



“Festive Greetings to Our Readers: Wishing You a Merry Christmas and a Joyful New Year”

This Thanksgiving, the Hispanic Restaurant Association (HRA) is overflowing with gratitude for the incredible year we've had in 2023. It's been a year filled with historic milestones and achievements that wouldn't have been possible without the unwavering support of our community, our dedicated team, and our amazing sponsors. As we gather around the table to celebrate, let's take a moment to reflect on our blessings and look forward to an even brighter 2024.

Together, we've reached a milestone by providing nourishment to tens of thousands of less fortunate individuals, bringing not just food to their tables but hope to their lives. Moreover, we've opened doors to new possibilities by assisting hundreds in finding employment opportunities that promise a brighter future. These achievements are not just ours but belong to every member of our vibrant community who has extended their support.

As we bid farewell to 2023, let's embrace the joy of Christmas and the freshness of the New Year with a heart filled with hope and hands ready to help. We encourage everyone to reflect on how we can collectively make 2024 a year of even greater impact and kindness towards others.

Looking ahead, the HRA is excited to announce the launch of our pioneering initiative - the Online “HRA Marketplace”

This digital portal will serve as a resource hub for the community, offering exposure and support to all our associates and members. It's a step towards creating a more connected and empowered culinary community.

Furthermore, we are thrilled to introduce the “HRA Professional Culinary Development and Leadership Academy” This hybrid program is designed to nurture culinary skills and leadership qualities, providing tools and opportunities for professional growth within our community.

These initiatives are more than just projects; they are our commitment to you and the culinary world. We believe that together, we can make a lasting impact, fostering growth, and spreading joy through the power of food and fellowship. Thank you for being a part of this incredible journey. Here's to a festive season filled with love, laughter, and good food, and to a New Year that brings even more opportunities to serve and grow together.

I wish you Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!

Hispanic Restaurant Association “Together, we are providing the ingredients for success and the building blocks for ensuring a better tomorrow”.

President & Co-founder

John Jaramillo



“Festive Flavours and Traditions Across Latin America”

By Chef Fernando Stovell

The significance of these celebrations is heightened by the integral participation of family and friends. In the context provided, I have chosen the following.

TAMALES

Los tamales (tamale) are Christmas fare in Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Mexico, and Nicaragua. What they all have in common is that they're corn-based. Costa Rican tamales are made with white corn *masa* (dough) and stuffed with vegetables, pork, and prunes. At Christmas, Guatemalan tamales are semi-sweet. *Tamales colorados* have *masa* (dough) that's tinted red because of the red sauce. In El Salvador, tamales are a side dish to eat with turkey and are made with hen meat, instead of chicken. Mexican tamales are diverse and are usually a side dish for other traditional Christmas foods. In Nicaragua, *nacatamales* are filled with vegetables, olives, rice, and meat.



CHRISTMAS DRINKS

There are many traditional Christmas beverages to enjoy during the holidays. In Guatemala, *el ponche de frutas* (fruit punch) is the most popular beverage of the season. Prepared with fruits, cinnamon, clove, sugar, and nutmeg, people enjoy it hot. It's customary to give after the *posadas* or on Christmas Eve. *El chocolate caliente* (hot cocoa) is another classic for the holidays. In Chile, there is a delicious beverage called *cola de mono* or *colemo* (monkey's tail) and while this is an adult beverage, many families prefer a kid-friendly version of it.



ASADO ARGENTINO

While Christmas takes place in winter in the northern hemisphere, the south hemisphere is in the middle of summer for *Navidad*. This means that the weather is perfect for outdoor activities, like an *asado argentino* (Argentinian barbecue). Argentinian families traditionally get together for an *asado* on *nochebuena* (Christmas Eve).



POSADAS

Las posadas are small processions celebrated in several Latin American countries. People recreate the birth of Jesus, beginning with Mary and Joseph asking for a place to sleep on the night of Christmas Eve. The people in the procession walk the images of the Holy Family through the neighbourhood while singing about their situation. Musicians accompany the procession with instruments. In Guatemala, people use turtle shells to follow the beat of the carol. There are specified houses where the images will find shelter. When the images get there, people go inside the house to sing and pray. The hosts give food and beverages to their guests.

Board wishes for a Merry Christmas and a prosperous 2024.



