



¿Que Pasa?

¿Que Pasa? The Columbia Restaurant Newsletter

March 2007

Columbia Restaurant & Bern's Steak House Earn "Award of Ultimate Distinction" from *Wine Enthusiast*

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. Only 29 restaurants in the United States received this award in 2007, 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 and is earned by restaurants that excel on all measures, offering the ultimate experience in wine with imagination and passion.

The Columbia has earned this honor for the third year in a row, beginning in 2005, the inaugural year for this award. Bern's has earned this honor for the second year in a row, beginning in 2006.

Wine Enthusiast states regarding the Columbia, "4th generation co-owner Richard Gonzmart is in charge of the



wine program, which features an awe-inspiring selection of Spanish wines, with an emphasis on verticals, plus wines from California with connections to Spain, and bottlings from Chile. 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 dating back to 1960. Plus CUNE and Alejandro Fernandez's Pesquera."

Wine Enthusiast says about Bern's, "With a staggering 500,000 bottles in its cellar, Bern's Steak House does wine in a big way." Bern's houses the most extensive selection of wines of any restaurant in the world.

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 1,000 wines with an inventory exceeding 50,000 bottles. A wine cellar seen from the Don Quixote dining room, Tampa's first air-conditioned dining room in 1935, holds over 15,000 bottles of wine — showcasing some of this extensive wine collection.





Legendary Columbia Restaurant Says Goodbye to Two Long-Time Employees

The Columbia Restaurant in Tampa's Historic Ybor City recently said goodbye to two long-time employees.

Jose Alberto Menendez, 84-years-old, passed away December 30, 2006. He manned the sauté station for 34 years, and was in the first inductee class of the Columbia Hall of Fame in 1998, which was created to honor employees who have contributed to the legacy of Columbia Restaurant. He was a native of Majagua, Camaguey, Cuba, and a resident of Tampa since 1954. He started working at the Columbia in 1959 and retired in 1993.

"I am saddened by his passing. Jose was known at work as Alberto, and he was a very kind and gentle man who taught me so much about the kitchen when I was just starting at the age of 12," said 4th generation family member and president of Columbia Restaurant, Richard Gonzmart.

In November of 2006, Luis Garcia, an employee for 41 years, passed away. Mr. Garcia started working at the Columbia in 1965 and was in charge of the pantry. One of his responsibilities was the daily preparation of the Columbia's Original "1905" Salad.

"Both gentlemen made their jobs at our family restaurant their careers," said Gonzmart. "We are proud to have had Alberto and Luis as part of our family for so many years," he said.

The Columbia has always fostered a spirit of family within their employees, and in an industry dominated by high turnover rates, it's not unusual to find employees who have worked for the company for 10 years, 20 years and even 25 years or more. 19% percent of Columbia's 775 employees have been with the company for 10 years or more.

Columbia Restaurant Announces Partnership with SYSCO of West Coast Florida and Chain Reaction Marketing

Columbia Restaurant in Tampa's Historic Ybor City has announced a new partnership with SYSCO of West Coast Florida and Chain Reaction Marketing as a way to reduce food costs while maintaining their focus on quality that has been the mainstay of their business since their first of seven restaurants was founded in 1905.

SYSCO is the global leader in selling, marketing and distributing food products to restaurants, healthcare and educational facilities, lodging establishments and other customers who prepare meals away from home. Its family of products also includes equipment and supplies for the food service and hospitality industries. Its headquarters are in Houston, Texas.

Columbia will work with the SYSCO office based in Palmetto Florida.

Chain Reaction Marketing, Parsippany, NJ was founded in 1985 by Steve Salzberg. CRM provides purchasing, logistics and distribution solutions to chain restaurant operators throughout the United States.

"We have been looking for some time now for ways to reduce our operating costs without giving up our food quality. As we begin our 102nd year of doing business, our business has changed, along with the way products are being bought and sold. Expenses have gone up, and instead of passing on these costs to our customers, we have searched for ways to reduce our food

costs," said Richard Gonzmart, President of the Columbia Restaurant and fourth generation member of the founding family.

