



Henry and Michele Salgado

New Smyrna Beach, Florida



Ricky's Canteen/Poke Bar & Street Food

Learn about Florida Entrepreneur Henry and Michele Salgado:

Henry and Michele Salgado, husband and wife and owners of Ricky's Canteen/Poke Bar & Street Food, first met while living in Atlanta.

Michele worked as a psychologist and Henry worked as a chef for various restaurants around town. Eventually the idea surfaced to open their own restaurant. After a weekend getaway to New Smyrna Beach, that idea was one step closer to becoming a reality.

"We loved the area and saw an opportunity to open a restaurant that took a modern approach to Latin cuisine," she said. "Henry's dad's side is Cuban and Spanish, so the influence of his cooking is Latin and Spanish. It was a great opportunity and we jumped on it."

The Salgado's sold their house in Atlanta, moved to New Smyrna Beach and opened Spanish River Grill in 1999. Michele shared that in the early

days, one of their challenges was educating their customers on Spanish cuisine and wines. The restaurant was such a new concept in New Smyrna Beach that most patrons weren't familiar with that style of cooking. Nevertheless, by 2008, they developed such a solid reputation and following that expansion was necessary. They acquired the adjacent space and doubled the size of their restaurant. Not long after, they opened a second restaurant in the Audubon Park area of Orlando called Txokos Basque Kitchen at East End Market. Henry and Michele explained that decision and the ultimate decision to close two successful restaurants to pursue their newest concept.

"The food at Txokos Basque Kitchen was based on the distinct cuisine that's part of the Basque region in Spain," Michele said. "It's unique, rustic and not overdone. The entire concept was based on the secret gastronomic societies where men would go to eat, drink, sing and dance. We visited the Basque region and completely fell in love with the idea. The restaurant was successful, but it wasn't the ideal market for the long-term. We put it up for sale and it sold immediately. That sort of planted the idea of selling Spanish River Grill. At some point, you need to stay relevant. In the restaurant business, it's important to keep things interesting and fun. We also wanted a better lifestyle."

After 17 years in business, that included Henry being named a James Beard semifinalist, a annual award presented by the James Beard Foundation to recognize culinary professionals, The Salgado's sold Spanish River Grill to pursue an entirely new concept. They wanted to have fun and get back to experiencing the joy of cooking. After decompressing and doing some research, they had a plan and took action.

"We did high-end cooking for so long," Michele said. "Now we wanted to have fun. So many other successful restaurant owners are doing the same thing. Whether it's casual but incredible tasting BBQ or the most amazing sandwich you've ever had, chef's are scaling back and going more casual. The concept we decided on was Poke and street food. Poke hasn't hit Florida like the rest of the country. We looked at chains, but ultimately decided to do our own thing."

Ricky's Canteen/Poke Bar & Street Food opened its doors the last week of June. The new concept features fresh poke bowls and street food inspired from cultures all around the world. Dishes include The Ricky Bowl, made with black beans, crispy pork belly, Maduros scallions and Ricky's BBQ sauce, Bahamian Conch Salad, Spicy Tuna Tacos, with wasabi yogurt, and many more mouth-watering chef-driven inspirations. Despite some familiar challenges, Henry and Michele are happy with their newest creation and optimistic about the future.

"Once again, we're back to educating people on the cuisine," Henry said.

"This time it's poke. Another challenge is staff. Certain younger generations just don't want to work as hard." Michele added, "We've also experienced people that miss Spanish River Grill, but there's a whole host of other people that love what we're doing now. Canal Street is having a renaissance and we're happy to be part of it. We're also happy to provide a place where people can come in, have fun, laugh and experience some amazing food."

Looking ahead, Henry and Michele have plans that include more than just Ricky's Canteen/Poke Bar & Street Food. While they've been

approached by One Daytona to possibly bring their concept to Daytona Beach, they're also in the process of opening a new restaurant around the corner from Ricky's Canteen. Thanks to the Salgado's, Canal Street will soon have a place where locals and tourists can ditch the fork and slurp down ice cold fresh oysters.

Henry and Michele offer up some great advice, not just for aspiring entrepreneurs, but also for aspiring restaurateurs. "A business plan is a must," Henry said. "Take a long hard look in the mirror and realize that there is no one else but you standing in that mirror. It's going to be a long and lonely journey. There's a lot of responsibility with owning your own business. You're the only one to point a finger at. It's important to understand this going into it." Michele added, "Consistency is very important. Whatever you decide to do at whatever level, it has to be consistent."

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