John



Selene



Drue



Fernando



Pablo



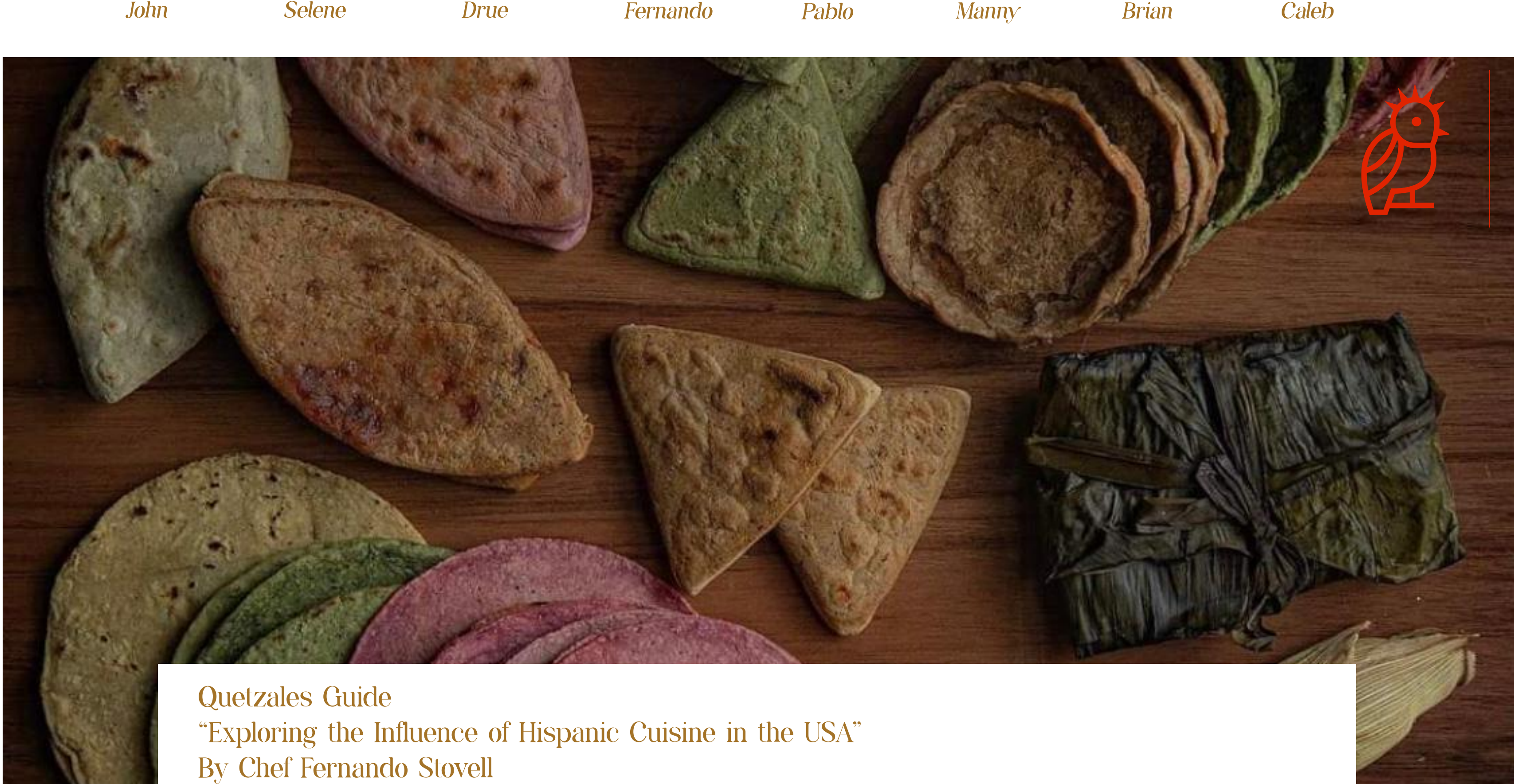
Manny



Brian



Caleb



Quetzales Guide
“Exploring the Influence of Hispanic Cuisine in the USA”
By Chef Fernando Stovell

QUETZALES GUIDE

As the Chairman of the Quetzales Guide, I am thrilled to share with you the vibrant and delicious journey we are embarking on to uncover the best chefs and restaurants shaping the landscape of Hispanic cuisine across the United States. Hispanic food has undeniably become a cornerstone of American culinary culture, captivating taste buds from coast to coast.

The surge of Hispanic cuisine, particularly Mexican, in the USA represents a culinary revolution of remarkable proportions. Traditional flavours, rich spices, and diverse ingredients have made their mark on American plates, transcending borders and creating a culinary fusion that is uniquely American. From the streets of Los Angeles to the bustling kitchens of New York City, the influence of Hispanic food is unmistakable.

At Quetzales Guide, we believe in celebrating the artistry and passion that chefs bring to their craft. Our mission is to uncover and recognise the culinary maestros who are elevating Mexican cuisine to new heights. We are on a quest to find the hidden gems and renowned establishments that embody the authenticity and innovation of Hispanic gastronomy.

We invite you, our valued readers, to be a part of this flavourful journey. Share your favourite Hispanic restaurants and chefs that have left a lasting impression on your palate. Whether it's a family-owned taqueria, asado, pupuseria or cevicheria, with time-honoured recipes or a modern eatery pushing the boundaries of traditional flavours, we want to hear from you.

How to Nominate:

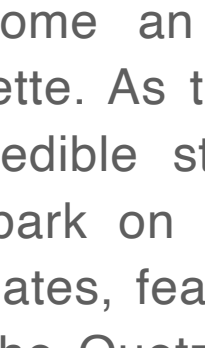
- Visit our website:
- Fill out the form with details about the restaurant or chef.
- Share your personal experiences and why you believe they deserve recognition.

Join the Conversation:
Follow us on social media and join the conversation using the website to social media.

Share your own culinary adventures, favourite dishes, and the chefs who have made a lasting impact on your love for Hispanic cuisine. Together, let's celebrate the diversity and richness of Hispanic flavours that have become an integral part of the American culinary palette. As the Chairman, I am excited to witness the incredible stories and talent that will unfold as we embark on this gastronomic journey. Stay tuned for updates, features, and, most importantly, the unveiling of the Quetzales Guide showcasing the best Mexican chefs and restaurants across the USA.

Let's savour the flavours and celebrate the cultural mosaic that is Mexican cuisine in America!

<https://quetzalesguide.com/>
Instagram: @quetzaesguide
@Hra_national @fernandostovell



Thank you.
Fernando Stovell
Director, Global ambassador for Hispanic Restaurant Association
& Chairman de Quetzales Guide

FOOD HERO CHEF JOSÉ ANDRÉS

In a heartfelt tribute to the Hispanic culinary virtuoso, Chef José Andrés, originally from Spain, who began a transformative journey in the US at 21, we celebrate his altruistic spirit and profound impact. Setting roots in Washington, DC, he found inspiration in volunteer work at DC Central Kitchen, igniting a passion for philanthropy. Chef José, recognising the power of food, co-founded World Central Kitchen (WCK) in 2010 with a mission rooted in humanitarian, climate, and community crises.

