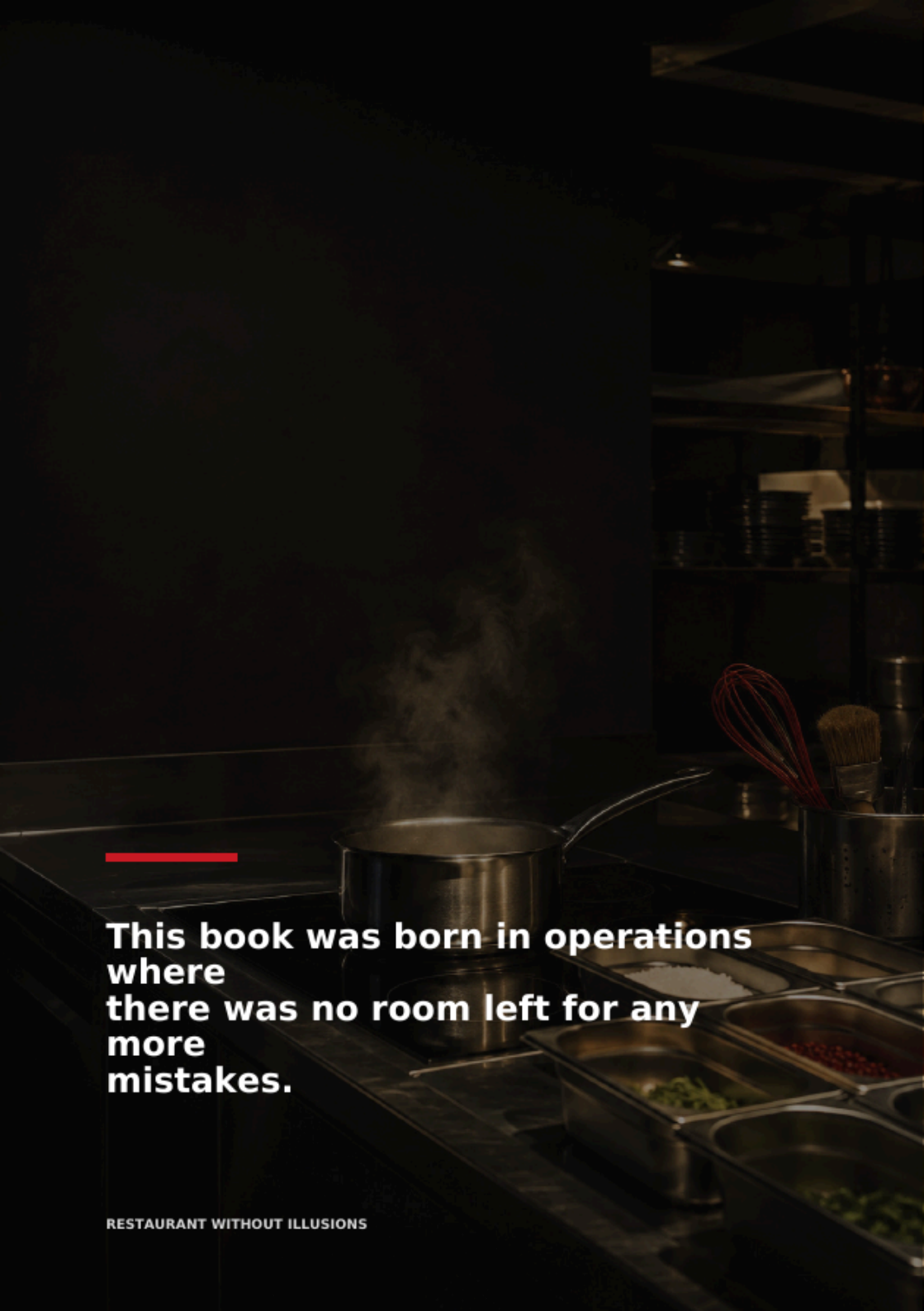
After more than twenty years of experience, one thing is clear. The difference between a business that operates steadily and one that is merely keeping its head above water is not the recipe. It is not talent, nor the number of hours you spend in the operation. The difference is the system and discipline.

