

George Abuabara

Orlando, Florida



[Restaurantes que Inspiran](#)

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Learn about Florida Entrepreneur George Abuabara:

Born in Colombia, but raised in Miami, George Abuabara, Founder of Restaurantes que Inspiran (Restaurants That Inspire), attended college in England before starting his career with Marriott Hotels. From the 1980s through the early 90s, Abuabara was part of a team that launched 17 new hotels. He then joined Carnival Cruise Lines, based in Miami, where he developed a passion for the environment and a desire to promote responsible and sustainable business practices. Adding to Abuabara's knowledge and awareness is the fact that he's owned and operated nine restaurants in Texas, Mexico and Florida.

"Cruise lines have strict rules and regulations controlled by the government," Abuabara said. "However, many restaurants do not. The more I learned about the environmental impact and the food waste at

most restaurants, the more involved I wanted to get.”

Abuabara continued, “I remember talking to my wife one day about how much it bothered me that half the trash bags at restaurants are full of wasted food, so I started investigating. As a baby boomer, I felt like I needed to do something about it. My generation is partially responsible for getting us in this mess. We decided to start an organization to consult with hotels and restaurants about minimizing their waste and reducing their environmental impact.”

Restaurantes que Inspiran is a non-profit organization that focuses on programs and initiatives for food recycling, elimination of the use of plastic items, such as sorbets, disposable plates, plastic cups and disposable containers replacing them with biodegradable products, in multinational companies. They serve clients throughout Latin America, Europe and the United States.

“The organization is growing much faster than we expected,” Abuabara said. “We started with the Hispanic community, and thought it would mostly remain there, but all of a sudden it’s exploding. We’re creating awareness in the community, providing education and demanding that people make changes. We also have ambassadors in Colombia, Costa Rica, Mexico, Spain and Canada.”

Abuabara shared that most owners, while concerned about cost, would like their restaurants to be more environmentally friendly. Through a series of steps, most owners can accomplish their objectives with fewer expenses than they might expect. Those steps include things like, preparing more seasonal food, using ‘Fair-Trade’ suppliers, better procedures around stored foods, serve appropriate quantities, installing

energy efficient equipment, donating left over food and using sustainable furniture. For restaurant owners that complete the process, Abuabara will offer a certification they can display and use for marketing purposes.

“Most owners are concerned with ROI, but they don’t have the proper systems,” Abuabara said. “That’s where we come into play. We give them the systems and provide the education. They’re ready for it, it’s just a matter of understanding the process.”

Abuabara is in the process of putting together a board of directors. He’s also creating a digital platform to offer educational courses in different languages to restaurant owners around the world. Unlike most non-profits, Abuabara shared that his vision for Restaurantes que Inspiran is to generate its own revenue through consultations and educational services. He doesn’t want to have to rely on grants and other sources of funding.

Looking ahead, Abuabara is excited for the future, and for good reasons.

“We have a lot of things going on right now. We’re publishing a book with 12 restaurant owners that inspire. We’ll launch that book during our summit on Nov 7th and Nov 8th, 2020. For the summit, we’ll bring in speakers from around the world to discuss sustainability and environmental impact. We’re also working on local workshops and seminars for Orlando restaurant owners. Ultimately we want to work with 95% of the Hispanic-owned restaurants in Central Florida by 2021 or 2022. To do this, we’ll need plenty of support from local governments. So far, we’ve been working with the City of Orlando. It’s been a great partnership.”

What advice does Abuabara have for aspiring entrepreneurs? “Really study what you want to do,” he said. “When you launch, make sure you have funds for at least six months to support yourself. Also, start your business on the side while still employed. It will make things a lot easier on you.”

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