Embodying resilience, WCK, under José's leadership, invested in long-term solutions for food-related challenges in the Caribbean, Central America, Europe. From establishing a Clean Cooking program in Haiti to opening École des Chefs culinary school in Port-au-Prince, the organisation prioritised sustainable programming.

José's commitment deepened during crises like Hurricane Harvey in Houston and Hurricane María in Puerto Rico, Hurricane Otis in Acapulco, Invasion of Ukraine & Middle East. Learning from each experience, WCK expanded its definition of disasters, providing meals in response to natural disasters, refugee crises, pandemics, and invasions. Collaboration with communities and adaptability became core principles, exemplified by initiatives like the Food Producer Network and innovative meal formats.

Throughout the years, José and WCK teams consistently demonstrated urgency, adaptability, and a commitment to serving chef-prepared meals with dignity. Facing the escalating climate crisis and frequent disasters, WCK remains dedicated, inviting others to join their mission. As José aptly puts it, "everyone is a part of World Central Kitchen, they may just not know it yet!"

Chef José Andrés, WCK Founder & Chief Feeding Officer, encapsulates their ethos: "When you need medical service, you bring doctors and nurses. When you need the rebuilding of infrastructure, you bring in engineers and architects. And if you have to feed people, you need professional chefs."

Join us in commemorating and appreciating this chef who is actively contributing to the mission of World Central Kitchen and making a positive impact.

<https://wck.org/>
@chefjoseandres

Follow us on instagram: @quetzalesguide @Hra_national @fernandostovell



WORLD CENTRAL kitchen



"Frida Kahlo"

A Powerful Tale of Resilience, Creativity, and Unyielding Spirit

By Maricarmen Iturralde de Stovell

Arts / Photography

In the vibrant tapestry of art history, few names shine as brightly as Frida Kahlo. Her life was a canvas painted with pain and passion, love and heartbreak, and above all, unyielding determination. Frida's story is not just about an extraordinary artist; it's a testament to the power of the human spirit to overcome adversity and create beauty from the depths of suffering.

Born in 1907 in Coyoacán, a suburb of Mexico City, Frida's early years were marked by hardship. At the age of six, she contracted polio, which left her with a limp and a lifetime of physical challenges. Then, at the age of 18, a devastating bus accident shattered her body, leaving her in excruciating pain for the rest of her life. Despite these setbacks, Frida's indomitable spirit burned brightly.

It was during her long and painful recovery that Frida turned to painting. Her art became her solace, her escape from the harsh realities of her existence. Through her unique and introspective self-portraits, she bared her soul to the world, depicting her physical and emotional pain with raw honesty. Her paintings were not just art; they were a mirror reflecting the depths of her inner turmoil and the strength of her character.

Frida's art was deeply rooted in her Mexican heritage. She embraced the vibrant colours, intricate patterns, and symbolism of Mexican folk culture, infusing her work with a sense of identity and pride. She was a pioneer of the Mexicanidad movement, which celebrated indigenous Mexican culture and traditions, challenging the prevailing Eurocentric art norms of her time.

Beyond her artistic brilliance, Frida Kahlo was a trailblazer for women's rights and gender equality. She defied societal norms, wearing traditional Mexican clothing and proudly displaying her unibrow and facial hair, challenging conventional standards of beauty. Through her art and her life, she championed the cause of self-acceptance and authenticity, inspiring generations of women to embrace their true selves.

Frida's tumultuous relationship with renowned muralist Diego Rivera added another layer of complexity to her life. Their passionate love affair, marred by infidelities and pain, was a source of inspiration and heartache. Yet, even in the face of betrayal and heartbreak, Frida's art remained a source of strength. She channeled her emotions into her paintings, transforming her pain into powerful masterpieces that continue to captivate audiences around the world.

Frida Kahlo's legacy goes far beyond the canvas. Her life and work continue to inspire artists, feminists, and activists worldwide. Her story is a reminder that creativity can flourish in the face of adversity, that resilience can triumph over suffering, and that authenticity is a powerful force for change.

As we celebrate the life and art of Frida Kahlo, let us draw strength from her unyielding spirit. Let us be inspired to embrace our true selves, to overcome obstacles with grace and courage, and to create beauty in the face of pain. In the words of Frida herself, "I paint flowers so they will not die." May we, too, find the strength to bloom amidst the challenges of life, just like the immortal flowers in Frida's paintings.

The Hispanic Restaurant Association is launching a series of watercolour artworks crafted by skilled Hispanic artists, aiming to promote and commemorate Hispanic artistry. Maricarmen Iturralde de Stovell, the spouse of Chef Stovell, will contribute a monthly feature in our newsletter, highlighting our vibrant Hispanic heritage and showcasing exceptional Hispanic artists from around the world. If you require commissioned artwork for your home or restaurant, please don't hesitate to reach out to us for information or inquiries. You can contact us at +1 303-351-1598 or visit our website at <https://hispanicrestaurantassociation.org/>



"Decoding Dining: The Impact of Modern Reservation Systems"

By Drue Jaramillo

Chief Technology Officer (CTO)

Dining out has evolved from a mere act of consumption to an orchestrated experience, one that begins not at the restaurant's door, but on our screens. Central to this metamorphosis are modern reservation systems. As we immerse ourselves in the digital domain of dining, let's untangle the intricacies of these systems and their multifaceted impact.

