

# ¿QUE PASA?

*Columbia*  
Since 1905

GEM of  
SPANISH RESTAURANTS<sup>SM</sup>

FALL 2008

Ybor City Sarasota St. Augustine St. Petersburg Clearwater Celebration

## A Baseball Challenge Columbia style!

As the Tampa Bay Rays prepared to take on the Chicago White Sox, Tampa Mayor Pam Iorio joined St. Petersburg Mayor Rick Baker and Clearwater Mayor Frank Hibbard at a press conference on October 2nd to place a friendly wager against Chicago Mayor Richard M. Daley on the outcome of the American League Division Series.

Mayor Iorio offered up Tampa's famous Cuban sandwiches from the world-renowned Columbia Restaurant, fine cigars from the J.C. Newman Cigar Co., and the book Tampa Bay, A Photographic Portrait.

Mayors Baker and Hibbard offered up coconut shrimp from Cha Cha Coconuts at The Pier, The Original "1905" Salad™ from Columbia Restaurant at The Pier, Florida grouper from Mid-Peninsula Seafood, stone crab claws from Clearwater's Frenchy's restaurant and conch fritters from the Palm Pavilion.

Mayor Daley wagered a "Take Me Out to the Ball Game" package of food to include Polish sausage from Vienna Beef, chips from C.J. Vinter Company, Lemonheads candy from Ferrara Pan Candy and other ball park treats. Additionally, Mayor Daley offered youth baseball equipment from Wilson Sporting Goods for 150 children and Mayor Baker pledged baseball and beach gear including sunglasses for 150 children from Transitions Lenses.



Thanks go out to Stacy Mettinger and the crew at Cha Cha Coconuts at The Pier in St. Petersburg for the wonderful coconut shrimp platter they put together on very short notice!

Elisabete and Dan also showed our Columbia hospitality to the reporters, mayors and other folks who stayed until the end of the press conference as they graciously served Cha Cha Coconuts Coconut Shrimp and Columbia Cuban sandwiches and "1905" Salad™ to the crowd.



Our own Elisabete Silva, General Manager at The Columbia at The Pier, and server Dan Trevino set up a wonderful display of not only our Original "1905" Salad™ and Cuban Sandwiches, they also brought "1905" Salad dressing, salsa picante sauce, olive oil, seasoning, olives, sangria mix, sangria pitchers and of course, our Columbia Cookbook!





## *A Message from Richard*

*"Hush hush" said the moon. "Turn out the lights...someone new sleeps with us tonight"*

UNKNOWN

On September 12, 2008 at 12:59 p.m. the world welcomed our new grandson, Alexander Cole Schellman. He was born a healthy 7 lbs. 7 ozs. and 19 1/2" long.

Our daughter Lauren and son-in-law Chris are doing fine. Melanie was blessed to be present of the birth of our fourth grandchild. Although I chose to not witness this miracle of God, I was inside the room only minutes after, tears formed in my eyes as I saw our beautiful daughter holding her son, the smiles and pride of both parents witnessing the greatness of Him was overwhelming.

When you experience seeing your children giving birth, then you have a greater understanding of how wonderful life is, how great God is to us.

It is a moment of happiness, giving thanks and much love.

Now our daughter Andrea, and son-in-law Sherrod are expecting their first child in May of 2009. God is great!

Peace,



## ***Gonzmart Family Welcomes Benziger Family Winery***

On Sept. 25, 2008 The Gonzmart Family and The Columbia Restaurant of Ybor City welcomed third generation Erinn Benziger of the Benziger Family Winery in California for a wine dinner. Andrea Gonzmart, fifth generation of The Columbia paired the food and wines for the evening's menu. Executive Chef Geraldo Bayona prepared each course to perfection.

Erinn Benziger manages the family's East Coast wine sales. She was interviewed by the St. Petersburg Times about her family business, here is an excerpt of that interview:

Benziger has a commitment to organic and biodynamic wine growing what is it and do you see that as a serious trend on the horizon?

In 1995 we started to transition to biodynamic. We got certification in 2000 for the six vineyards that we own and have been certified ever since. With the success of them, we started working with our network of family growers, where our goal is to help them reach their highest level of sustainability, organics or transitioning to biodynamic farming.

Biodynamic is the top end of organic farming. It not only encompasses the tenets of organics, but works with nature and the forces of nature to grow grapes. I like how my dad explains it: It's like grapes are the lead character in the play and the cows, sheep and insects are the supporting cast. We're able to eliminate pesticides and chemicals by creating diversity in the vineyard, as opposed to a monoculture.

At the tasting in Tampa, we're going to be doing a mix of sustainably, organically and biodynamically made wines. We're releasing a sauvignon blanc and pinot noir in our Signaterra line in a few weeks. It's a very exciting single-vineyard program, so each of the wines has a unique character.

What advice do you have for people attending the wine dinner?

A wine dinner is a chance to meet a winemaker or a principal and learn more about where their wines are coming from, about how they grow grapes and make the wines. I send the wines in advance to the chef so he or she can create a menu around them. A course is paired with each wine, which for us usually starts an evening with sauvignon blanc, then moves down through chardonnay, merlot and cabernet. Everyone has a different take on food and wine pairings, and sometimes there's a pairing I wouldn't necessarily have chosen, but it makes me stop and reconsider. What's so great about food and wine is that you're constantly learning and experimenting.