System, processes and discipline are the common features of operations that have their numbers and results under control. Their absence is the common feature of problems that deepen over time. In most cases, the same scenario repeats itself.

The name of the business changes, the city, the interior and the menu. The foundation, however, stays the same. The belief that it will somehow work on its own. It will not.

This book is not about running a business without risk. Risk is part of it. It is about avoiding mistakes that cost you money every day. Understanding your own economics. Setting up processes so the business is not dependent on your constant presence.

If you are ready to look at your restaurant without sugar-coating, this book will help you understand where you are and what you need to change to move forward.



**This book was born in operations
where
there was no room left for any
more
mistakes.**

RESTAURANT WITHOUT ILLUSIONS

Why This Book Was Written

**Debt, broken families, sadness and hopelessness.
Questions that repeat every day:**

- What am I doing wrong?
- How will I pay the rent?
- How am I supposed to keep going?

Owners who stop going to their own businesses because being there destroys them. They become slaves to their own business. They cannot close. Staying open does not work. Debt is standing at the door. This is the reality of operations that nobody writes about.

Such an operation can be helped. But it takes time and money that businesses on the edge often no longer have.

And this is exactly where the idea for this book came from. To put together the system I use in practice. To spell out the steps exactly as I implement them in operations.

You may be asking yourself:

Why would anyone give away know-how that earns them money? Precisely because of what you read at the beginning. And for one more reason. Because I have been through it too. I know what it is like to stand on the other side. Not as a consultant, but as an owner who knew that VAT would not wait.

Who This Book Is For

This book is for people who do everything they can, yet still do not see the expected result at the end of the month. It is for those who put time, energy and money into the operation, but the final numbers do not reflect it.

It is also for those who are only preparing to open their own foodservice business and want to know what actually awaits them. Not according to assumptions, but according to reality. Not according to excitement, but according to what has to work every single day.

It is also for excellent chefs and waiters who think their professional knowledge of the craft will be enough on its own. It will not. Knowing how to cook or serve does not mean knowing how to manage the business as a whole.

It is also for managers who do not want to merely react to problems once they have already happened. It is for those who want to know what is happening in the operation, why it is happening and what specifically needs to be done to get things moving in the right direction. Preventing problems is easier than putting out fires later and losing guests.

What Type of Operation Is This Book For?

This book is intended for restaurants, pizzerias and cafés serving breakfast. For operations with indoor seating of roughly up to eighty and a summer terrace of roughly up to one hundred seats. For businesses that run a daily menu, delivery, or combine several forms of sales at once. It is in these types of operations that the same mistakes, the same weak points and the same losses that are invisible at first glance most often repeat.

How to Read This Book

**This book was not written to be an easy read.
It was written to be useful.**

The decision does not come when you buy the book. It comes while reading it. That is when you find out whether you will just skim through it, or start comparing it with how your own operation works.

Think back to your first driving lesson. You are sitting behind the wheel, your hands are on it, but you do not yet know exactly what you are doing. An instructor sits beside you. They show you where the brake is, where the accelerator is, when to shift and when to ease off. Most importantly, why. Knowing what to press is not enough. You must understand the connections, otherwise the car will not move forward smoothly.

An operation works the same way. Owning it is not enough. Standing in it from morning to night is not enough. Good intentions are not enough. You have to understand it as a whole. You must understand how processes connect, the law of action and reaction, and know what happens when one link stops working. Every decision very quickly shows up in the result. Either as money, or as a loss.

Do not read this book passively. Work with it. Compare each chapter with your own reality. For each one, write down one specific thing you will change. Then return to it and check whether the change actually happened.