Reservation systems have become more than just a tool for booking tables; they're an interface that stitches together the diner's anticipation and the restaurant's preparations. From the restaurant's financial perspective, these systems can be godsent. No more are eateries at the whims of walk-ins or no-shows; with reservations, there's a clearer projection of footfall. This predictability translates to better staff scheduling, optimized inventory management, and reduced wastage, all of which contribute to a healthier bottom line.

But financial systems, even when they are as integrated as reservation platforms, come at a price. Subscription costs, transaction fees, or the expense of integrating these platforms into existing systems can strain a restaurant's budget, especially smaller establishments.

Yet, it's hard to overlook the convenience. Both for the eager diner and the bustling restaurant, the ease of use is palpable. A few taps on a phone or clicks on a computer, and voilà, a table is booked. Restaurants, on the other hand, receive these bookings in a streamlined manner, reducing the overheads of manual tracking or potential overbookings.

However, this convenience might also come with a shade of impersonality. The traditional call to book a table often came with a friendly chat, perhaps a recommendation or two, or even a special gesture for a regular. With automated bookings, some of that human touch risks getting lost in the digital abyss.

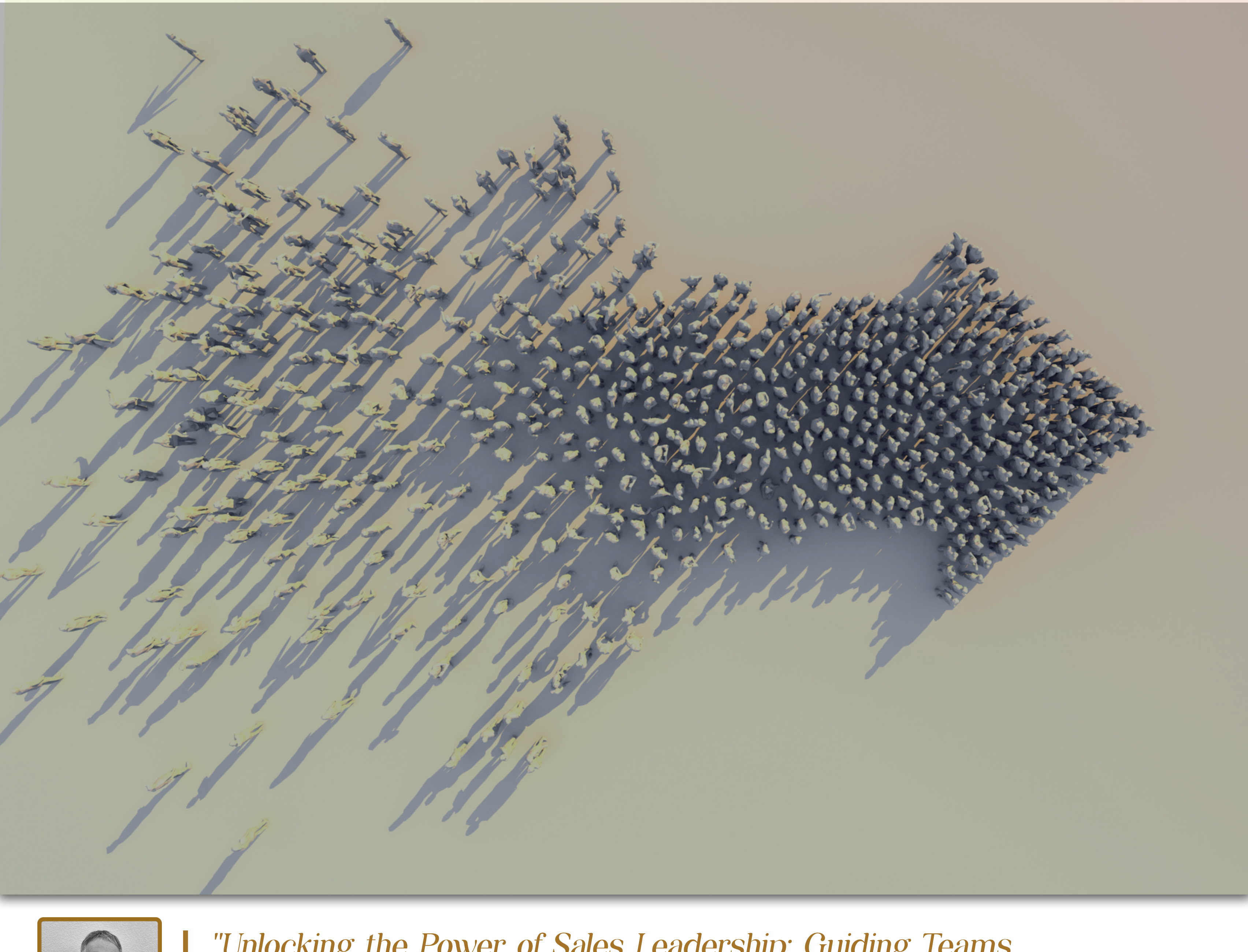
The broader canvas of the dining experience also witnesses the strokes of reservation systems. For customers, the assurance of a booked table can enhance the dining experience. There's a psychological comfort in knowing that a space awaits, especially during peak hours or special occasions. For restaurants, this translates to a paced service where the kitchen isn't suddenly overwhelmed with orders, and the front-of-house staff can offer a more personalized service.

On the flip side, the rigidity of reservations can sometimes impact spontaneity. An unexpected delay, a change in plans, or even the mood of the moment can clash with the structured nature of reservations, leading to cancellation fees for customers or unoccupied tables for restaurants.

Perhaps the silent, yet potent, aspect of modern reservation systems is the data they amass. Each booking, modification, cancellation, or review becomes a data point. When harnessed correctly, this data offers deep business intelligence. Restaurants can glean insights into customer preferences, peak demand times, or even predict future trends. It's a veritable treasure trove for strategic planning.

