C1-C2 English Worksheet

Pineapple on Pizza: Why an Italian Chef Was Sacked in Australia

9 November 2026

Article

A request for ham-and-pineapple pizza at Brisbane's La Costa restaurant escalated into a dispute over culinary identity and professional autonomy. Italian chef Davide Tamburella chose to draw the line at the topping, describing it as an affront to his food culture. He refused to bow to management's wishes and continued to take issue with a request that, to him, undermined authenticity. His uncompromising stance drew attention in pineapple-growing Queensland. This confrontation was not unique: he had refused similar instructions three times in four years. He appeared determined to stand his ground.

By May 2026, wider concerns about workplace conduct had come to a head. Management cited inappropriate language and strained relations with colleagues alongside the pizza refusal. Tamburella disputed the circumstances of his dismissal and argued that a workplace injury had played a role; the owner rejected that allegation. His legal challenge did not hinge on whether culinary convictions justified refusing an order. Instead, his application fell foul of a strict 21-day deadline. The Fair Work Commission dismissed it without deciding the substantive fairness of the termination. The ruling therefore did not spell out whether refusing pineapple pizza alone would have warranted dismissal.

The affair exposes a dilemma that can boil down to competing expectations: customers pay for flexibility, while chefs may prize cultural authenticity and creative independence. Employers must factor in professional judgement, but employees cannot assume personal principles override every reasonable instruction. These disputes can have repercussions for workers in precarious situations: Tamburella said losing his job disrupted his employer-sponsored residency plans. He has since joined another Brisbane Italian restaurant without pineapple pizza on the menu. The real debate is less about a single fruit than about who has the authority to decide when tradition should give way to commercial demand.

True/False

Decide if each statement is True (T) or False (F).

No.	Statement	T / F
1	The chef considered the request objectionable on cultural rather than merely culinary grounds.	
2	The article says this was the first time Tamburella had refused pineapple pizza.	
3	The employer cited no concerns about the chef apart from the topping dispute.	
4	Tamburella alleged that a workplace injury influenced his dismissal.	
5	The commission rejected the legal application without resolving the merits of the dismissal.	
6	The tribunal concluded that cultural authenticity could never justify a refusal.	
7	Losing his job reportedly affected the chef's employer-sponsored residency plans.	
8	His next restaurant added pineapple pizza in response to the publicity.	

Phrase Match

Match the phrases (1-10) to the correct definitions (A-J).

Phrases (1-10)	Definitions (A-J)
1. draw the line at	A. yield to another person's demands
2. bow to	B. reach a point when action is needed
3. take issue with	C. consider something in a decision
4. stand his ground	D. refuse to accept something beyond a limit
5. come to a head	E. be reduced to one essential point or idea
6. hinge on	F. broke a rule and faced consequences
7. fell foul of	G. keep your position despite pressure
8. spell out	H. depend on a particular factor
9. boil down to	I. disagree with or object to something
10. factor in	J. explain something clearly and fully

Synonym Match

Match the words (1-10) to the correct synonyms (A-J).

Words (1-10)	Synonyms (A-J)
1. culinary	A. consequences
2. autonomy	B. gastronomic
3. authenticity	C. behaviour
4. uncompromising	D. insecure
5. confrontation	E. genuineness
6. conduct	F. claim
7. allegation	G. clash
8. warranted	H. inflexible
9. precarious	I. justified
10. repercussions	J. independence

Use the New Language

Choose 5 words or phrases from the worksheet and write your own sentences.

No.	Your sentence
1	
2	
3	
4	
5	

Discussion Questions

Student A	Student B
1. Which national dish would you defend against unusual alterations, and why?	1. When, if ever, does artistic or culinary autonomy justify refusing a lawful instruction?
2. Have you eaten a regional version of a familiar dish that challenged your expectations?	2. Can traditional cuisine remain authentic if it adapts to local tastes and ingredients?
3. When have you had to stand your ground over a professional or personal principle?	3. Should an employee's cultural convictions outweigh a business's commercial interests?
4. What qualities make a chef or restaurant feel genuinely authentic to you?	4. How much should a manager factor in an employee's wider conduct when resolving one dispute?
5. Have you ever disagreed with a manager or client about how a task should be done?	5. Does a customer's right to choose end where a professional's creative standards begin?
6. Where do you draw the line when making changes to accommodate other people?	6. What ethical responsibilities do employers have when a worker's residency depends on their job?
7. Would you visit a restaurant famous for refusing certain customer requests?	7. Why must public debate distinguish procedural legal rulings from judgements about fairness?
8. Have you ever discovered that a supposed food tradition was relatively recent?	8. Does this controversy boil down to cultural respect, workplace authority or poor communication?

Answer Key

True/False	1=T, 2=F, 3=F, 4=T, 5=T, 6=F, 7=T, 8=F
Phrase Match	1=D, 2=A, 3=I, 4=G, 5=B, 6=H, 7=F, 8=J, 9=E, 10=C
Synonym Match	1=B, 2=J, 3=E, 4=H, 5=G, 6=C, 7=F, 8=I, 9=D, 10=A

Example Sentences With the Phrases

No.	Example sentence
1	The chef decided to draw the line at changing the restaurant's signature recipe.
2	An independent restaurant may refuse to bow to every passing food trend.
3	Some diners take issue with menus that claim to be authentic without evidence.
4	The owner expected him to compromise, but he chose to stand his ground.
5	A long-running dispute can come to a head during a busy evening service.
6	The decision may hinge on whether the instruction was reasonable.
7	The company fell foul of employment rules by ignoring a legal requirement.
8	A clear contract should spell out who approves changes to the menu.
9	The argument may boil down to competing expectations about the job.
10	Managers should factor in cultural differences before discussing sensitive issues.