

Cipriani over 'thyme' war

A former Cipriani chef has cooked up a court case claiming his ex-employers cheated him out of overtime.

Aurelio Caruso, of Staten Island, alleges that the famed restaurant group — whose owners pleaded guilty to tax evasion in 2007 — has a “corporate policy ... of minimizing labor costs” by shortchanging its kitchen staff.

Caruso, who worked at Cipriani 42nd Street, Cipriani Wall Street and the Rainbow Grill between 2004 and April of this year, says he routinely put in more than 40 hours a week without being paid for it.

His Manhattan federal court suit doesn't specify damages.

A Cipriani spokeswoman didn't return a call for comment. *Bruce Golding*