Yet, the challenges of data privacy, ethical use, and potential breaches are ever-present. While these systems come fortified with security measures, the evolving nature of cyber threats makes data handling a responsibility that restaurants cannot take lightly.

In conclusion, as modern reservation systems weave themselves into the fabric of the dining industry, their impacts reverberate across multiple dimensions. They symbolize the dance between technology and tradition, efficiency and experience. As diners and restaurateurs pirouette in this evolving arena, the challenge lies in harmonizing the two, crafting experiences that resonate both digitally and personally.



"Unlocking the Power of Sales Leadership: Guiding Teams, Fostering Impact, and Driving Success"

By: Brian Krueger
Regional Business Development

What makes sales leadership so important?

Contrary to popular belief, sales leadership isn't just about keeping salespeople in line. Rather, it's about leading an entire sales department in order to make a positive impact as a company. There is also a difference in leading a team and managing a team. Ultimately, the way your business makes an impact is through sales. The more sales you make in less time, the more people you can help and the more of an impact you can make.

What makes sales leadership so important?

Leading and **managing** might sound like interchangeable terms, but they're quite different. Essentially, a **leader** helps his team to see the big picture and know the "why". They empower their teams to make good decisions and move on. They inspire and help push you to get the best out of you.

A **manager**, on the other hand, works to assure the team meets their goals and objectives but many times micromanages every step. Not all managers fall into this category but they should all try to lead instead of managing.

With that said both leaders and managers do try to do all of the below.

- Develop mission-oriented processes and strategies.
- Bring out the best in team members.
- Stay focused on what's most important.

From my perspective, without effective sales leadership, a business will never make the impact of which it's capable. It will plug along but it could hum along.

Here are a few simple practices you can use today — and every day — to become a more effective sales leader. Keep in mind that becoming a better sales leader is a continuous process, not a destination. So, turn these into regular habits. With consistent application, you'll continue to evolve into the sales leader you, your team members and customers need.

1. Show gratitude.

How often do you take a step back and show gratitude for how far you've come? When it comes to being a sales leader, it's extremely easy to get caught up in day-to-day messes and forget to be grateful for everything that's happened so far. Regularly practicing gratitude by reflecting on your experiences is the first step to becoming a better sales leader.

I believe that when you're grateful, you start to radiate the kind of positive energy that lifts up everyone around you. Suddenly, you and all the people around you, including your team members, start to function smoother than ever before. Find a way to practice gratitude every day.

2. Stay focused.

Do you ever open your computer in the morning intending to accomplish X, Y and Z, but then you suddenly start to get pulled in a thousand other directions? Then, at the end of the day, you realize that all you did was put out fires instead of getting the hard work done? If so, you're not alone. With emails to answer and a phone ringing all day, it's extremely easy to lose focus on what's most important. Not only that but also when you as the leader lose focus, you're basically giving permission to your team members to lose focus, too. In order to stay focused and get your most important tasks done, try time blocking. Each night, strictly section off your time for the next day to focus on specific tasks. For example, you might cold call your new leads from 8 to 9 a.m., and then you might immediately switch to reviewing a new sales pitch from 9 to 9:30 a.m. Thanks to time blocking, you and everyone around you can have a better focus and accomplish more in less time. You have to set aside the time or it will be gone.

A great example of building this habit is a book I strongly recommend by James Clear **Atomic Habits**. If you want to grow and challenge yourself, I would start with this book and put the principles into action in your life and career

The Book in Three Sentences

- An atomic habit is a regular practice or routine that is not only small and easy to do but is also the source of incredible power; a component of the system of compound growth.
- Bad habits repeat themselves again and again not because you don't want to change, but because you have the wrong system for change.
- Changes that seem small and unimportant at first will compound into remarkable results if you're willing to stick with them for years.

The Five Big Ideas

- Habits are the compound interest of self-improvement.
- If you want better results, then forget about setting goals. Focus on your system instead
- The most effective way to change your habits is to focus not on what you want to achieve, but on who you wish to become.
- The Four Laws of Behavior Change are a simple set of rules we can use to build better habits. They are (1) make it obvious, (2) make it attractive, (3) make it easy, and (4) make it satisfying.
- Environment is the invisible hand that shapes human behavior.

3.-Practice effective communication.

In my experience, 99% of sales problems are people problems. Additionally, I find that 99% of sales problems can be solved with effective communication. Therefore, practice effective communication with your team members and customers. Some of the best ways to do this include:

- Hosting a regular Monday meeting to kick off the week.
- Giving team members the floor to talk about their experiences.
- Regularly connecting with customers to assess how they're doing.

Often, you can prevent many sales-related fires altogether simply by practicing effective communication.

4.-Listen to understand instead of simply responding.