***Erinn Benziger and Andrea Gonzmart***



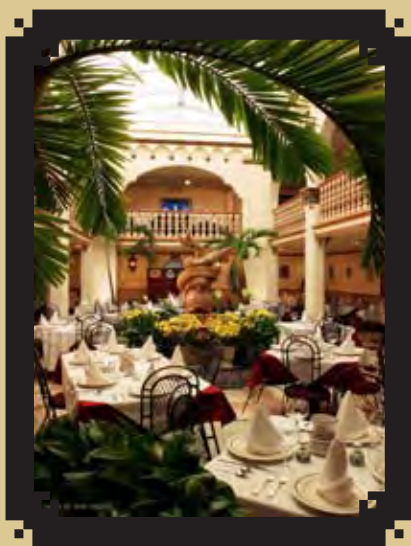
***Melanie Gonzmart, Executive Chef Geraldo Bayona  
and Erinn Benziger***



# ¿QUE PASA?

is a quarterly newsletter for  
the Columbia Restaurant.

EDITOR: Angela Geml



Send story ideas

and comments to

[A.Geml@columbiarestaurant.com](mailto:A.Geml@columbiarestaurant.com)

If you work for The Columbia

and would like to share

your story about

working with us,

please contact

Angela at

[A.Geml@columbiarestaurant.com](mailto:A.Geml@columbiarestaurant.com)



## 7th Annual "Richard's Run For Life" 5K

Where can you run for beer, burritos and paella while supporting efforts to find a cure for cancer? At the 7th Annual "Richard's Run for Life" 5K on Friday, November 7th at 7:00 p.m.

The 5K begins and ends at the Cuban Club in Ybor City, and is open to runners and walkers.

100% of all proceeds will benefit The Amandalee Fund for Pediatric Sarcoma Cancer Research at H. Lee Moffitt Cancer Center & Research Institute.

The entry fee is \$20 per person donation for pre-registration through November 5th and \$25 per person donation on November 7th.

Register at [www.richardsrunforlife.com](http://www.richardsrunforlife.com).

Entry fee includes admission to the post-race party after the 5K Race at the Cuban Club with the Columbia's world-famous Giant Paella, Black Beans & Rice, and The Columbia's Original "1905" Salad™; burritos from Moe's Southwest Grill, Cha Cha Coconut's Guava BBQ Ribs and ice-cold Michelob Ultra Premium beer.

All registered runners will receive free entry to the post race party and a race t-shirt. Guests and visitors can also enjoy the festivities and food for a \$20 donation, and children under 12 for \$10.

"Richard's Run for Life" 5K was created by Columbia Restaurant President, Richard Gonzmart, as a way to combine his love for running with his long-time desire to find a cure for cancer.





# Tom Harman

He conned his way into the Columbia Restaurant family. It was 1985 and he needed a job. An experienced waiter, he heard that the Columbia was looking for help, so he stopped by the Ybor City location to fill out an application. "When I asked for an application, the manager told me the Ybor locations wasn't hiring, but the Harbour Island restaurant was, so off I went," said Tom Harman. When I arrived there, the manager said I was supposed to be there two days ago, and asked me what happened. Obviously they thought I was someone else, but I needed the job and went along with it. Without even needing to fill out an application, they hired me."

Twenty-three years later, Tom is one of the most popular and beloved waiters at The Columbia, the last 13 of which have been spent in the Ybor City location. The Gonzmarts have taken him on cruises, have made him the face of the restaurant's service staff by casting him in their employee training video, and have treated him like more than a waiter, but as a member of the family.

"Adela Gonzmart was so sweet to me and always made me feel close to her," says Tom. "And the sons, Richard and Casey, who

run the restaurant now are like the brothers I never had. I've seen their kids grow up, get married and have kids of their own. I consider myself lucky enough to have known them for so many years.

Harman's been with the Columbia for so long he jokingly said he believes if a flamenco dancer didn't come to work, he could easily jump on stage and fill in, having memorized the routine after seeing it so many times. Over the years, he has also waited on a number of celebrities who dined at the world-famous Columbia Restaurant: Evander Holyfield, Joan Rivers, Bo Derek, and Shirley McClain, just to name a few. Of course, his favorite customers are the Ybor City old timers, the men and women who grew up in Ybor City and love to visit the restaurant and reminisce about their younger days visiting the restaurant. "You never get tired of their stories," said Harman. "There are actually very few things I could ever complain about when it comes to working here and I think that's what kept me here for so long. I have a real passion for this palace and enjoy meeting the people who come here. I can't imagine working anywhere else."

Tom's story, as told to La Gaceta – August 29, 2008.



