



¿Que Pasa?

¿Que Pasa? The Columbia Restaurants' Employee Newsletter

June 2006

Columbia Restaurant Receives “Award of Ultimate Distinction” from Wine Enthusiast Magazine

Columbia Restaurant & Bern's Steak House Earn the “Award of Ultimate Distinction” from Wine Enthusiast Magazine. The Only Restaurants in Florida to Earn this Honor.

The Columbia Restaurant and Bern's Steak House, two venerable restaurants located in Tampa, Florida, have both received the “Award of Ultimate Distinction” from Wine Enthusiast magazine. Last year was the inaugural year for this award, and the Columbia was the only restaurant in Florida to receive the award in 2005.

Only 32 restaurants in the United States received this award in 2006, and the Columbia and Bern's were the only restaurants in Florida to earn this honor.

This is the highest level of award given by the magazine. The award is earned by restaurants that excel on all measures, offering the ultimate experience in wine with imagination and passion.

Wine Enthusiast states regarding the Columbia, “Owner Richard Gonzmart and sommelier Garrett Reid tend an impressive collection of Spanish wines. Emphasis is on the finest Spanish wines, plus Californian and Chilean, with many verticals and products from family-run wineries. One of the most complete collections of Torres Mas la Plana in the world, including some Torres made expressly for the king of Spain. Verticals of Vega Sicilia Unico, as well as CVNE, Alejandro Fernandez and Opus One.

Wine Enthusiast says about Bern's, “Their list of 6,500 table wines and 1,000 dessert wines is enough to set them apart – they have an inventory of 500,000 bottles in all, carefully tended by owner David Laxer and three sommeliers.” Bern's Wine Cellar houses the most extensive selection of wines of any restaurant in the world. Criteria used for judging were evaluating the quality, depth and pricing of the wine list, careful attention to the level of wine service: from how wine is stored, how it is presented and served, to the expert knowledge and training of the management and staff. The

individuality of the establishment is evaluated as to wine-oriented programs such as special wine dinners, events, and wine tasting menus, wine-by-the-glass selections, and half and large bottle availability.

The wine list of the Columbia has also been recognized by many of Spain's leading winemakers as having the most complete and the world's best collection in the world of wines from Spain. The Columbia's wine list contains more than 700 wines with an inventory exceeding 30,000 bottles. A wine cellar seen from the Don Quixote dining room, Tampa's first air-conditioned dining room, holds over 15,000 bottles of wine -- showcasing some of this extensive wine collection.





The Columbia Is The First Restaurant In Florida Appointed An Official Member Of Skål



Lorrie G. Hero, Group Sales Manager for the Columbia Restaurant has been appointed to Skål International of Tampa Bay, a professional organization of

tourism leaders around the world, promoting global tourism and friendship.

This is the first year that restaurants were approved as a tourism category, and the

Columbia Restaurant is the first restaurant in Florida to become an official member of Skål.

Skål is the only international group uniting all branches of the travel and tourism industry. Its members, the industry's managers and executives, meet at local, national, regional and international levels to discuss and pursue topics of common interest. Skål International of Tampa Bay was founded in 1959 and has members from across the Tampa Bay Area.



Rack 'Em Up!

Recent studies show brochures drive visitors to web sites and influence travelers to change their travel plans, both before and during a trip. Over half of the visitors indicated that they visited additional places or made extra purchases after being influenced by a tourism brochure. Brochures continue to have a strong role in a world dominated by internet marketing.

What does this mean to you?

Please make sure that you always have Columbia brochures and lunch and dinner to go menus on display in the restaurant.

It is also important that we always have our brochures and menus on display with the hotels/concierges in our concierge program, at the Convention and Visitors Bureau Centers, etc.

Please contact Angie Geml at the Corporate office to reorder brochures and lunch/dinner to go menus.

A Message From Richard

“To exist is to change, to change is to mature, to mature is to go on creating oneself endlessly.” — Henri Bergson

Here we are today, celebrating our 101st anniversary. I often think “what would my great grandfather, Casimiro Hernandez Sr., say about the Columbia Restaurant today?”

Did he ever dream that his descendants would still be running the restaurant and trying to provide the locals and visiting tourists a memorable experience?

The fact is, if we had continued to operate without changes to our menu and service standards over the five generations of the family, the business would have failed, much like the rest of the once bustling cafes and restaurants that were located in Tampa.

In today's business environment, the customer has many options on where to

dine. The chain restaurants do a wonderful job of training, purchasing and customer service. But they do not have what the Columbia has; a dedicated, loyal staff and a business rich in history and pride, a company that believes in giving back as much as possible to help those in our communities that are less fortunate.

To succeed, we will need to continue to follow the dining trends of the world; while at the same time, looking to purchase the freshest and highest quality products available to produce a great dining experience with exceptional service, with a smile.

Whether you are the greeter, assistant server, cook or kitchen assistant, you are what makes the Columbia great! Thank you for being part of our family as we continue creating ourselves endlessly.

*Peace,
Richard Gonzmart*



The Columbia Restaurant Celebrates Its 101st Anniversary By Rolling Back Prices For “1905 Day”

All 7 Columbia’s in Florida will Offer Prices of Yesteryear



On Sunday, September 17th, all seven Columbia Restaurants throughout Florida will celebrate “1905 Day” to commemorate the 101st ANNIVERSARY of the family-owned business. As has been the tradition since their 75th Anniversary, the Columbia has developed a special menu with the prices of yesteryear for this day. From noon until 7:00 p.m., guests will

enjoy the Columbia Restaurant’s world-famous Spanish cuisine for the prices they might have paid in the “good ole days”. Menu items will include: Chicken & Yellow Rice “Ybor” for \$2.75, Boliche (eye round of beef) for \$2.95, Merluza “Russian Style” for \$2.95, Columbia’s Original “1905 Salad” for \$1.95, Sangria for \$.95 cents, flan for \$.35 cents, and their richly brewed coffee for \$.05 cents.

