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# TotalFoodService

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# Herb Karlitz

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# Celebrity Chef Job Hazards

**W**e always go into a profession looking to succeed and get to the top. The restaurant industry is no different. It can be grueling. It can be strenuous. It is not for the faint of heart. We now know somewhat of what is involved, especially due to the serious influx of cooking shows that show the audience how much work is required in the back of the house. We know what the end-product is: delicious savory and sweet delights that people will pay lots of money for and will wait forever in a line for. But do we really know what being a chef means, especially when you become a celebrity chef?

My longtime friend and client, Chef Wylie Dufresne knows exactly what it takes to get to the top. The long hours, the hard work, the continuous grind, and now... the 'other job's' demands...the sedentary hours in front of the camera.

Chef Dufresne was asked to judge another cooking competition on TV this past season. What he did not know was where he was going to sit amongst the other judges. What he did find out was that the job required sitting at a long table in line with two other chefs. Chef Dufresne ended up being the farthest from the show's host which meant he had to keep his head turned to one side to engage in any conversation as well as to stay in the scene when the camera pulled back to watch the whole group interact.

This occupational hazard created a bit of a problem, for someone who already had some neck discomfort



Wylie Dufresne, chef/owner of wd-50 and Du's Donuts & Coffee (opening soon).  
Photo by Eric Medsker Photography.

from general stiffness. By the time I was able to see Wylie, he had tried to self-diagnose and self-treat his condition. He had done a lot of rolling out on an exercise ball and digging into his own tissues. He did this to



try to relieve the muscle tension and the pain since he thought it was just his muscles being tight. What he did not know was that his muscles had created a condition where his neck pain was caused by a specific bone being pulled out of place, his first rib.

The first rib sits at the base of the neck, just behind and below the collarbone. It really is hidden deep down at the base of the neck, pretty much at the top of the ribcage. You would only really notice it when it is elevated, which means symptoms of neck pain, shoulder pain, headaches, stiffness, and numbness and tingling in the arm. When it elevates, it can get stuck in this position, which then makes it hypomobile or immobile.

There are many muscles that connect to the neck (cervical spine) and



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the first rib. The scalene muscles sit on the front and side of the neck and the first rib. The intercostals are muscles that connect between the ribs. The scalenes can pull the rib up; the intercostals can pull the rib down. There needs to be a harmonious balance for the first rib to sit in the appropriate position. How you use your body and how you position your body can affect how this bone sits, which we learned from Wylie's case.

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Wylie sat for over 7 hours with his head turned to the side. Prolonged posturing like a forward head, side bent or rotated head can shorten the surrounding muscles and cause the muscles to pull up on the bone. Stretching the surrounding muscles will only provide temporary relief as the bone underlying is stuck and not sitting in the right position. Traumatizing them with too aggressive self-massage will only aggravate the condition. What fixes this issue is mobilizing the bone back into the place where it is supposed to sit. That will then normalize the overlying muscles to relax and lengthen to their original position. This can be done using a strap over the side of the elevated rib and bending the head toward the same side to relax the muscles. Pulling down on the strap in this position helps to mobilize or move the bone back to its

original position. If this does not work, then see a physical therapist to perform manual joint mobilizations. They will use their hands to specifically target this bone.

This last visit from my friend Wylie ended being a great story of another source of neck pain, unfortunately for him. As our careers take us out of our normal environment which in this case would be the kitchen, we can encounter different challenges in different industries. What happened in this case was learning of the physical demands of prolonged posturing of the head and neck and the subsequent cause of his pain after his physical therapy evaluation. We look forward to watching Wylie judge the cooking competition with a smile on his face and hopefully not picking up on any discomfort caused during the filming of the TV show.