*Faustino Rios, on stage. His wife, Jeny, is the first dancer on the left.*

## *Faustino Rios*

The lights fall dark in The Columbia's Don Quixote dining room as Flamenco guitars and bongos gain intensity through speakers. Colorful track lighting follows four women in red, gracefully waving black fans, and a spotlight centers on the old stage. A hypnotic foot stomping grows nearer. Faustino Rios enters the room, dramatically twirling his cape and thrusting his hips to the beat of the music. Women in the audience swoon, forgetting all about their paella.

Faustino has had this effect on women at the Columbia for eight years, and others around the globe for thirty-two. But he admits a certain weakness for the Columba. "It's just one of those special places," says Faustino. "You get a magical feeling when you're here."

And that magic – whether it's the Spanish wine, sensual music of the Flamenco show or the history of the building itself, has changed his life. More than 20-years ago, Faustino toured the Columbia with his Spanish dance troupe, and locked eyes with the hostess. He left Tampa dreaming about the beautiful hostess and kicking himself for not asking for her number. On his next trip, he sought out the woman with the warm brown eyes, Jeny, and three months later they were engaged. They have now been married for nineteen years and have a 14-year-old daughter, Sabrina. She is the understudy in the show.

The Flamenco invites you to fall in love. How could you not, Faustino wonders, when you hear a story about a man and woman finding each other, told in a beautifully provocative dance with vibrant costumes and soulful music. "The dance is like a painting," he says. "Beautiful. And everyone makes their own story." He later adds (with a smile) that it's really about a man trying to conquer a lady.

Even with all his charm and experience dancing for audiences from Las Vegas to Spain, Faustino still gets nervous. "I just want to make sure I put on a good show and the audience enjoys themselves," he says. At the end of the night, when the crowd roars as a woman rushes the stage to unbutton Faustino's shirt, he knows it was a job well done.

Faustino's story, as told to South Tampa Magazine, June/July 2008.





## *Columbia Named One of Five “Cultural Treasures on Florida’s West Coast”*

The Columbia Restaurant in Ybor City has been chosen as one of the Rand McNally Best of the Road® Editor’s Picks for 2009. Each year Rand McNally editors hit the road to uncover local dining spots, unique shopping, special events, and new takes on well-known attractions. The Columbia is included in the segment called, “Cultural Treasures on Florida’s West Coast.”

Rand McNally’s goal is to find and recommend these top spots so travelers can explore the American travel treasures right in their own backyard.

According to Rand McNally, “Columbia Restaurant has served hungry diners since 1905. Expanded many times since then, the restaurant now encompasses 18 dining rooms, features Flamenco shows Monday-Saturday, and still serves a tasty Spanish bean soup.”

Included with The Columbia as a Best of the Road® Editor’s Picks are the Renaissance Vinoy Resort in St. Petersburg, FL; Ca d’Zan, of the Ringling Museum in Sarasota, FL; Taste of Greece Bakery in Tarpon Springs, FL; and Big Cypress Gallery in Ochopee, FL.



### *Special Dates*



*Friday, November 7*  
*Richard’s Run for Life*

*Thursday, November 20*  
*Luis Felipe Edwards Wine Dinner*  
*at Columbia St. Petersburg at The Pier*

*Tuesday, November 18*  
*Luis Felipe Edwards Wine Dinner*  
*at Columbia Ybor City*

*Thursday, November 27*  
*Thanksgiving*



*Wednesday, December 24*  
*Christmas Eve*

*Thursday, December 25*  
*Christmas*

*Wednesday, December 31*  
*New Year’s Eve*

*Thursday, January 1*  
*New Year’s Day*





## COLUMBIA ACCOLADES



### *Columbia Restaurant in Tampa's Historic Ybor City Earns "Best of Award of Excellence" Distinction from Wine Spectator Fifth Year in a Row*

The Columbia Restaurant in Tampa's Historic Ybor City earned the "Best of Award of Excellence" distinction for an outstanding collection of Spanish wines from Wine Spectator magazine for the fifth year in a row. To be considered for this recognition, a restaurant's wine list must contain 400 or more wines from top vineyards in several regions, along with vertical offerings from major regions.

Every year since 1981, Wine Spectator magazine acknowledges restaurants that show passion and commitment when it comes to receiving Award from Columbia an "Award from Wine



having at least 80 wines, well-chosen and matching food in style and price. Prior to the "Best of Excellence" 1993 to 2003, was awarded of Excellence" Spectator for

The wine list of the Columbia has also been recognized by many of Spain's leading winemakers as having the world's most complete and best collection of wines from Spain. The Columbia's 265 page wine list contains more than 850 wines with an inventory exceeding 50,000 bottles.

### *Fox on Your Block*

## *WTVT-TV Live Interview*



WTVT-TV, the local FOX affiliate in Tampa Bay, invited The Columbia to be part of a new feature called "Fox on Your Block." Each Thursday, WTVT will profile an area neighborhood to show what makes it special.

On September 25th, for the inaugural launch of this segment, they profiled Ybor City. Andrea Gonzmart was interviewed about her family's Columbia Restaurant, and Columbia Ybor

server, Abe Abdo prepared our world-famous "1905" Salad for the TV audience, and the folks that gathered in Centro Ybor for the show.

Two of our Flamenco dancers, Jeny Rios and Gelsey Torres performed for the segment.