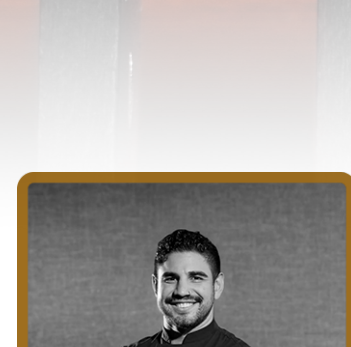
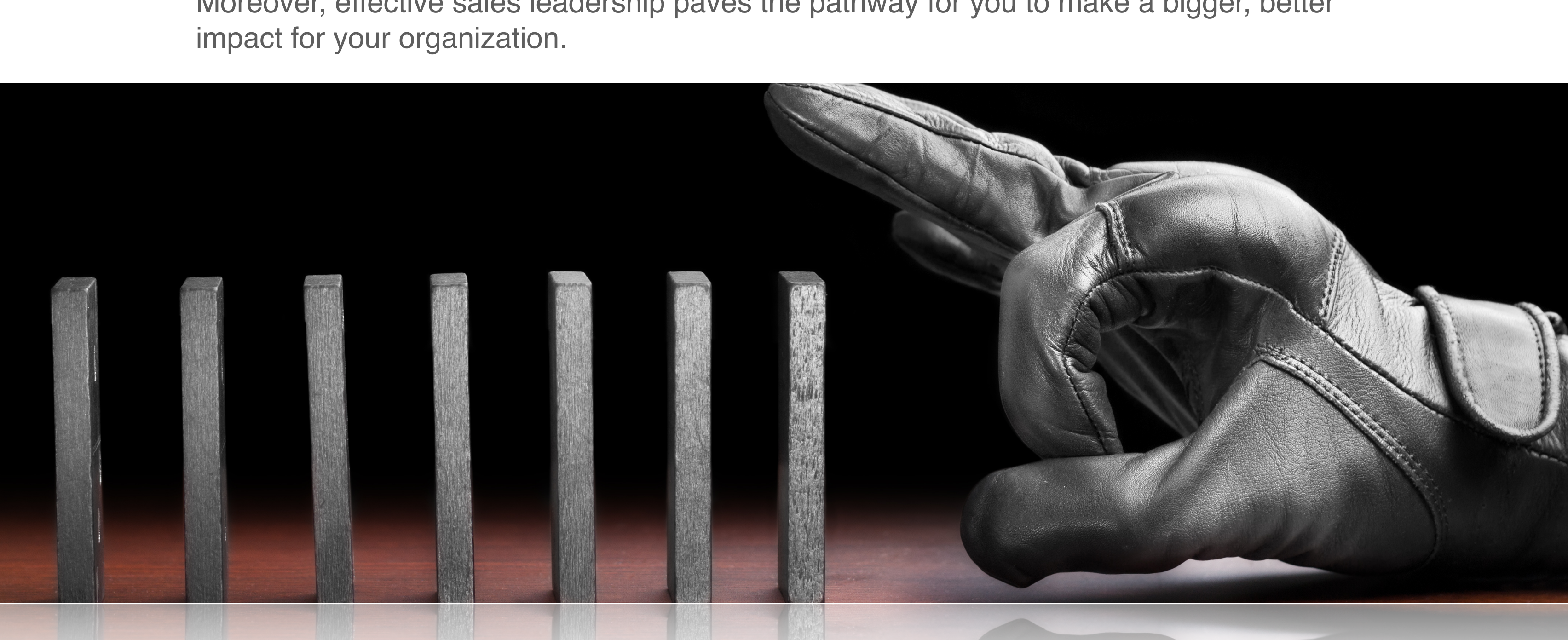
- As a sales leader, you've probably had some skin in the sales game for a while now. While experience has its benefits, one of the downsides to having experience is an unconscious bias toward your own opinions.
- With a strong unconscious bias, it's challenging to open yourself up to what team members and customers have to say. As a result, you might start to listen to simply respond to their opinion versus listening to understand and extract value from it.
- Therefore, before shooting down an opinion that you initially don't agree with, step back and ask yourself if your unconscious bias is kicking in. As reinforcement, ask a trusted team member to give you feedback on your listening skills.

5.-Delegate and lead.

An important part of being an effective leader is knowing how to delegate. More specifically, it's important that you know how to delegate different parts of the sales process to team members so you can focus on big-picture sales items, such as fostering customer relationships and closing the biggest deals.

If you have a difficult giving up control, first know that you're not alone. Second, learn to let go of control by setting clear expectations with team members and then allowing them to take the ball and run. With clear communication about what is expected, delegating becomes much easier.

While it'll challenge you at first, learn to delegate so that you can focus on a sales leader's primary job: leading. Effective leadership is important at any point in business, but I believe it's most important when it comes to sales. When you lead your sales team in the right direction, you can make more sales in less time in order to help people more effectively. Moreover, effective sales leadership paves the pathway for you to make a bigger, better impact for your organization.



"No-Show Reservations in Restaurants and Their Economic Impact"

By: Chef Manny Barella
President - Hispanic Chefs Association

As the restaurant industry is still recovering from the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic, it faces a unique and persistent challenge: no-show reservations. These elusive diners who fail to honor their bookings are not just causing inconvenience; they are significantly affecting the economic health of restaurants. In this article, we will delve into the phenomenon of post-pandemic no-show reservations in restaurants and explore their profound economic implications.

Post-Pandemic Landscape

The COVID-19 pandemic has reshaped the post-pandemic landscape, leaving it in a state of flux as it seeks to recover. Here are some key factors defining the post-pandemic industry:

1. Variable Demand: Restaurants now grapple with unpredictable fluctuations in customer demand. Dining experiences suffer sudden rushes and unusually quiet periods. Reservations have become vital tools for managing these ebbs and flows.
2. Supply Chain Disruptions: Supply chain disruptions stemming from the pandemic continue to affect the restaurant industry. Inconsistent ingredient availability and fluctuating prices add to the challenges of running a restaurant efficiently.
3. Staffing Challenges: Restaurants face ongoing staffing challenges, with many employees leaving the industry during the pandemic. Maintaining the right number of staff for each service is essential but complicated when no-show reservations disrupt the staffing plan.

