

FOOD

'Ridiculous': Noosh chefs sued, reportedly locked out of their San Francisco restaurant

By [Amanda Bartlett](#) Updated Nov 24, 2019 3:34 p.m.

<https://www.sfgate.com/food/article/Noosh-executive-chefs-sued-locked-restaurant-14859275.php>



A paper sign taped to the front door of tech-savvy Mediterranean hotspot Noosh intended to provide clarity on the restaurant's temporary closure to

the public on Thursday afternoon, claiming the eatery would be shuttered for a couple of days while test kitchen staff "worked on a few final touches to bring guests the best hospitality experience."

Instead, the notice and locked doors left employees arriving to work equally dumbfounded – it was reportedly the first they had heard of such news.

The upheaval at the trendy restaurant comes as Noosh's former [Rising Star chefs](#), wife-and-husband duo Laura and Sayat Ozyilmaz, were unexpectedly terminated from their positions following a lawsuit filed by co-founder and CEO John Litz, ABC7 [reports](#). The 25-page [lawsuit](#) alleges breach of contract and fraud.

[According to Eater SE](#), the Ozyilmazes are accused of misappropriating funds and failing to abide by the terms of an agreed-upon stockholders' agreement. The lawsuit claims the couple created "a work environment in which it became impossible for the Plaintiff to be present on the restaurant premises," and that they have "placed the ongoing financial viability of the Company at significant risk."

"None of it is true – all of the allegations," Laura Ozyilmaz told ABC7. "I haven't even had time to read all of them because they are ridiculous."

Litz has moved to replace the couple with Emily Luchetti as Noosh's new Culinary Advisor, a hire costing Litz upwards of \$800,000 according to the lawsuit. Luchetti was formerly the Executive Pastry Chef for Marlowe, Park Tavern and The Cavalier.

"You can be a very good chef, but that doesn't make you a good person," spokesperson Sam Singer told ABC7 on behalf of Litz, adding, "These two people turned out to be not good, reliable, honest employees."

Noosh was scheduled to re-open on Saturday, Singer told SFGATE, but efforts were delayed.

"After their termination, the couple encouraged enough employees not to return to work, making it impossible for the restaurant to reopen as planned," he said.

An update from a GoFundMe [page](#) set up in support of Laura and Sayat said the couple was turned away when they tried to enter the restaurant, and two men who were reportedly not employed by the restaurant were blocking the entrance.

A video shared via Noosh's Instagram account showed footage of the exchange, in which Laura and Sayat appear to be repeatedly denied entry by the men.

"You can't come in today," one of them can be heard saying to the couple in the video. After Sayat asks one of the men for his business card and says he was illegally terminated, the other responds, "I'm not involved in the lawsuit. This is just what we were told."

In a separate Instagram post shared the day before, the couple alleged that while Litz had continued to bar them from entering their own operation, he had not set foot in the restaurant himself since May, though he had "threatened to destroy their careers in the past."

The couple [told](#) Eater SF they feared for their safety. In April, Eater reports they allegedly filed a police report after Litz "became angry, shoved a table and yelled at her loudly in front of multiple employees" during a business meeting. Litz denied the incident occurred.

Singer told SFGATE employees were paid on Saturday. It remains unclear when Noosh will open its doors again.

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