

Feedback from judges

The 500-word Fiction Challenge 2025 / 1st Round Feedback

Dear Raji Writes,

The feedback from the judges on your 1st Round submission for the 500-word Fiction Challenge 2025 is below. We hope you find the feedback helpful, and you are proud of the story you created. **Congratulations on receiving an honorable mention in your group!** Honorable mentions do not advance to the next round, but it means you were very close. Thanks for participating, and we hope to see you in a future challenge!

"Chef" by Raji Writes - [WHAT THE JUDGES LIKED ABOUT YOUR STORY](#) –

{1894} There is a clear goal for the story - to get the job - and it was interesting to see this goal not be met, but for the narrator to still seem like they got what they wanted - the slow shift in desire is well done. It was a smart move to have the job go to someone else, as this both frees the two characters from worry about their date and creates a realistic feeling - most people have to interview (or audition) several times before finding the right job. The balance of one loss and one win works nicely.

{2419} This fun meet-cute builds perfectly, bringing the reader along as the protagonist shifts their desire from a job to a date. The job ad provides an organic reason to get in touch with Maritza, and the dialogue that follows seamlessly reveals information about her via the dietary restrictions. The details throughout are great, from the descriptions of the food and boxing to the inside joke references that the two share. The specifics bring the reader into the mind of the protagonist, making us feel that much more invested when the romance sparks. The ending is the inevitable surprise, and the final call-back to the tofu reveals that the relationship has real potential, since who would not be impressed with the best-of-all-internet-tofu-preps paired with a spotless apartment? (Lol.)

{2465} The food descriptions are so delectable! It's easy to picture the dishes, and they help bring a richness to the story. Maritza and the main character's meet cute is exactly that, and the main character's thoughtfulness is incredibly sweet. The ending is actually wonderfully realistic: the hero of the story can't always win in the end, but it feels more optimistic than not getting a job typically does. It retains the lighthearted, hopeful tone of the job "interview" with the prospect of a dinner date, and doesn't complicate the relationship with career power dynamics (very clever!)

WHAT THE JUDGES FEEL NEEDS WORK –

{1894} Consider cutting the time spent on the food - while it's nice to know what the narrator plans to cook, this could be summed up in a sentence or two to create more space for the romance. What would it look like if the narrator had to serve the food? If they were forced together for a longer period of time? Could the narrator struggle to keep their attraction to themselves while Maritza is in the room? Could their flirtation deepen? Could the flirting be part of the reason the narrator doesn't get the job? Could Maritza be a distraction? Finding whys to emphasize the relationship between the two characters can deepen the emotional pull and stakes of the story.

{2419} The 'magic potion' inside-joke bit is really cute and a great way to bring them together... but I grew up watching the Asterix the Gaul cartoon, and even I had to look up Getafix! (To my utter shame, I assure you!) You might think about either making the references a little bit broader OR having the main character note how both of them getting this reference is exciting, since not everyone would get it. The second edit would open up the protagonist a little more, highlighting just how special this connection is to them (which dovetails with the main romantic arc of the story already expertly in play). To make a little room for this edit, you could take out the bit about the bass, since that doesn't factor into the backstory about cooking and catering.

{2465} Our main character doesn't have a name! It would be lovely to see it included in the narrative, just so that it rounds out the character. Some descriptors don't quite make sense: is it really "conspiratory" to ask what people like to eat? Perhaps a better word could be substituted in here to make the tone clearer. It's obvious that the main character is trying to be playful with Maritza.

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Feedback on Forum (from fellow writers)

10/1/2025

Forum: 500-word Fiction Challenge Review 2025

Topic: R1 G 84 - Rom Com/Job Hunting/Tin Foil - Chef

Posted By: frumpel

I love the energy and resilience of the protagonist and how it drives the story. I also like the

Short Story *Chef*

realism of how hard it is to start a business and how much you exploit yourself in the beginning in the hopes of eventually making some money.

Nitpick: the whole story hinges on bringing up the courage to ask Maritza out. Even for someone as industrious as the protagonist one would think there would be *some* hurdle, some butterflies and I am not sure "I was seized with a growing impulse, to which I gave in" is quite strong enough to carry all that weight.

Good job and good luck

10/1/2025

Forum: 500-word Fiction Challenge Review 2025

Topic: R1 G 84 - Rom Com/Job Hunting/Tin Foil - Chef

Posted By: cigarehhts

hi!! congrats on your honorable mention :) that's what I also got in another group, same genre though!!

I really enjoyed this. It was very cute and I think your take on the prompts was good! I thought the dialogue between the MC and Martiza was adorable, and I loved the flitartious energy of it all! the banter! is it ironic to say it was chef's kiss?

If I had to give feedback I would say that this read slightly more as a straight romance to me than rom-com, the dialogue was funny in it's flirtatious way but I expected there to be more of a twist, some sort of obstacle, or more internal panic. Clearly it fit the genre enough by the judges standards to get a mention, but I am an avid rom-com enjoyer so just felt like I would share that!

And, I wish that there was a little more 'showing'. We get a lot of what happens and how the MC feels through being told, which isn't always bad but I would've included at least one phsyical sensation to go along with it- does he blush when they meet in person? what does being 'seized with the growing impulse' feel like- is it butterflies in his stomach? is he sweating? Does his heart beat faster? To me it would've made it a little more engaging and really able to connect with the characters.

Overall though, as I said I really enjoyed this! Congrats again- now we wait for the feedback from the judges!!!