



¿Que Pasa?

¿Que Pasa? The Columbia Restaurant Newsletter

June 2007

Columbia Restaurant Spices Up The University Of South Florida



Melanie, Lauren and Andrea with Max.

The University of South Florida was alive with Flamenco, flavor, and flair when it announced on April 18 that the Columbia Restaurant has been selected to receive the 24th Celebration of Free Enterprise Award. According to Dean Robert Forsythe, the Columbia, established in Ybor City in 1905, personifies the spirit of free enterprise.

“The entrepreneurial spirit of each generation leading the restaurant has enabled it to blend tradition with contemporary business practices, making the Columbia one of the nation’s most honored restaurants in the world and a favorite among locals and tourists,” he said.

The announcement was accompanied by Flamenco dancers and free Cuban sandwiches for College of Business students, provided by the Columbia Restaurant.

The Celebration of Free Enterprise is an annual awards program recognizing business leaders or leadership teams demonstrating solid business practices and displaying an entrepreneurial spirit. Author and political commentator William F. Buckley, Jr., Congressman Jack Kemp, former White House Chief of Staff Donald T. Regan, Senator Phil Gramm, Republic Industries Chairman H. Wayne Huizenga, and Indianapolis Motor Speedway President & CEO Joie Chitwood III are among the previous recipients of the award.

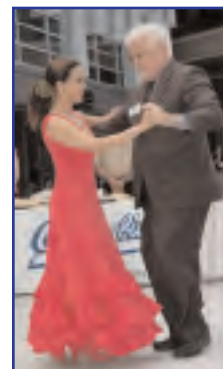
The awards presentation and Free Enterprise Dinner, to be held Oct. 30 at A La Carte Event Pavilion in Tampa, will include a keynote speech by Thomas Donohue, President and CEO of the United States Chamber of Commerce in Washington, D.C. Funds raised by the awards dinner support student scholarships and related programs at USF’s College of Business Administration.



The Gonzmart Family with USF Dean Forsythe.



Flamenco dancers entertain students and faculty.



Dean Forsythe learning to Flamenco.



McCollum Applauds Columbia Restaurant For Protecting Consumers

Columbia Restaurant has taken steps to safeguard patrons

Office of the Attorney General
Bill McCollum - Attorney General of Florida

TALLAHASSEE, Fla., May 4, 2007 – Attorney General Bill McCollum today commended the Columbia Restaurant for taking a proactive approach towards protecting consumers from deceptive marketing. The president of the Columbia restaurant group issued a statement assuring consumers that Columbia restaurants would serve grouper only if they could ensure the fish was in fact grouper and not a less-expensive substitute.

“By taking this initiative, Columbia Restaurant has exemplified professional responsibility, and for that I commend their action,” said Attorney General McCollum. “By taking this positive step towards protecting Florida consumers, these restaurants lead by example.”

“We will never compromise our family's name and reputation by

servicing our guests any kind of substitute item. If we say it is grouper, it will be grouper caught in Florida,” said Richard Gonzmart, President and 4th generation family member for the Columbia Restaurant Group.

“My family would like to thank the Attorney General, Bill McCollum and his office for their efforts in looking out for consumers in Florida,” said Andrea Gonzmart, 5th generation family member for the Columbia Restaurant Group.

Last October, the Attorney General's Economic Crimes Division began investigating allegations that Tampa area restaurants were advertising grouper on their menus, but were substituting less expensive fish to the customers while continuing to charge them for grouper. Investigators collected samples from more than 20

restaurants and sent the specimens to a St. Augustine lab for DNA testing. Upon receiving results that tested negative for grouper, 17 separate investigations were launched into the alleged fish substitutions. To date, investigations are ongoing and several restaurants have reached settlements with the Attorney General's Office.

The Columbia Restaurant has stated it will offer grouper only if the entire fish is received from its supplier, not just a fillet, thus ensuring the restaurants are serving what is listed on the menu. Columbia Restaurant locations include the flagship restaurant in Tampa's Historic Ybor City, St. Armands Circle in Sarasota, the Historic District in St. Augustine, The Pier in St. Petersburg, Sand Key on Clearwater Beach, Central Florida's town of Celebration, and in West Palm Beach at CityPlace.

Congratulations To Our Columbia Gems!

Richard Gonzmart has been named Community Benefactor by St. Joseph's Hospitals in Tampa.

Barry Strauss of The Columbia Ybor City was a winner of a Bern Laxer Spirit of Excellence Award for Hospitality from the Tampa Bay Convention & Visitors Bureau. Barry has been a

bartender with us for 13 years.

Donna Stokes of The Columbia in St. Augustine received honorable mention for the 2007 Tourism Attractions Employee of the Year from the St. Augustine, Ponte Vedra & The Beaches Visitors and Convention Bureau. Donna has been with

Columbia St. Augustine since opening day in 1983...for 24 years!

Congratulations to both Donna and Barry. They are both valued employees and a large part of the success of the Columbia Restaurant.



Cesar Gonzmart Inspires Young Marine In 1984

Richard Gonzmart recently received the email below from Corporal Robert J. Schumacher, who served his country in the United States Marine Corps from 1981-1985. He shared a story about Richard's father, Cesar Gonzmart.

Sometimes we don't realize how important acts of kindness are. They are very important, and as you will read below, they are remembered for a very long time.

Dear Mr. Gonzmart,

I recently had the pleasure of revisiting your beautiful restaurant (Columbia St. Augustine) on Tuesday, March 6th.

