

Bistro owners mocked workers, stiffed them on pay: suit

By Lisa Fickenscher

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A French bistro on Restaurant Row should have stuck to its pommes frites and steak au poivre instead of serving its workers heaping helpings of insults and stiffing them on pay, a lawsuit filed by the employees claims.

The owners of Le Rivage, a stalwart on W. 46th St., failed to pay servers minimum wage and swiped some of their tips, it is alleged.

Marcel and Paul Denamiel, the father and son team that own the eatery, created a “hostile work environment” in which the five servers were called “morons” “stupid” and “retards” or publicly humiliated for wearing hearing aids, the suit claims.

“I’ve worked in a lot of restaurants, and it’s a crazy environment,” Paul said. “Customers are very demanding, and that’s just the work environment.”

The eatery, founded by Paul’s uncle, has been in the Denamiel family since 1984.

But old-time eateries that have authoritarian owners are dying breed in the city, said restaurant consultant Arlene Spiegel.

“The ... rude boss may not change his personality, but he has to play by the rules of the game,” Spiegel said “There’s no hiding now with empowered workers, who should have their rights respected.” ■