"After careful consideration, we have selected SYSCO as our food service supplier. We feel that Carl Cannova, President and Chief Executive Officer, and his team would best meet our needs." "I am looking forward to a mutually benefiting relationship between the Columbia, CRM and SYSCO," Gonzmart said.

SYSCO, along with CRM will be helping the Columbia to secure contracts to reduce costs on beef, shrimp, and many other food products.



Columbia Restaurant: Giving Back to Our Communities



“Amandalee Ride for Life” Raises Over \$40,000 for H. Lee Moffitt Cancer Center & Research Institute

The “Amandalee Ride for Life” bicycle event raised over \$40,000 for H. Lee Moffitt Cancer Center & Research Institute in Tampa and took place on September 30th, 2006 on the newly opened elevated express lanes of the Lee Roy Selmon Crosstown Expressway in Tampa. Over 400 individuals and families participated.

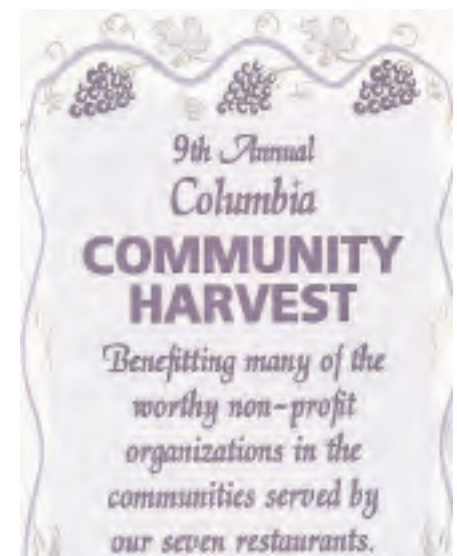
“The Amandalee Ride for Life” was created by Columbia Restaurant President, Richard Gonzmart, as a way to combine his love of running and biking with his long-time desire to find a cure for cancer. He was especially touched by the story of Amandalee Weiss, a Moffitt patient who at 20-years-old, lost her battle the

same week she graduated from college. This ride was named in her honor. The Amandalee Fund was established to hasten research for sarcoma, a rare bone cancer that usually targets adolescents.

Columbia Restaurant Donates Over \$84,000 to 67 Local Non-Profit Groups in Florida Communities

The Columbia Restaurant donated over \$84,000 to 67 non-profit organizations throughout Florida as a result of the Ninth Annual Columbia Restaurant Community Harvest held in September of 2006. Over the past nine years, the

Columbia Restaurant Community Harvest has donated over \$698,000 to non-profit organizations throughout Florida.





5th Annual "Richard's Run for Life" 5K Raises Over \$50,000 to Benefit Pediatric Sarcoma Cancer Research for H. Lee Moffitt Cancer Center & Research Institute

The 5th Annual "Richard's Run for Life" 5K took place on Friday, November 3, 2006 at 6:30 p.m. in Ybor City's Centennial Park and raised over \$50,000. The race drew over 1,000 runners and walkers.

"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.

"I created 'Richard's Run For Life' 5K, which is part of the Gonzmart Family Foundation, a 501 (c)(3) non-profit organization, dedicated to supporting my ongoing pledge to help raise funds to fight cancer and to help those fighting it," Richard Gonzmart said. "Cancer has affected so many of my loved ones and friends, especially my nine-year-old friend, Mark Desmarais, who recently passed away. He continues to inspire me," said Gonzmart.



Richard with Mark Desmarais, who recently passed away at 9-years-old from cancer.

"Andrea's Sip for Life" Raises Over \$45,000 for H. Lee Moffitt Cancer Center & Research Institute



Richard and Casey with Miguel Torres, 5th generation family member of Torres Winery. Mr. Torres generously donated a variety of his family's wines to help make this event a success.

