Italian chef fired after refusing to put pineapple on pizza

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Simon Atkinson
Queensland

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The chef had told the Queensland restaurant that it was "offensive" to his culture to put pineapple on pizza

An Italian chef sacked from a Brisbane restaurant had refused to put pineapple on a pizza because it was an "insult to his culture".

Davide Tamburella was fired from the now-closed La Costa restaurant in May, a fortnight after a meeting with management who had a string of complaints about the chef's behaviour.

Among them were Tamburella's refusal to provide ham and pineapple pizza for guests at a function. At the time, the chef had stated that any direction from management "need not be followed when it is offensive to his culture".

The details came to light after the chef went to Australia's Fair Work Commission claiming he had been unfairly dismissed.

In its ruling released on Tuesday, the commission noted that Tamburella's refusal to put pineapple on the pizzas was because "he considers, as an Italian, that putting pineapple on a pizza is an insult to his culture".

It also noted that it was the third time Tamburella had refused to use the fruit on pizzas in the past four years.

He had previously requested his boss to "check how important it is for Italians not to put pineapple on a pizza".

The state of Queensland, where the restaurant is located, is considered Australia's pineapple heartland and produces all of the country's commercially-grown pineapples.

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The state of Queensland is considered Australia's pineapple heartland

Other concerns were raised about Tamburella using foul language, his communication style and "escalation of frustration in the workplace".

The ruling also detailed an incident at work in April this year where Tamburella fractured bones in his right hand when he struck a metal hand rail.

Tamburella had been hoping the restaurant would sponsor a visa for him that allows skilled workers to be permanent residents.

However after his sacking, the restaurant ended that process, the tribunal heard.

He lost his unfair dismissal claim on the grounds that the application had been filed too late, according to the ruling.

The restaurant's managing director, Elliot Ingram, told the Daily Mail there was "more to this story than a pizza topping".

The BBC has approached Tamburella for comment.

On the chef's LinkedIn profile, he describes himself as someone who, throughout his career, has focused on "delivering exceptional food" and "improving business performance".

Three months ago he posted a "letter for chefs" with the theme "respecting the ingredients".

The LinkedIn profile states he now works at another Brisbane restaurant. A BBC check has found that pineapple is not on its menu.

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