



Segment 3 (Units 5–8)

Restaurant critics

Genre: Food and cooking show

Viewing Time: 3:37

Background Information

Food and cooking programs are increasingly popular with television viewers in the United States, Canada, and the United Kingdom. Many viewers want to find out how to prepare gourmet meals in their own homes, and they are also interested how restaurants are run and in other more sophisticated aspects of the food industry, such as how restaurant critics come to their conclusions about a particular restaurant or style of cuisine.

Vocabulary for Comprehension

Preview the vocabulary with your students.

anonymous: *not known by name*

crucial: *extremely important*

froth: *a mass of small bubbles that form on top of a liquid*

hokey: *too simple, old-fashioned, or silly*

indicative: *providing a clear sign that a particular situation exists or is likely to be true*

"make or break": *make something succeed or make it fail*

praise: *say that you admire or approve of something*

submit: *to give something to someone in authority for them to consider or approve*

undercover: *working secretly in order to find out information*

Answer Key

Previewing (Answers may vary—as long as they are appropriate guesses, accept them for now.)

1. They are a restaurant critic and her friends/a chef.
2. They are in a restaurant/the critic's home.
3. They are in the restaurant to taste the food/cook the food.
4. It's about restaurant critics.

In-Depth Viewing

- | | |
|----------------------|----------------------|
| 1. restaurant critic | 4. several times |
| 2. anonymous | 5. the latest trends |
| 3. important | |



Video Script

Narrator: Have you ever wondered what it takes to write a really great restaurant review? Well, even though Fran Schumer is not a police detective, she does go “undercover.” As a restaurant critic for a major news magazine, she must keep her identity a secret.

Schumer: It's very important for a restaurant reviewer to be anonymous. That's crucial. If you walk into a restaurant and the chef knows that you're writing a review, he's not going to give you the same food that he's giving his other customers. And so, when you write a review praising a restaurant, other people will go there and they'll have a horrible meal possibly. It won't be . . . your meal won't be indicative of what they serve everyone. Also, what a restaurant reviewer writes about a restaurant is so crucial in terms of the restaurant's future business that many restaurants will actually offer to pay people to come and review them favorably, which is why you never want them to know who you are, so they just don't change the way they cook.

Narrator: Schumer has eaten at hundreds of restaurants without anyone recognizing her.

Fran: For example, I will never use my name publicly when I'm doing a review, because literally what I write in the magazine can make or break their business. So this is a matter of economic life and death for many restauranteurs, which is why I can't give you my name or tell you what magazine I work for, so that people will be able to basically rely on my reviews. I lose my credibility if I can be identified, because that means that every time I walk into a restaurant, they know who I am, and they cook a special meal for me. So all restaurant reviewers remain anonymous.

Narrator: At this café in suburban New Jersey, Schumer takes careful notes about the meal as she and two friends discuss the food.

Friend: Where do they get those little string beans? I'm always suspicious that it's a can.

Schumer: Or frozen.

Friend: But I think you can taste the difference between frozen and fresh.

Schumer: What do you think?

Friend: I can't tell.

Narrator: So, what makes a spectacular soup? A fabulous sandwich? A delicious cappuccino?

Schumer: People really want to know if a place makes a good cappuccino. Or, more important, if a place doesn't make a good cappuccino, people really feel bad about that. So, this one, I like the fact . . . well, the glass is a little hokey, and it could use more froth. And it's not too strong, but it's OK. It's not a bad one. It's not great. It's OK.

Narrator: Schumer knows that even the best chef can have a bad day—and that her reviews can make or break a restaurant. So, she insists on visiting the same restaurant several times before submitting an article to her editors.

Schumer: I would never write a review based on these few dishes. I would come back. Because a menu has maybe 30 dishes on it, and we've had maybe six. And you can't really judge a restaurant . . . I mean if it's a great restaurant, everything should be great, of course . . . but most restaurants, that's not the case, so I would come back and order a whole new round of dishes. And on that second meal I would pretty much base my review.

Narrator: Wouldn't you love to get paid to eat in restaurants? Of course, Schumer's job isn't just eating and taking notes—she needs to keep up-to-date on the latest trends in international and regional cuisine!

Preparing all those fabulous gourmet meals is no easy task, either. When we come back, we'll visit with a local chef to learn more about what goes on behind-the-scenes at one of the trendiest restaurants in town.