In foodservice, what matters is not what you told yourself you would do. What matters is what is set up and what is actually done every day.

What Will This Book Give You?

First of all, a head start. Not a marketing one. An operational one. A head start in understanding what you need to watch, what you need to control and where you are losing money, time and performance.

You get experience from more than twenty years of practice in real operations. From situations that did not hurt on paper, but in day-to-day operations. Experience from mistakes, bad decisions, falls and moments when the result was turned around by the right setup.

You will find answers to questions that repeat over and over. Why you are losing money even when you are making sales. Why your team is not working. Why performance falls apart even where capable people are present. How to set up the business so that it produces results. And most importantly, how to implement these things step by step, not just think about them.

You will not find legal shortcuts or cheap recipes for quick success here.
You will find what every operation stands or falls on.

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Operations Management

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Revenue Is Not Profit

Revenue looks good, sounds good and often gives reassurance.

People are sitting on the terrace. The kitchen is running at full speed. Orders come in one after another. The cash register does not stop. At first glance, everything works. But this is exactly where one of the biggest errors in thinking begins.

Revenue by itself guarantees nothing.

You can have a full restaurant and still have nothing to pay the bills with. Strong days and a weak month.

Between revenue and profit lies an entire chain of decisions, processes and everyday mistakes and questions.

How much the ingredient costs.

How much of it ends up on the plate and how much in waste.

How much time its preparation takes.

Who prepares it and at what wage.

How many things are done badly, slowly or unnecessarily.

The guest does not see it. The numbers do.

Most people track how much was sold. Very few track what actually remained from it. And this is what also decides the result. It is not enough to know how much revenue you made. You need to know what was left from that revenue.

A full restaurant without cost control does not mean success. It means a problem that is not visible yet.

KEY POINT

Revenue without control is only an illusion of profit.

FC% Is Not Decoration on a Costing Sheet, but an Alarm

Food cost (FC%) is one of the key indicators of an operation. It expresses what share of the selling price of a dish or drink excluding VAT is made up by the cost of the ingredients used.

Formula:

$$\text{FC\%} = \text{ingredient cost per portion} \div \text{selling price excluding VAT} \times 100$$

If the ingredients for one portion cost €3.20 and the selling price excluding VAT is €10, FC% is 32%. The calculation alone is not enough: the paper costing must be regularly compared with actual production, consumption and losses.

That is why FC% is not just a calculation. FC% is a control of production discipline.

Do Not Look Only at Food. Track Wages as a Percentage of Revenue Too

The second major hole is often payroll. Not because people earn too much. But because performance and shift scheduling are not linked to actual revenue.

Basic view:

$$\text{Payroll cost \%} = \text{total payroll costs} \div \text{revenue} \times 100$$

Every Menu Item Changes the Economics of the Whole

A menu is not just an offer for the guest. It is an economic model. Every dish and drink has its own ingredient cost, production time, demand on staff, waste, service speed, storage demand, refrigerator space and complaint risk.

A dish that looks attractive can make no economic sense. For example, because it has high waste, low yield, many components and poor repeatability in production.

A properly designed offer is not built around ego or around what "might be popular." It is built around the capacity of the kitchen, the team, the location, price, turnover and margin. The menu is the operation's economic filter.

If You Do Not Control the Process, the Numbers Will Lie to You

This is where everything connects. The economics of an operation are not just calculations. They are a check of whether the system works.

- If the chef does not weigh portions, FC% will lie.
 - If inventory is not controlled, costs will lie.
 - If shifts are set up badly, payroll will rise.
-
- If service does not sell drinks, the average check will lie.
 - If the menu contains the wrong items, margin will be weak.

Control Questions

- Is my revenue broken down so I know where I make money and where I do not?
- Am I within the target food cost today, or am I off?
- Is my average check growing, or are guests leaving without additional sales?
- **Does the number of labor hours match the actual revenue?**
If you cannot answer, you do not have control.