"Andrea's Sip for Life" raised over \$45,000 for H. Lee Moffitt Cancer Center & Research Institute in Tampa. The event took place on January 19th, 2007 at the beautiful Ybor City State Museum and Garden. Over 250 people enjoyed 150 premium wines from Spain, along with Spanish Tapas including Spain's famous Jamón Serrano, all prepared by The Columbia Restaurant.

"Andrea's Sip for Life" was created by

Columbia Restaurant President, Richard Gonzmart, as a way to combine his love of wine with his long-time desire to find a cure for cancer. 100% of the \$45,000 raised was donated to the A.D. Fund at H. Lee Moffitt Cancer Center and Research Institute in Tampa to support the development of clinical trials that utilize novel drugs to better improve the care of people with sarcoma. The fund and the event were named after Andrea Dicks Hartley.



Andrea Dicks Hartley – a young Mother and Moffitt patient who lost her battle to sarcoma cancer in August 2006 at the age of 30. She left behind her 2 1/2 year-old daughter, Emma.



Elisabete Silva, Our GM at Columbia St. Petersburg Shares Her Story

There are still some days when I walk in The Columbia Restaurant at the Pier that I feel the same as when I walked in for the first time. It was back in January of 2000, I just moved from Venezuela where I lived for 7 years. I had planned to spend New Year's Eve of 2000 in Times Square, NY, but life tricks you sometimes and I ended up spending the New Year's Eve bussing tables in a small restaurant in St. Pete, Florida.

I got to St. Pete in December of 1999, the next day I had an interview in a restaurant where many Venezuelan people were working, and right away I was hired as a busser. I was excited because this was my first real job, but right away the excitement faded, the place was nice but it didn't really make me happy, I worked there for not too much more than 2 weeks, and that was enough to see that if I would be staying in this city, that was not the place for me to work.

One of the bussers there told me about a place on the Pier where he was also working, saying that I should try it. Well, I did, and I still remember the first time when the elevators opened, UHAU, amazing.

I couldn't believe how big and nice the place was, I walked in and right away a girl with a Spanish accent greeted me. I noticed her Spanish accent, so we started to talk in Spanish, she was very nice and she made me feel very comfortable. Her name was Mariela, and she had worked here for a long time and was also from Venezuela.

I got an application and filled it out. I gave it back to Mariela, hoping for something good to happen. She got a manager to come out and speak with me, he asked me what job I would like to apply for, I simply said - OPEN, I just wanted to work there. When I left, I hope that I had a good impression.

After a few days I got a message in my voice mail asking for me to come back, and that meant I got HIRED. I remember how happy I was when I heard the message, that was just what I wanted. I didn't know what I would be doing at Columbia, if it would be better than the job I already had, but I just felt happy and excited and I couldn't wait to start.

I came in the next day for orientation, and I found out that I was hired as a server assistant, that sounded really nice for me back then, soon I also realized that it was a nice word for busser, Oh well, I didn't care, I was working for the Columbia Restaurant, and proud to be a busser. Till then I had no idea of what history proceed this restaurant, within a short time I realized what a BIG name in Florida Columbia is, with a great reputation and even bigger history.

As a busser, I started to familiarize myself with the service standards, guest expectations, and restaurant business practices in USA, it was a great experience, but soon I started to realized that I needed more and could do more, that is when I started to pursue the idea of becoming a hostess. That wasn't easy at all, for some reason when you are hired as a busser you are seen as a busser, and it takes time to change. Well I had time, and I wanted to do it. Soon I was given the opportunity of doing some hostess shifts, but I still kept the busser position at the same time. That was fine, the money as busser was good, but the hostess was more of a challenge for me. Soon after I became a full time hostess, that was great, I was so excited, because I remembered the image that I kept in my mind from the first time I came in the restaurant and when I saw the hostess stand, it may seems weird now to believe, but by then, that was my goal. I knew I couldn't walk in as a hostess right away, I would have to go the right steps to earn the job. There were a lot of people here with

many more years in the position, you just don't step over that.

Throughout my hostess time, I always tried to do my best with the guests and with the staff, and soon I started to realize that again, I can do more, I want to do more.

