
Restaurant Employees: Advice from a Podiatrist on Choosing the Best Restaurant Shoes



Cheryl Fenton | July 30, 2018



Restaurant life is not a walk in the park. From zipping to and from the kitchen to standing back-of-house all day, long shifts can give your feet all the feels.

Hosts and hostesses, servers, bartenders, cooks, and chefs should make the best restaurant shoe choice. If not, slips, fatigue, back pain and knee problems could be the issue du jour.

We tapped Dr. Miguel Cunha, New York-based podiatrist and founder of Gotham Footcare, for tips on choosing the best shoes for restaurant work. He walks us through the most important considerations: comfort, support, and traction.

“A food server is constantly on their feet and can easily take over 10,000 steps a day at work,” says Cunha, adding back-of-house workers typically stand on their feet most of their shift. “It’s important to select shoes that are appropriately sized, comfortable, supportive, shock absorbent, and slip resistant.”





Identify Comfortable Non-Slip Restaurant Shoes

Cunha recommends buying shoes at day's end when your feet are most swollen.

"If they feel comfortable at the end of the day most likely they will feel comfortable throughout the day," he explains. Make sure the toe box is wide enough to accommodate your toes with enough room to slightly wiggle.

Also look for a comfortable footbed to support the arch with memory foam or an EVA (ethyl vinyl acetate) anti-compression insole. "An outsole made of rubber will help alleviate the impact of each step far greater than a shoe with a hard sole," he adds. Translation: Bye, Crocs.

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Find The Best Restaurant Shoes with Arch Support

One of the most common server injuries is sore feet. According to Cunha, this is usually caused by wearing unsupportive shoes.

"Our feet naturally pronate [walk with most weight on the inside edge of the feet] during the gait cycle. When we wear unsupportive shoes, we pronate for a longer period of time, which then alters the biomechanics and distribution of pressure and weight across the foot," he explains. "This imbalance increases the progression of underlying foot deformities, such as bunions and hammertoes leading to soreness of the feet and painful conditions, such as arch/heel pain, shin splints/posterior tibial tendonitis, and Achilles tendonitis." This can progress to knee and back aches.

Employees who stand for long periods of time need good arch support, which will equally distribute body weight across the plantar (bottom) of the feet. Cunha's simple way to check if shoes are supportive is to try and bend them in half. If they bend, back on the shelf they go.

Make Sure to Purchase Non-Slip (or Skid) Shoes

“Servers can fall over when they’re carrying plates and trays because they can’t see where they are walking, or may slip, trip, and fall over floors that have been soiled with water, stews, soups, and other liquids,” he says. A slip can easily result in a severe ankle and/or leg sprain, fractures, and other serious injuries. Look for slip-resistant work shoes with high traction rubber outsoles.

It’s also important to consider whether a shoe is water resistant or has hard uppers. Spills and dropped objects are common, and a protective shoe can prevent or minimize injury, and shoes with black leather or polyurethane uppers are not only waterproof, but can also be cleaned easily and quickly.

The 3 Best Non-Slip Restaurant Shoes

Here are a few of Cunha’s picks to put your best (and safest) foot forward.



Dansko XP Clogs

XP Clogs by Dansko (available in men’s and women’s) are slip resistant, have great arch support, and are cushioned for added comfort and protection for the upper foot and toes.



New Balance 510 v3

New Balance 510v3 boasts even support, non-skid treads, breathability and is lightweight. However, it won't protect against spills.



Dickies Apex

Dickies Apex slip-resistant shoes have MICHELIN®WCX channeled shoe tread that provides traction with a self-cleaning design that evacuates liquid and debris.

Check out Upserve's staff training guide for more restaurant management tips!



Written by Cheryl Fenton | July 30, 2018

Cheryl Fenton knows her five food groups – fruits and veggies, meats and poultry, cheese, bacon, and fries. She loves sarcasm over very dirty martinis and steak dinners (medium rare, if you please), and she's never met a poutine she doesn't like. Because life is all about balance, she makes time for a healthy lifestyle with hikes accompanied by her two rescue dogs and bike rides along the Mystic (dogs not included).

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