Warning Signs

- **Revenue is growing, but money is not**
- **Food cost fluctuates for no clear reason**
- **The average check stagnates or falls**
- **Staff are busy, but the result does not reflect it**
- **At the end of the month “something does not add up,” but you do not know what. These are not minor details. This is a system without control.**

KEY POINT

Daily control of the numbers is not about wanting an overview. It is about the fact that without it you have no control. And without control there is no business. Only the illusion that it somehow works.



**A menu is not a list of dishes. It is
an economic tool.**

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Menu as an Economic Tool

INTRODUCTION TO MENU AND COSTING

The menu is one of the most important things in a restaurant. And at the same time, it is a place where many mistakes are made. Not because owners do not want to do things right, but because the menu is very often created in the opposite order from how it should be.

In practice it looks like this: the chef proposes dishes, the owner approves them, the menu is designed graphically and only then does anyone ask whether it actually works economically. Attention is often paid to variety, trends, what competitors have or what guests might like. Less attention is paid to whether such an offer can actually support the operation.

But a menu should not start with food. It should start with economics and process. Look at it from the perspective of the person who is responsible for everything.

Before you start putting the offer together, you need to answer several basic questions.

- How many guests per day does my operation need to be economically stable?
- What fixed costs do I have to cover every month?
- What FC% can I afford so there is room left for wages, energy and profit?

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Suppliers as Part of the System

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Critical Equipment Must Have a Plan B

- Pizza oven? Twin-deck
- Coffee machine? Backup solution
- Critical equipment? Always a Plan B.

Not for comfort. For survival.

Why Does This Happen?

- Price is considered, not risk
- Deadlines are taken on trust
- No checking of stock, service or the supply chain
- Contracts are general, without real consequences

Solution

- Choose the supplier by service, not price
 - Verify whether they have stock and spare parts
 - Find out real response times, not marketing claims
-
- Set up the contract with clear deadlines and penalties
 - Schedule staff start dates based on actual delivery
 - Prepare backup solutions for critical equipment

Control Questions

- Do I know exactly how much I spend on ingredients each year and which suppliers handle that volume?
- Do I have at least two genuinely usable alternatives for every key ingredient?
- Do I have clear rules for deliveries, orders, complaints and quality?
- Do I evaluate a supplier by long-term stability, or by price?

Warning Signs

- Purchasing is based on habit, not data
- There is no price comparison between suppliers
- A supply failure immediately disrupts the operation
- Complaints are postponed or left unresolved

Basic Calculation Model

Change starts when you stop cooking by chance and start managing volume. A basic lunch-menu model is created for several months, and it repeats. Not because there is nothing else to cook. But so you can plan.

Every week has its own plan. Ingredients, minimum quantity in stock, quantity for the number of portions.

The operation prepares approximately 150 lunches a day. This volume is divided as follows:

- 80 portions chicken
- 40 portions pork
- 20 portions pasta
- 10 portions meat-free dishes

If something sells out, there is an alternative. Not improvisation. A plan.

The Foundation Is Portion Weight

Chicken: 130 grams per portion. Pasta dish: 100 grams of meat per portion. Sides, sauces, everything has its number. This is the basis for determining how much to order.

When you know how much you will sell and how much goes into one portion, you can calculate consumption. And when you know consumption, you can manage inventory.

Consumption Calculation

Chicken is on the menu every day

- per day, 80 portions $\times$ 130 grams = 10.4 kilograms per day



PORTION WEIGHT AND SERVICE

A deviation of 10 to 20 grams of meat per portion at 50 portions a day means 0.5 to 1 kg of extra product. At a price of €8 per kilogram, that is €4 to €8 per day.

Without weighing, a small deviation turns into a regular loss.

UNPLANNED PURCHASE

A missing ingredient has to be solved quickly and is often bought at a higher price. The difference can amount to €5 to €10 per day.

