

## Cover Letter

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I'll begin by hanging a lantern on the fact that I do not have five years of "professional" editing experience. I do have well over five years experience in editing, motion graphics, and graphic design; not all of it for money or deep in the entrepreneurial jungle. I know what I'm doing, and I am accustomed to meeting deadlines and functioning as a part of a pipeline of people who take their work seriously, which is why I'm here, now.

My name is Gus, and the majority of my professional experience is in foodservice. I spent six years at Cafe Zola, a restaurant in Ann Arbor, MI which turns 20 this year. I did everything from washing dishes to expediting to waiting tables. I count my experience there as the most educational and formative I've had. I left after graduating, in order to move to Chicago, where I took some time to pursue a few creative projects. What ended up being most creatively invigorating, though, was the job I got once my savings had run low, at Alinea.

Several days in, a fellow food runner told me about a dishwasher who'd just ended their five-year tenure at the restaurant and had been sent off with a champagne toast and a cookbook. From my perspective as a relative outsider, lowest on the totem pole, this was the paragon of acceptance and gratitude. That was my metric, so I set that goal for myself: I want my contribution here to be cookbook-worthy. I took my job there very seriously and always treated it with respect, but after several months, I realized that this was not the path I wanted to follow. I took so much inspiration from Alinea, which informed my decision to look for a job where a more personal set of passions and skills would be at work. After about half a year at Alinea, I was proud to leave with a copy of the cookbook, dotted with notes from my colleagues. One loving inscription reads: "You worked here for three weeks. Chef Doug."

Parallel to the restaurant work was a lot of time spent experimenting with and learning the Adobe creative suite. In school, I took every chance I got to create show posters, t-shirts, and social media graphics. I made a lot of dumb videos with my friends, and I got better by trial and error. This past year, I had the opportunity to do some work for a local (local to Ann Arbor, that is) theatre group called the Penny Seats. The brief was, essentially, that I incorporate their "theme song" into a two-minute video which would serve as a fundraising appeal and an announcement for their summer shows. This was an important milestone for me. I have always been drawn to visual modes of expression, and have logged a lot of hours working to understand it better and emulate the artists I admire. At this point, the skills I had amassed were truly put to the test - under strict deadlines, close scrutiny, and the stakes of a successful fundraising season.

The fundraising was a success, and they were able to secure a grant of \$10,000 from the Michigan Council for Arts and Cultural Affairs. This was incredibly validating and, indeed, when I felt comfortable calling myself more than an amateur. I've done more work for them as recently as this summer, and with other theatre groups in the area. My larger goals take me into filmmaking, so this is the kind of work I'm very eager to be good at.

My hope is to contribute to the growing video library on the ChefSteps site and on their Youtube channel with my own visual sense and with an eye for consistency across the whole series. I have a great sense of the tonal goals these videos have, which I feel confident emulating, continuing, and improving with time. I also have a great respect for the mission of the company and the service it provides. I became much more aware at Alinea: food is really exciting in the 21st century. Ferran Adria was suspending olive juice in gelatinized bulbs inspired by a method for stuffing martini olives with peppers, Grant Achatz (feat. Mike Bagale) makes totally edible balloons out of taffy, Heston Blumenthal turns a scene from "Alice in Wonderland" into something you can eat.

For me, as a writer and art lover, this is exciting. It's exciting to watch as the latter, but as the former, I want to participate. I think a lot of people do (Allen Hemberger, Carol Blymire, to name a couple). We all understand we're not going to walk out of this a Thomas Keller, that takes all of a person's time and focus. And then some. But there is a lower stratus - where most of the leaders of the foodservice industry are operating - and just below that, a space for people who just want to learn and play.

The model for education has been pretty uniformly underwhelming, especially in visual media. From Julia Child to Mario Batali, you're delivered a personality first, with a compliment of heady opinions about when to add oil to the pan and how hands-on to be with your Boeuf Bourguignon. Thirty minutes of programming leaves you with one or two pieces of actionable advice (ex. from Child: pat your beef dry before browning it) and no fundamental insights into the way this food actually works.

I see ChefSteps democratizing that with brevity and an abundance of information. The food porn is captivating, sure, but there is a consistency, rigor, and accountability unique to the videos and to the way ChefSteps is carrying out their mission to empower and educate the home cook. From what I understand, this is the team should be playing for. And given the opportunity, I intend to prove myself a valuable member.