

## Lawsuit Claims Mike Isabella Used NDAs to Silence Sexual Harassment Allegations

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Photo courtesy of The Business Journals. [/caption]

*Summary: A company owned by Top Chef's Mike Isabella allegedly used nondisclosure agreements to prevent employees from talking about sexual harassment.*

An expanded lawsuit claims that the company owned by celeb restaurateur Mike Isabella used nondisclosure agreements to silence whistleblowers from disclosing the problem of sexual harassment. According to the [Washington Post](#), the lawsuit was filed on Tuesday by former employee, Chloe Caras.

Caras's lawsuit was originally filed in March, and in that lawsuit, she said that she was wrongfully terminated by Isabella after he had told her to have sex with a sous chef at the company.

In Caras's Tuesday filing, she said that Isabella's company used nondisclosure agreements (NDAs) to stop employees from speaking out about sexual harassment. She asked that the court declare these contracts unenforceable, which would allow staff and former staff to speak out about the alleged toxic work environment at the Top Chef star's company and restaurants.

According to the Washington Post, Isabella's team is fighting to save the esteemed chef's reputation while also claiming that Caras partook in the same behavior she is complaining about. In her March 19 lawsuit, she said that while working at Isabella's company, she was called names like "bitch" and "whore" and that she experienced unwanted touching.

Caras said that she was fired on December 5 after a fight at one of Isabella's restaurants, and she said that during this argument Isabella told her she should sleep with a sous chef and that she was a "bitch." The Washington Post interviewed 25 people after the lawsuit was filed, and many of them said that they were afraid to go public with what they saw because they had all signed NDAs.

According to the recent complaint, employees of Mike Isabella Concepts sign NDAs that bar them from disclosing what they experience or learn of at the company or they risk a fee of \$500,000.

Debra Katz, an employment lawyer representing Caras, said that the NDAs are lifetime muzzles.

"This is a lifetime muzzle, with a hammer of \$500,000 per occurrence, hanging over the head of all of his employees, including many of who are low wage earners," said Katz. "These NDAs have been one of the tools that companies use to allow serial harassers to stay in place, without any kind of ability for people to speak out."

Isabella said that Caras's lawsuit is false and that he does not allow a hostile work environment to exist.

"These allegations are false, petty, and lack context. I want to be clear: We do not condone the hostile work environment implied in these allegations," said Isabella. "My team has worked incredibly hard building this successful restaurant group, and I will continue to focus on my employees, food and hospitality at this time."

- [Top Chef Star Accused of Sexual Harassment](#)
- [Mario Batali Forks Over Millions in Tip-Scam Lawsuit](#)
- [60 Women Claim Sexual Harassment at IHOP and Applebees](#)

**What do you think of the lawsuit against Mike Isabella? Let us know in the comments below.**