Economic Consequences of No-Show Reservations:

The economic ramifications of no-show reservations in the post-pandemic era are profound:

1. Revenue Loss: Restaurants are still on the path to financial recovery after the severe setbacks caused by the pandemic. Every unoccupied table represents lost revenue, making it difficult for restaurants to regain their financial stability.
2. Labor Costs: Balancing staff levels is challenging due to the variable demand. No-show reservations can lead to overstaffing during busy periods and potentially understaffing when unexpected rushes occur.
3. Food Waste: Restaurants meticulously plan their menus and ingredient orders based on reservations. When diners fail to show up, it can result in food waste, as ingredients are prepared but remain unsold. This not only leads to financial losses but also environmental concerns.
4. Customer Experience: No-show reservations negatively impact the customer experience. When other guests are turned away due to reservations that go unfulfilled, it can lead to dissatisfaction and harm a restaurant's reputation.
5. Debt Accumulation: Many restaurants incurred debt to survive the pandemic. No-show reservations exacerbate financial instability, making it challenging to repay loans and manage ongoing operational expenses.

Solutions for Post-Pandemic No-Show Reservations

Addressing the issue of no-show reservations in the post-pandemic era is vital for the economic recovery of restaurants. Here are some strategies that can help:

1. Deposit and Prepayment Systems: Implementing deposit and prepayment systems, especially for larger parties or during peak hours, can encourage commitment from diners and reduce the likelihood of no-shows.
2. Digital Reservation Management: Leveraging digital tools for reservation management allows for automated reminders to be sent to guests before their reservation, reducing last-minute cancellations or no-shows.
3. Variable Pricing: Restaurants can explore dynamic pricing strategies to adjust prices based on demand. This encourages customers to be more considerate when making reservations during high-demand times.
4. Waitlist Management: Creating an efficient waitlist system can help fill vacant seats resulting from no-shows. By ensuring that waitlisted customers

The post-pandemic era presents a unique set of challenges for the restaurant industry, with no-show reservations emerging as a significant economic threat. These reservations disrupt revenue, staffing, and resources, with far-reaching consequences for the industry's recovery.

By implementing strategies such as deposit systems, digital reminders, dynamic pricing, reputation management, and efficient waitlist management, restaurants can mitigate the no-show problem and safeguard their financial stability. As restaurants play a vital role in our communities and economies, addressing this issue is not just essential for their survival but also for the broader post-pandemic recovery.



"The Nutty Tradition: Chestnuts - A Global Christmas Delicacy"

By Fernando Stovell

Director, Global ambassador for Hispanic Restaurant Association & Chairman, Founder Quetzales Guide

'Tis the season of warmth, joy, and delightful aromas wafting from kitchens around the world. Amidst the array of treasures adorning our holiday tables, one ingredient stands out for its enduring allure and worldwide importance: chestnuts. As a renowned chef, I invite you to embark on a culinary expedition exploring into the intriguing history and customs surrounding this beloved Christmas delight.

Chestnuts, the edible nuts of the chestnut tree, have been a cherished culinary resource for centuries. Originating in Asia Minor and Southern Europe, these nuts found their way into diverse cuisines and traditions worldwide. The majestic presence of the chestnut tree and its abundant harvest granted upon it the title of the "bread tree" in many cultures, underscoring its vital role in providing sustenance.

In Europe, especially in England, Germany, Poland, Italy, France, and Spain, roasted chestnuts reign as a quintessential Christmas delight. The enchanting aroma of roasting chestnuts fills the air at festive markets, captivating both locals and tourists alike. The delightful crackle as they split open, revealing their tender flesh, heralds the arrival of the holiday season in a sensory symphony, reminiscent of "Chestnut Overture: A Holiday Symphony" composed by Andy Williams.

In the United Kingdom, roasted chestnuts are a familiar sight during the winter months. Street vendors offer these warm, toasty treats in bustling cities, creating an atmosphere of coziness and indulgence. The tradition of roasting chestnuts over an open fire harks back to Victorian times, symbolising the arrival of Christmas and the spirit of togetherness. Furthermore, in the UK, chestnuts find their way into the heart of Christmas desserts: the Christmas pudding. This iconic dessert, often served with a flaming brandy butter sauce, is rich with dried fruits, spices, and, of course, chestnuts. Families gather around as this decadent pudding is ceremoniously brought to the table, its flame flickering brightly, embodying the essence of Christmas traditions in the UK.

In Asian nations like China, Japan, and South Korea, chestnuts are skilfully transformed into exquisite sweet treats. Chestnut paste, crafted by blending cooked chestnuts and sweetening the mixture, serves as a pivotal ingredient in various Asian desserts. From chestnut cakes to dumplings, these delicacies honour the nut's distinctive flavour, adding an opulent touch to celebratory occasions.

Across the Atlantic, chestnuts find their way into traditional American fare. Chestnut stuffing, boasting earthy and nutty undertones, is a favoured accompaniment to Thanksgiving and Christmas feasts. The velvety texture of chestnuts infuses pies and desserts with a rich complexity, captivating palates and hearts alike.

In Mexico, the tradition of incorporating chestnuts into festive cuisine is celebrated through a delightful dish: chestnut tamales. During the holiday season, families come together to prepare these unique tamales, blending the nutty flavour of chestnuts with masa (corn dough), spices, and sometimes chocolate. These tamales, wrapped in corn husks, are steamed to perfection, creating a harmonious blend of textures and tastes. The aroma of these tamales fills Mexican homes, adding a touch of warmth and tradition to Christmas festivities. Don't hesitate to experiment with a chestnut mole by incorporating chestnuts instead of the usual and traditional recipe with nuts.

Beyond their culinary applications, chestnuts carry profound symbolic meaning in diverse cultures. Some regions believe they usher in good luck and prosperity, making them integral to New Year's festivities. Chestnut trees symbolise longevity and resilience, embodying the spirit of endurance and growth in the face of challenges.

