

TRENDS

Chef's response to brutal review of Michelin-starred restaurant gets meme treatment

There's no end to the creativity of Twitter users given images of horses ... and a plaster mouth filled with foam.

 TAP TO UNMUTE

Michelin-starred restaurant reacts to brutal review

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By Randee Dawn

"What if food?"

What, indeed? That statement is just one of the thoughts sent to TODAY Thursday, after we asked if the chef of Bros' restaurant in Lecce, Italy, had a comment about a review on Everywhereist that had gone viral.

TODAY Food had written up a post about the review by Geraldine DeRuiter, which was truly

epic in its breakdown of the experience (tiny portions, strange combinations, concrete bunker-like room and off-putting servers, to say nothing of the plaster cast of the chef's mouth filled with citrus-flavored foam). And of course, we asked the restaurant if they wanted to respond.

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Chef Floriano Pellegrino did, extensively and with multiple images of horses that have now *also* gone viral! His "declaration" goes on for three pages, and poses the questions, "What is art? What if food? What is a chef? What is a client? What is good taste? What looks beautiful?" and lastly, "What is a man on a horse?"

On Thursday evening, DeRuiter posted the TODAY story (which includes the reply) and wrote on Twitter, "I AM SCREAMING WITH JOY ... IT IS LIKE CHRISTMAS CAME EARLY."

And it seems her followers agreed, ready to dine on every last morsel. Today, the memes based on Pellegrino's reply-tweeted photos from the original dinner have been coming fast and furious, and here are just a few of our favorites.

"What has been truly amazing about all of this is the art it has inspired," wrote DeRuiter, retweeting a collage by @absurdxistenz that summed up the surreal nature of the whole experience:

She also wrote, "Been wanting a tattoo for a while, finally found a good contender," under a separate tweet that featured one of the horse images:

But others have gotten into the act:

"As a writer, you pray to the gods of chaos for something like this to happen," DeRuiter told TODAY on Friday via email. "It's comedic gold. The only thing that's upsetting is that Floriano's response is funnier than any joke I will ever be able to come up with. I could try for a hundred years and I will never be able to beat 'This is a horse.'"

To be fair, TODAY appreciates Bros' and Chef Pellegrino's willingness to not just respond, but

respond in perfect harmony with the meal that prompted the original review. Clearly, this is a restaurant that (as the statement says) embraces the avant-garde and theatrical, and if you were looking for a pizza and some breadsticks, Bros' was not the place to go. In fact, we suspect that Pellegrino and his co-workers are quietly cheering in Italy for not just the publicity all of this has generated, but because – as DeRuiter notes – it has created *more* art.

"(I)f you think about it, this story really does have something for everyone," adds DeRuiter. "Drama, suspense, betrayal. Plaster casts of people's mouths. A green crepe that I think was made of, I don't know, lichen and a forgotten memory of your first love? Drawings of horses. Rambling manifestos about the nature of art."

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