

'Putin Burger' Waitresses Fired in New York City

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Screenshot Ruptly

Two employees have been fired from a New York City restaurant after they created and filmed a "Putin burger" in celebration of the Russian president's birthday.

The video agency Ruptly, owned by the Kremlin-backed news outlet RT, on Oct. 7 ran a story about Lucy's Cantina Royale in Manhattan, featuring a 1,952-gram burger in honor of Vladimir Putin's birth year.

Perhaps the gram measurement in a country where ounces are used was the first tip-off that the celebration was staged.

When Russian journalist Alexei Kovalev contacted the restaurant, representative Sean Ryan said his establishment "had never in any form celebrated the birthday of Vladimir Putin." Ryan said that the waitress had "lied about a school film project," and was suspended pending investigation.

Russian independent channel Dozhd TV [confirmed](#) on Wednesday that the employees broadcast by RT offering the burger — Darya Pauto, a bartender, and Tamara Ilizarova, a waitress — had been dismissed.

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Pauto, who said she had worked at the cantina for two and a half years, learned of her suspension from the news. “Tamara, the waitress, was just filmed in the feature. I was the one to make the campaign,” Pauto said.

Confronted with Kovalev's findings, RT [said](#) they had “no reason to doubt the authenticity of the story” and quoted an interview by the state-run news agency TASS with “Lucy bar manager Ted Bryan” as proof.

On Oct. 10, TASS [published](#) an audio clip of an interview with a man who gave his name as “Ted Bryan” and claimed to be a manager at Lucy’s Cantina. The man described in detail the recipe for the “Putin Burger,” which he called “a crazy idea.”

Ryan, the spokesperson, said there had never been any manager by that name, calling the incident “a hoax involving Vladimir Putin's birthday.”

Ruptly subsequently [removed](#) the burger story from its website, saying it “did not meet editorial standards” but [copies](#) remain on other channels.

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