

'Don't Think You're "Too Good" for Anything' —Kristen Kish, winner of *Top Chef* season 10

"When I graduated school, I was a cocky little brat, thinking that I could do anything and have any job," says Kish. "Harsh reality is that you have to take the time to start at the bottom and work your way up—and that's a very, very valuable lesson." In fact, Kish says that even the most menial of tasks can prove to be a valuable experience. "Now, looking back on my career, thinking about those moments where I would sit and peel carrots for two hours, those were the moments where I dreamed up some of the biggest things," she says. "Whether or not I did them is whatever, but those are important moments. When you get to be a chef, you lose those quiet moments. It's really about having the humility to admit when you don't know something but then having the confidence to learn to do it even better."

'Make Your Health a Priority' —Rohini Dey, Ph.D., founder/owner of the restaurant

Vermilion When Dey was launching her first restaurant, Vermilion in Chicago, she was pregnant. Her baby was due two weeks after the restaurant was scheduled to open, but she ended up being born a month before opening day. "Those are inevitable challenges that you don't face if you're a man," says Dey. "Of course there's parenting, but that's quite different." Dey dealt with the stressful situation by putting a crib in the restaurant so she could have her daughter with her as much as possible and also by delegating some tasks that she might have otherwise

taken care of herself. That was 10 years ago, but Dey's continued to face other challenges along the way. One of her biggest pieces of advice for all women? Don't let your wellbeing fall by the wayside when things get busy at work. "Health, I think, is paramount and therapeutic," she says. "My counsel to all women is to give yourself that hour or hour and a half a day to focus on yourself and your health. It's my source of energy and renewal. I'm a fanatic about my morning run or morning swim or something for myself. I get cranky if I don't do it. I push myself, and I'm exhausted while I'm doing it, but when I come out of it, I have that energy and strength to go through the rest of the day—rather than being sapped from beginning to end."

'Say Yes Whenever You Can' —Gail Simmons, special projects director at *Food & Wine* and a judge on *Top Chef* Simmons is quick to admit that, for every challenge she faced in the food industry, she was also presented with several opportunities that helped her get where she is today. So how can you open yourself up to opportunities in your field of choice? "There's that famous saying that 'The harder I work, the luckier I am,' and I really believe it to be true," says Simmons. "There's no such thing as a free ride to the top. I worked really hard and paid my dues in every sense of the word, through physical blood, sweat, and tears, to get where I am right now. I did many unpaid internships in kitchens and magazines, and I said *yes* to everything. There was just not a *no*. If someone offered me an opportunity to work, to

learn, I said *yes*. I took it, and I put that knowledge under my belt and used it on the next step, and I think that's what you have to do—just not be afraid of working hard and listening to everything around you and everyone around you.

'Let Mentors Find You' —Dana Cowin, editor-in-chief of *Food & Wine* You probably know that it's a good idea to form relationships with mentors who can help you learn and grow—but finding them is the tough part. "There's a little bit of a misperception that you can find and pick your mentor," says Cowin. "Mentors in a way pick you because the person who's going to mentor you is the person who is really energized by what you do, inspired by what you do. ... You need to just do your very best, inspiring work and, not in an obnoxious way, but point it out—so that people will know what it is you've done. Then you'll know when you have that natural connection, and then you realize it's something you can nurture." Of course, it can be difficult to get others to notice your work without coming off as too showy. "There's a fine line between sharing, which is good, and promoting," says Cowin. "If you're promoting yourself and saying, 'Look at me, I'm so great,' that's not so good. But if you're saying, 'Look at this work—is it in the direction that you feel like we should be going?' And they say 'Oh my gosh, yes it is, this is really great,' that's good. So I think promoting yourself is where it probably crosses the line, but exposing someone to your work that they could add to and make better—and then if they do engage and say, 'Oh my gosh, that's so

interesting,' then you're just beginning the conversation that is the basis of mentorship."