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Permanent contract offers in Italian hospitality job listings more than doubled to 12.4%

A Restworld sample of 6,872 postings suggests employers are trying to retain workers despite thin margins and 190-day median job spells

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Permanent contract offers more than doubled in a sample of Italian restaurant and hospitality job listings in July-September 2026, a shift that points to stronger efforts to retain staff even as pay, productivity and margins remain under pressure across the sector.

The finding comes from a Restworld Observatory report cited by Ristoranti Web. The report examined 6,872 job listings posted on the Restworld platform by 2,007 companies from April 2024 through September 2026 and compared them with economic data from Italy’s Istat and from Eurostat. In the third quarter of 2026, 12.4% of the listings offered permanent contracts, up from 5.5% in the same period of 2025.

The report says that increase is significant within the platform’s own data, but it does not prove that the whole Italian food service industry has gone through the same structural change. The sample includes businesses that chose to advertise on Restworld, disclosed wages in their postings and met contractual minimum pay requirements in the offer, so it is not a statistical picture of the entire labor market.

For restaurants and related food service businesses, the report ties the labor market picture to tight operating conditions. Across Italian food service, including bars, restaurants, canteens and catering, employee labor costs absorb an average 26.3% of revenue, while gross operating margin stands at 11.2%, according to Restworld’s analysis of official economic data.

The report says the averages hide wide differences by company size and business type. In businesses with fewer than 10 workers, about 4 in 10 workers are owners or family members. Restworld calculated that gross operating margin amounts to about €17,000 a year per person in that group, before depreciation, interest, taxes and social contributions. It said that figure is not the actual income received by owners, but an indicator of the economic resources available.

Productivity also differs by company size. Restworld said value added per worker rises from €17,700 in small businesses to €31,400 in medium-sized ones. Medium-sized companies also devote a larger share of revenue to staff, 31.5% compared with 21.3% in smaller businesses, and spend a smaller share on raw materials. The report says those differences cannot be explained by organization alone because business mix and

cost structure also vary across the companies being compared.

In its comparison with other European countries, the report found that annual productivity in Italian food service remains below France and Germany. Based on Eurostat data processed by Restworld, an Italian food service worker generates an average €21,900 in value added a year, compared with €35,000 in France, €26,300 in Germany and €21,400 in Spain.

Restworld said part of the gap with France is linked to hours worked rather than productivity alone. It found 1,181 hours worked per employee per year in Italy, compared with 1,561 in France. On an hourly basis, the gap narrows to about 17%, with value added of €18.5 an hour in Italy and €22.4 in France. The report says that means annual productivity per worker reflects not just efficiency but also part-time work, seasonality and breaks in employment.

The wage data in the report also come with limits. Among the listings posted on Restworld, the median proposed take-home monthly pay was €1,700, including 13th- and 14th-month payments spread over 12 months. For full-time jobs, the median rose to €1,750. Pay varied sharply by role. Listings offered about €2,400 net a month for a kitchen manager, €2,000 for a station chef, €1,580 for a waiter and €1,490 for a bar counter worker.

Among full-time listings, 29% offered more than €30,000 in annual gross pay and 9% offered more than €40,000, according to the report. Restworld said those figures should not be read as actual average wages across the whole sector because the sample covers only ads posted on its platform by employers that disclose pay.

The report also points to persistent job instability. It reviewed more than 301,000 completed work experiences reported by Restworld users and found a median job length of 190 days, a little over six months. That suggests a labor market still shaped by short tenures even as permanent offers increased within the platform sample.

Hotels performed differently from the broader restaurant sector in the report’s data. In a separate analysis of 791 listings from hotels, hotel restaurants and luxury properties, the median proposed take-home monthly pay was €1,800, compared with €1,692 in

other businesses covered by the study. Among full-time hotel listings, 40% offered more than €30,000 in annual gross pay, versus 26% in the rest of the sample.

The pay difference also appeared within specific roles. For a station chef, hotel-related listings offered an average €2,158 net a month, €181 more than similar positions in other venues, according to Restworld. On productivity, the hotel segment also looked closer to France than the restaurant segment did. Restworld's analysis put annual value added per hotel worker in Italy at €52,100, compared with €54,100 in France, a gap of about 4%.

Housing emerged as another major factor in recruitment. Restworld said the rent for a single room absorbs about 40% of the wage offered in Milan, 38% in Rome and 30% in Turin. In that context, job postings that include housing drew far more interest from applicants.

Controlling for role, quarter and geographic area, listings that offered accommodation received 53% more applications than comparable listings without housing, the report said. By comparison, offering pay above the median for that role was associated with an 11% increase in applications. The report describes those findings as statistical associations, not proof that one factor alone caused the higher response.

Housing is especially common in hotel hiring. Restworld said 69% of hotel listings in its sample included accommodation, compared with 20% of listings from other businesses. Seasonal work was also much more common in hotels, representing 62% of the hotel listings against 16% in the rest of the sample.

Separately from its market data, Restworld used the report to argue for what it called a productivity pact between employers and workers. The proposal centers on measuring value created per hour worked and tracking indicators such as revenue, labor cost and covers per shift, with the stated aim of improving operations and channeling part of any gains into wages, potentially with favorable tax treatment. Luca Lotterio, Restworld's chief executive and co-founder, said businesses in Italy are already showing that higher pay and stronger earnings can coexist.