“1905 Day is our way of thanking all of our customers who have contributed to the

success of the Columbia for over 100 years and five generations of ownership,” explained Richard Gonzmart, 4th generation family member and president of the Columbia Restaurant. “We are convinced that we would not be celebrating our 101st anniversary without the support of the communities we serve,” Gonzmart said.

Guests are invited to join the annual celebration at any of the seven locations: Ybor City in Tampa, 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.

On this day only, reservations are not accepted, and take-out items are not available.

Columbia Restaurant Honors Long Term Employees And Hall Of Fame Inductees

The Columbia Restaurant, Florida’s oldest restaurant, will host their Employee Appreciation Dinner on Thursday, June 22, 2006 at 6:00 p.m. at the original Columbia Restaurant located in Tampa’s Historic Ybor City.

10 years or more. Three retired employees will be inducted into the Columbia Hall of Fame, which was created to honor former and current employees who were instrumental in forming the Columbia Restaurant legacy.

The event will honor 51 staff members who have worked for the Columbia family for

Special Dates

June 18

Father’s Day

June 22

Employee Appreciation Dinner/Hall of Fame Inductions

September 17

1905 Day

All September

Community Harvest

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

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Send story ideas and comments to A.Geml@columbiarestaurant.com

Columbia Restaurant Kicks Off 9th Annual Community Harvest

How can you enjoy a great meal while supporting local non-profit groups without spending an additional dime out of your own pocket? By dining at the Columbia Restaurant during the month of September for lunch or dinner during the 9th Annual Columbia Restaurant Community Harvest program.

Over the past eight years, the Columbia Restaurant Community Harvest has donated over \$512,000 to over 100 non-profit organizations throughout Florida.

Through this program, Columbia Restaurant donates 5% of all guests' checks to the charitable organizations chosen by their customers during the entire month of

September. The Columbia Restaurant Community Harvest will be in effect at all seven restaurant locations in Florida, including Ybor City, Sarasota, St. Augustine, The Pier in St. Petersburg, Sand Key on Clearwater Beach, Celebration, and the newest restaurant in West Palm Beach at CityPlace. Columbia Restaurant is open 7-days a week for lunch or dinner.

"We started this program in 1998 as a way of contributing to the many non-profit groups that are so important to our communities," noted Richard Gonzmart, president of the Columbia Restaurant. "We thought the best way to do this was by letting our customers get involved in

selecting the organizations. The process is simple. They just put a check mark next to the name of one of the charitable organizations listed on the form we provide to them, or they can write in the name of their favorite charity, and turn it in to their server. We do the rest," explained Gonzmart.

"We selected September for the Community Harvest program as a way of commemorating our anniversary and thanking the communities that have hosted us through the years," said Casey Gonzmart, Chairman of Columbia. The Columbia celebrates their 101st Anniversary in 2006.

Joe Roman Honored For 51 Years Of Service



Left to right: Joe Roman, his wife Mat and Richard Gonzmart.

Joe Roman, who has worked as a server/ambassador at Columbia Restaurant in Tampa's historic Ybor City for 51 years, was honored with the Bern Laxer Spirit of Excellence Award for Best Server at the National Tourism Week Luncheon from the Tampa Bay Convention and Visitors Bureau on May 16, 2006.

The awards, given in eight categories, were created to honor those individuals who distinguish themselves through their enthusiasm and exemplary service to visitors. Named for Bern Laxer, the founder of Tampa's legendary Bern's Steak House, the awards were specifically designed to recognize front-line staff for their contributions to

the success of the hospitality and tourism industry in Tampa Bay.

"All the candidates were exceptional, and the winners provide wonderful examples of what 'hospitality' truly means," said Paul Catoe, President & CEO of the Tampa Bay CVB.

According to Richard Gonzmart, President and 4th generation family member of Columbia Restaurant, "Joe has set the standard for service, and his work ethic is second to none."

In August of 2004, Joe was awarded the Iris D. Larson Hospitality Award at the Annual Florida Governor's Conference on Tourism. The Iris D. Larson Hospitality Award was created to recognize hospitality/tourism industry professionals who exemplify the qualities of selfless spirit of service and leadership in their work experience.

Joe Roman, 78, started working at the Columbia Restaurant in 1954 at the age of 26. He took great pride in his work and it earned him a good living, on which he raised two sons with his wife of 55 years. Roman was a favorite among guests because he would often spontaneously break into song as he brought them their

favorite Spanish dishes. He earned his nickname, "The Singer Waiter," in 1962, the year the first song that he sang to guests was released, Tony Bennett's classic, I Left My Heart In San Francisco.

"For his dedication to his work and to our family, we inducted Joe into our Columbia Restaurant Hall of Fame in 2000," said Richard Gonzmart. "We created our Hall of Fame to honor employees who have contributed to the legacy of Columbia Restaurant."

In 2002, after 48 years of work, Joe began to cut back on his hours due to problems with his knees, and then had to retire. He was very distressed that this meant he would not reach 50 years of service.

"We knew how important it was to Joe for him to reach that milestone," said Gonzmart. "We created a position just for him in conjunction with our 100-year anniversary in 2005. Joe was named our "Columbia Restaurant Ambassador." In this role, he continues what he does best, greeting guests and sharing the Columbia story with them. He also gives tours of the restaurant. We don't have to train him in our history, he lived it first hand."