Buffets and Breakfast

The biggest silent killer. Excess food. Inaccurate planning. Zero control of service. Every day something remains. Every day something is thrown away.

Loss: €20 to €30 per day

Ingredient Losses

Spoiled ingredients. Poor storage. Unused stock.

Loss: €10 to €15 per day

Small Consumables

Napkins, packaging, cleaning products. They disappear every day. Nobody deals with them.

Loss: approximately €10 per day

Daily-Menu Leftovers

Production FC per portion: €1.70. 3 portions remain per day

Daily loss:

$$3 \times \text{€}1.70 = \text{€}5.10$$

Weekly loss over five days:

$$\text{€}5.10 \times 5 = \text{€}25.50$$

Monthly loss over four weeks:

$$\text{€}25.50 \times 4 = \text{€}102$$

Loss over six months:

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People and Performance

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The Job Interview Is the First Filter of the System

A restaurant system does not begin on the first working day. It begins at the job interview.

A restaurant sells a service. People create that service. If they do not have clear rules, performance becomes random. And random performance creates inconsistent results.

The job interview is one of the key processes of an operation. It determines the future level of service, the quality of cooperation and the economic stability of the business. If it is not clearly defined who the operation needs, selection is based on impressions. If no goal is set, personal sympathies decide. If there is no system, risk enters the operation.

An interview should not be a conversation about likability. It should be a test of compatibility with the system.

Three basic pillars must be clearly defined during the interview

- Who we are looking for
- What we expect from them
- What we offer in return

First pillar: Who the operation is looking for

Not just a job title. Not just a cook, waiter, bartender or manager. That is only the name of a role. The operation is not looking for a title. It is looking for a person who can handle a specific way of working.

What a New Person Evaluates First

An employee does not arrive to evaluate your visions. They evaluate the reality they experience during the first days.

01**What the shift looks like****02****How the team works****03****How the rules are set****04****How mistakes are handled****05****How people communicate**

Employee Training Is Decisive

One of the biggest threats to a hospitality business is not marketing or competition. It is employee training. This is one of the most underestimated risks in the entire operation.

Every owner wants to offer a service that makes the customer return. But that service is not created by a logo, the name of the business or a social-media post. Every day, that service is sold by people. And if those people do not have clear rules, they do not work according to a system. They work according to themselves. They do things the way they happen to know how. Relying on the idea that someone "has done this before" is the same gamble as cooking dishes only from Pinterest photos. It may look good, but it guarantees nothing.

The worst scenarios all look the same. A new employee arrives on the first day. They may have a company uniform, a signed contract and expectations. In the changing room someone says in passing: "Come on, I'll show you how we do things here." An hour later they are already working the shift. After two hours they get their own section. After three they make mistakes. After four they are stressed.

But reality is often even worse. They enter the shift without a clear plan for the first day. They hear: "You know how to do this? Then do it." They are put into full performance simply because "there is no time". They are trained by someone who is already overloaded. Nobody has clearly defined who is responsible for the training.

In such an operation, training does not become a process. It becomes a test of endurance. The new person does not learn the standard. They learn to survive. They learn to improvise. They learn to put out fires instead of learning the correct way to work. Then the owner wonders why performance fluctuates, mistakes repeat and staff turnover grows.

The reward system must grow together with the level of the operation.

An operation without reliable numbers starts with a simple revenue bonus.

An operation that knows its high-margin items can reward the right sales.

An operation that has its economics under control can afford a tailored reward system.

The biggest mistake is pretending to use the third model in an operation that has not even mastered the first.

Because without numbers there is no reward system. There is only hope handed out according to feelings.

And hope does not pay invoices in an operation.

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Conclusion

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Continue with the complete 154-page English PDF edition.

- Numbers, costs and daily control
- Menu, purchasing and inventory
- Processes, staffing and performance
- Practical questions for real operations

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Includes the option to consult the author about applying the book to your own restaurant operation.