I became very good friends with both David Miller, who was then our Sous-Chef, and with John Pedaggi, then a server. But John was not just a server, he was a server who had his goals very clear in mind. I also saw that he could be so much more, as he knew so much more. I knew his background; soon he became my example and my good friend.

His many years in this country along with his experience of owning his own restaurant here, plus the European mentality, was a great match for me. John was somebody that really could teach me all the things that I need to know. Granted I knew something about the restaurant business, and I had all the will to know more, I also knew I didn't have any experience in the USA.

John became my coach, teacher, mentor and more important, he was a Good Friend. Very quickly, I saw John moving towards what he wanted, he got an interview with Mr. Gaither, and he got the job, he was promoted to Assistant Manager. At this time, many things were happening in the restaurant, and David Miller was promoted to Chef. John came back from his training stronger and better, soon started to note the differences on a lot of things in him as a server and myself as a hostess that we always used to talk about.

The more we talked, the stronger I felt about moving up. I knew it wouldn't be easy, but I had help, I could do it. From John and David I got the most support, I can not thank them enough for believing



that I could do it.

I finally got an interview with Mr. Gaither, Oh Boy, I can't tell you, how nervous I was, I knew it was the interview of my life. Till then, I wasn't very familiar with Mr. Gaither, I always had a great amount of respect for him, I saw him every time he came in the restaurant, and I could see how wise and fair he was.

I remember that I couldn't find the right clothes to wear. I wanted to make a very good impression, but at the same time I wanted him to see me as a future Assistant Manager, not just as a busser, so I got a suit (skirt and jacket), and whoever knows me, I am not a skirt girl at all. The color was a pale beige, again not me at all, and too big on me. I don't think I was hired because of my image, I was so nervous. John trained me for that interview, like you have no idea, for days we just talked about that, what to say or not say. I believed him, if it worked for him, and it would work for me.

Well, I forgot the "nerve" factor... when I sat down, I went blank, I forgot everything that John and I had talked about. When I finished the interview, I couldn't really evaluate how I did, that is how nervous I was.

John let me know that I did fine, well I really didn't know what that meant, I didn't think I did well, but I guess I did, because a few days after, I got the news that I was being promoted to Assistant Manager, Uhau, Uhau, assistant manager.

I went through my training in Columbia Celebration and St. Pete. In the middle of my training I found out that I was going to have a baby. I was happy, but scared and worried. Would I be able to do everything in the right way in my new job and have a baby?

Now I look back, and I was able to handle the situation in the best way I could, it was very tough but I was very grateful for the chance in my new job.

A lot of things happened next. John left

for Columbia Celebration to work for a while, and came back to Columbia St. Pete as the General Manager. Now my good friend would become my immediate supervisor, but I was happy for him, and the restaurant and for the company, he would be a great Manager, and when you work for somebody Great, you will become great also.

We started to make the turn in St. Pete, sales went up, and we all had positive attitudes. I felt that I was part of something great. We worked hard but it was worth it, the results start to show up, there was still a long way to improve, but we had already started.

Next, a great opportunity came for John and he left to be the GM in Columbia St. Augustine. It's a great restaurant and it would be a great move for him, I was very sad because I lost a friend but I was very happy for him.

The move was fast, there was not too much time to think about it. The new general manager took over immediately, but it wasn't an easy transition. Taking over after a bad manager, it is easy to show results, but replacing a strong manager it is very hard. Somehow it didn't work out, and Mr. Gaither decided to give me the opportunity next, which I took very serious and very cautiously.

It was a long and hard road at the beginning, I know now that I could never have done it if it wasn't for the great support that I had from many very wise and honest people that I was always lucky to be surrounded with.

It has been three years since then, and sometimes I still have the same feelings when I walk in the morning as when I walked in for the first time.

I could tell you all kinds of stories and names of people involved in my history with the Columbia Restaurant that made all this possible, but the bottom line of the story is that, this restaurant means so much to me, that it is hard to imagine my life without it. With the Columbia Restaurant on the Pier, I have had the opportunity of

making some of the best friendships of my entire life, I've work with incredible people that give their best everyday and taught me a lesson of life. I became a BELIEVER.

