



Written by [Raven Clabough](#) on December 7, 2021

Backlash Compels San Francisco Restaurant to Apologize to Police Officers Denied Service

A restaurant in San Francisco has publicly apologized for refusing to serve three uniformed police officers after massive social media backlash and impactful negative online reviews.

The trendy, all-day-breakfast restaurant, Hilda and Jesse, asked a group of on-duty police officers to leave the location on December 3, claiming the staff was uncomfortable with the presence of the officers' guns, which they said violated their "safe space" standards in an Instagram post initially defending their move.



Hilda and Jesse Restaurant (AP Images)

"At Hilda and Jesse, the restaurant is a safe space. The presence of the officers' weapons in the restaurant made us feel uncomfortable. We respect the San Francisco Police Department and are grateful for the work they do. We welcome them into the restaurant when they are off-duty, out of uniform and without their weapons," the restaurant posted one day after the incident.

California Globe reported that San Francisco Police Chief Bill Scott took to Twitter in response to the incident and said he found it "discouraging and personally disappointing" to see the police treated that way.

"Community engagement is a core principle of SFPD's 21st century police reforms, and we are intentional about asking our officers to support local businesses and get to know those they're sworn to safeguard," Scott said.

Initially, the restaurant continued to defend its stance.

"Our restaurant is a safe space - particularly for queer and bipoc [referring to black, indigenous, and people of color] individuals," another December 4 Instagram post read. "Furthermore, the fact that they were in uniform with multiple weapons on them made our staff uncomfortable, and potentially other guests, so they were asked to leave. We would happily welcome them off duty, out of uniform and without weapons. We're sorry that the decision upset you."

Despite this statement referencing specifically the officers' uniforms and the fact that their presence is somehow offensive specifically to "queer and bipoc individuals," the restaurant went on to claim that their position was not "anti-police" or "political."

"This is not a political statement," the restaurant said in another statement on December 4. "We did what we thought was best for our staff. It's not about the fact that we are anti-police. It is about the fact that we do not allow weapons in our restaurant. We were uncomfortable, and we asked them to leave. It has nothing to do that they were officers. It has everything to do that they were carrying guns."

By Sunday, December 5, however, the owners had dramatically changed their tune. Co-owners Rachel Sillcocks and Kristina Liedags Compton backed off their controversial position, prompted by intense



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social media backlash and negative Google and Yelp reviews that dropped the restaurant's star ratings to 1 and 1.4 respectively, according to *USA Today*.

Based on the comments, it became quickly clear the poor ratings directly resulted from the restaurant's actions.

One comment read, "I would not support or recommend a San Francisco business that discriminates against the SFPD. Shame on you!!!" Another read, "If I could give them a zero star rating I would. I will never eat here, people who discriminate against occupation."

New York Post reported that Yelp eventually disabled comments and reviews for Hilda and Jesse, citing its policy of ensuring that reviews are related to actual consumer experiences.

"This business recently received increased public attention, which often means people come to this page to post their views on the news," Yelp says. "While we don't take a stand one way or the other when it comes to this incident, we've temporarily disabled the posting of content to this page as we work to investigate the content you see here reflects actual consumer experiences rather than the recent events."

Sillcocks and Compton ultimately apologized on Instagram on Sunday afternoon, the *Los Angeles Times* reported.

"We made a mistake and apologize for the unfortunate incident Friday when we asked members of the San Francisco Police Department to leave our restaurant," the owners wrote. "We are grateful to all members of the force who worked hard to keep us safe, especially during these challenging times. We hope this will be a teachable moment for us as we repair and continue to build bridges with the SFPD. These are stressful times and we handled this badly."

Sadly, however, this is not the first time an establishment refused service to uninformed police officers because of someone's feelings.

In 2019, for example, Starbucks asked six police officers to leave an Arizona location, citing a customer's discomfort. The restaurant later apologized for its actions.

Fortunately, the incident revealed that Hilda and Jesse's attitude towards police officers is not necessarily representative of all San Francisco businesses.

"Most people tended to be behind the SFPD on this," said Elaine Gregory, a San Francisco restaurant owner who represents several restaurants on her block to local business and governmental meetings, in an interview with *California Globe*. "There were dozens of owners and managers saying their piece during a Discord meeting last night, and nearly all of them were for the SFPD."

"We get why some people may not like them, because of mistrust still coming from the George Floyd protests last year, for example," Gregory continued. "But you don't need to be flying a thin blue line flag to know that it's a good thing they are coming around the neighborhood. Not only do you get their business, but you have a police presence that helps keep all of these [robberies happening nowadays](#) at bay. It seems so odd to kick them out of a restaurant at a time when there is an active crime wave in the city."

"The general consensus is that they made a decision that went against logic and only based it on a few employees not liking officers sworn to protect them having guns."



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