My last visit was sometime in 1984 which brings me to the point of this correspondence. While assigned to Marine Air Group 42 at N.A.S. Cecil Field, Jacksonville, Florida, myself and group of young Marines were assigned to perform several honor guard details, one of which brought us to the St. Augustine area.

After completing our assignment and laying a passed brother to rest, we were directed to a local VFW to refresh ourselves and toast our fallen brother. That is where I believe we met another Mr. Gonzmart. While enjoying a cocktail and conversing with several proud veterans we were approached by a gentleman who asked if we were planning to have lunch anytime soon to which we replied yes.

The gentleman told us to stay put and quickly left. A short while later he returned and asked us to follow him. That was my first visit to The Columbia St. Augustine.



Cesar Gonzmart in the Patio dining room of the Columbia Ybor City.

The kind gentleman had arranged to bring in an entire staff prior to the restaurant even opening. There, we were treated to the finest food and margaritas one could hope for. Hours later when we departed, he would accept no payment for the lavish affair.

That act of kindness and respect was never forgotten by that young Marine, now 43 years of age. While back on base some months later, our press officer learned that the gentleman was hospitalized for a serious ailment. In an attempt to lift his spirits and to express our thanks for the unforgettable generosity we received at his hand, we sent two Marines in our finest dress to his hospital room where we

presented him with a unit plaque as a small token of our eternal gratitude.

Though I was not present, Cpl. Mark Newkirk returned to share the story with all of us who had been present at The Columbia. After reading the information on your website, I believe that gentleman was Cesar Gonzmart. I have many fond memories of my time in the Marine Corps but this is the one I most cherish. I simply wish to say thank you.

Robert J. Schumacher
Cpl. USMC 1981-85



The Columbia Says Goodbye To Long Time Employee

The Columbia Restaurant of Ybor City lost a long time employee on April 24, 2007 when Sandy Coulter passed away. Sandy has been a part of The Columbia family since 1981.

Sandy worked for 11 years as Cesar Gonzmart's personal assistant. After his death in 1992, she joined our banquets and catering department, where she

helped hundreds of brides who celebrated their weddings at The Columbia. Everyone enjoyed planning their parties, anniversaries and other events with Sandy, and she will be greatly missed. She was recently honored for her 25 years of service in June of 2006 at the Columbia Employee dinner.



L to R: Casey, Sandy & Richard at the Columbia Employee Dinner.

Columbia St. Armands Circle Earns Excellence In Customer Service Award

Congratulation to The Columbia on St. Armands Circle for earning an Excellence in Customer Service Award in May. This award is presented monthly to a member of The Greater Sarasota Chamber of Commerce in recognition of their excellence in customer relations and long term support of the Chamber of Commerce.

The award is earned by the company for having no unresolved customer complaints.

Eligibility

1. Be a current paid member of The Greater Sarasota Chamber of Commerce
2. Have no complaints for the current year
3. Have no more than three(3) adjusted complaints within the past five (5) years
4. Be a member of the Greater Sarasota Chamber of Commerce for 10 or more consecutive years.



The Columbia on St. Armands Circle.

Sebastiani Wine Dinner



L to R: Casey Gonzmart Jr., Cassandra Gonzmart and Marc Cuneo.

On March 8, 2007, Columbia Restaurant of West Palm Beach hosted a winemaker dinner with Sebastiani Vineyards and Winery of Sonoma, California. We were fortunate to have as our guest of honor, Marc Cuneo 4th Generation family member of Sebastiani. Cassandra Gonzmart, 5th generation family member and Columbia Restaurant West Palm Beach assistant manager, and her brother Casey Jr., represented the Gonzmart family at this event.



A Message From Richard



“At the close of life the question will be not how much have you got, but how much have you given; not how much have you won, but how much have you done; not how much have you saved, but how much have you sacrificed; how much have you loved and served, not how much were you honored.”

— Nathan C. Schaeffer

Our family lost a long time friend recently, Sandy Coulter. Sandy started in 1981 in our offices and quickly became the personal assistant to my father Cesar until he passed away in 1992. She was dedicated to the family business and even though she had suffered a stroke when she was only 37, about twelve years ago she kept her head up and fought to regain a normal life. Sandy was not driven by receiving

awards or by money, she was driven by the need to help others in anyway she could, to make sacrifices in an effort to help find a cure for cancer.

After her mother passed she spent years dedicating her time to helping her father because he had grown old and ill, until the day he died. Her long time boyfriend/fiancé suffered a long battle with cancer until he died a few years ago. Sandy was a rich person, she was rich in the only sense that matters; she cared about others before she worried about herself. In many people eyes she lived a sad life but in my eyes she accepted her life and made the most of it.

We can choose to spend our life searching for meaning or we can choose to live a meaningful life. The first choice only leads to despair, bitterness and an ever-growing sense of futility. The second choice leads to pure happiness.

Sandy will always be remembered by me as a part of our family, she will never be forgotten. I am better person for having known Sandy and she taught me to appreciate all that life has to offer. May each day of your life be more meaningful than the day before.

“I will not follow where the path may lead, but I will go where there is no path, and I will leave a trail.”

— Muriel Strade

Peace. Wisdom. Love.
Richard Gonzmart



Special Dates

June 17, 2007

Father's Day - Sunday

July 4, 2007

Independence Day - Wednesday

September 16, 2007

1905 Day - Sunday

Entire Month Of September
Community Harvest

¿Que Pasa? is a quarterly newsletter for the Columbia Restaurant.

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Send story ideas and comments to
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