There are key people that I owe all my respect and gratitude forever, and they are:

John Pedaggi- My dear Friend who was the first one who saw potential in me. He is now our GM in West Palm Beach

David Miller- My best friend, he always supports me every moment. He is our Chef in St. Pete

Andrea Gonzmart- Dear Friend who helped me and stayed together with me in my tough beginning as a GM, always there, I will never forget her. She is the 5th Generation.

Joe Tully- My right hand and right arm who has been with me since we worked together as assistant managers. He believes in what I do and supports me. He is our Assistant Manager in St. Pete.

Pedro Nassar- The one who is always there for me -My husband

Curt Gaither- My mentor, my example, my orientation, my good friend who I have ALL the respect in the world for what he does, He made me a BELIEVER.

To everybody else involved, Thank you for everything. — *Elisabete Silva*



Elisabete, Pedro and Michelle.



A Message From Richard



“Start by doing what’s necessary; then do what’s possible; and suddenly you are doing the impossible.”

— *St. Francis of Assisi*

Whether it is a physical mountain or a mountainous task, the most important part of the job before us is... beginning. I have been involved more and more at Moffitt Cancer Center, and they are approaching the summit, climbing mountains, one step at a time. The new M2GEN project with Merck & Co. is huge and we will see people coming from all over the country and world to Moffitt in the effort to beat cancer.

We all can not be world class researchers but we can all dream and take that step towards realizing the dream. I never accept that I can not succeed, take the first step today to accomplishing the impossible.

The family of the Columbia has been part of living Don Quixote’s “Impossible Dream”, thank you for being part of our success; we have accomplished what we have because of you, we are only as good as our team.

May all your necessary beginnings lead to accomplished impossibilities.

*Peace,
Richard Gonzmart*

Special Dates

April 8, 2007
Easter Sunday

May 4, 2007
**12th Annual Cesar Gonzmart
Memorial Golf Tournament**

May 13, 2007
Mother’s Day

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

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Columbia Restaurant on St. Armands Circle Debuts Brand New, State-Of-The-Art Kitchen

The Columbia Restaurant on St. Armands Circle, Sarasota's oldest restaurant, debuted its brand new, state-of-the-art kitchen on Tuesday, November 21, 2006.

"We are happy to welcome back our guests for the holiday season," said Richard Gonzmart, 4th Generation and President of Columbia Restaurant Group. "We also are happy to welcome back to work all of our longtime and loyal Columbia Sarasota employees," Gonzmart said.

The Columbia opened on St. Armands Circle in 1959, and will celebrate its 48th anniversary in 2007, always under the same family ownership. The restaurant was temporarily closed for

extensive structural repairs in July. While repairs were being done, the Gonzmart family, 4th and 5th generation owners of the Columbia, decided to build and create Sarasota's most modern, state-of-the-art kitchen.

"Our new kitchen will allow our family to prepare the very best Spanish food, and will also enable us to serve our food more efficiently," Gonzmart said. "The new kitchen will also let everyone work more comfortably, from the kitchen employees to the waiters and servers - without changing the flavor of our family recipes," Gonzmart said."

The contractors for the project were R. L. James General Contractor,

Incorporated and the Holliday group of Sarasota. Both have been a part of the Southwest Florida business community for years.



Columbia Donates Christmas Dinner to James A. Haley VA Hospital

In December 2006, Columbia Restaurant donated a delicious Christmas Dinner for the wounded military patients at James A. Haley VA Hospital in Tampa. Also participating were the patient's families, former patients, doctors, nurses,

current military personnel from MacDill Air Force Base, deputies with the Hillsborough County Sheriff's Office, members of Operation Helping Hand, and others.

Several of our employees from Columbia Ybor City were there to serve the Christmas Dinner. Thank you to everyone who helped to create a wonderful evening for this special group.