From the bustling markets of Mexico, where the aroma of chestnut tamales mingles with the festive air, to the cozy corners of British homes, where roasted chestnuts and Christmas pudding create moments of joy, the chestnut tradition spans continents, connecting us through shared culinary experiences. As we celebrate the holiday season, let's embrace these diverse traditions, appreciating the cultural richness and flavours that make our world so beautifully interconnected.

May the nutty charm of chestnuts continue to weave its magic, adding warmth and tradition to our Christmas celebrations, whether in the heart of Mexico, the UK, or anywhere else in the world. Here's to a festive season filled with the delectable delights of chestnuts and the spirit of unity that transcends borders. Cheers to a joyous and flavourful holiday!

At Hispanic Restaurant Association we are embarking on a series of seminars over the upcoming couple of months. We extend our gratitude to Remy Martin and Where Food Comes From, Door Dash, Colorado Beef Council, for their invaluable support. Chef Stovell will be the featured speaker in these seminars, and we encourage you to stay tuned, as updates will be posted across our social media platforms and on our official website. Additionally, the Hispanic Restaurant Association has established a [recruitment agency](#), and through the expertise of Mr Jaramillo, Chef Pablo Aya and Chef Stovell, a consultancy service is available. Should you require any guidance, please do not hesitate to reach out to us

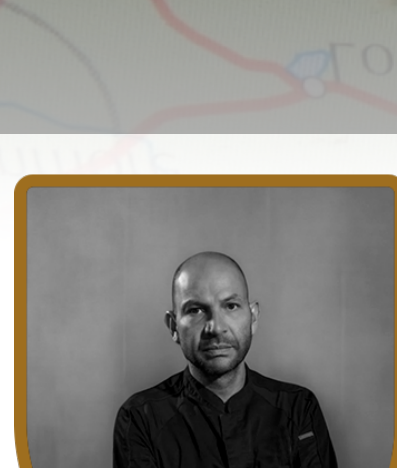


"The Resilient Return of the Andean Guardians: The Potatoes' Journey Through Time and Flavor"

By Chef Pablo Aya

Senior Leadership - Hispanic Chefs Association - Executive Chef - Hispanic Restaurant Association Vice Chairman - Quetzales Guide

As a potato born in the fertile soils of the Andes, my journey transcended continents, reshaping nations and societies. From South America to Ireland, I became a vital sustenance for communities, my humble existence woven into the fabric of human history. Yet, my story intertwines with a narrative of human migration, resilience, and the pursuit of a better life. In the late 16th century, European explorers carried me from my South American home to the verdant fields of Ireland. Swiftly embraced by the Irish soil, I flourished, becoming more than just a crop—I became a lifeline. My adaptability and high yield made me indispensable, supporting a growing population. However, tragedy struck in the mid-19th century with the onset of the potato blight, leading to the Great Famine. From 1845 to 1852, this devastating period witnessed widespread crop failures, hunger, and the loss of over a million lives. In the wake of this catastrophe, a mass exodus began. Seeking refuge, over 4 million Irish immigrants departed their homeland. The 19th century witnessed waves of migration, notably peaking between 1845 and the early 20th century. America beckoned as a land of promise and opportunity, drawing in millions seeking respite from hardship. The years between the late 1840s and early 20th century mark the significant influx of Irish immigrants into the United States. Their arrival contributed immeasurably to the nation's cultural mosaic, workforce, and spirit, leaving an enduring impact on American society. As a humble potato, my role in this historical tapestry highlights the profound impact of migration on societies. The story of Irish immigration to America, intertwined with hardship and aspirations, echoes across generations. It speaks of resilience, courage, and dreams that drive individuals to seek new horizons. Understanding and acknowledging such historical migrations fosters empathy, appreciation, and a deeper awareness of the diverse threads that weave the fabric of our shared human experience.





CHEESE EMPANADAS

By Chef Eva Barrios

@evabc

Dec '23

INGREDIENTS

- 2 CUPS CARINA PAN (PRECOOKED CORN FLOUR)
- 2.5 CUPS WARM WATER
- 1 TSP GRANULATED SUGAR
- 12 / 14 OZ - 396G SEMI HARD WHITE CHEESE, COTIJA, GOUDA, CHEDDAR
- OIL FOR DEEP FRYING
- PAPER TOWELS
- 2 OZ - 59MLS WATER ON A WIDE SMALL CONTAINER FOR FINGER FOR HOLDING PASTA

EMPANADAS - Empanadas, a popular Venezuelan dish, are enjoyed throughout the day as a snack or a full meal. They offer a versatile filling, allowing you to customize them with your favorite ingredients.

METHOD

In a medium sized bowl, pour the water. Add salt and sugar. Add the corn flour slowly until fully incorporated to prevent lumps. Knead for 2 minutes. Let it rest for 3 minutes. Make 4-ounce balls until all the dough has been shaped into balls. On a cutting board. Place a piece of plastic wrap (about 12x12). Place one ball on the plastic wrap. Dip your fingers in water and press down carefully until they are about ½ cm thick. Alternatively, a tortilla press can be used carefully to press down the dough. Plastic wrap is also required for this process. Add about ¼ of a cup of cheese on the flat dough. Grab one edge of the plastic and dough and fold it over to create a half-circle or half -moon. Press the edges gently to prevent cheese from oozing out while frying. Repeat the process for every ball of dough. In a medium deep saucepan. Heat oil at 350F. When the oil has reached the temperature, place one or two empanadas at a time. Deep fry empanadas until golden brown for about 5 to 7 minutes. Gently remove the empanada from the hot oil using a medium-sized strainer spoon. Transfer it to a plate with paper towels to drain the excess oil. Transfer empanadas to a serving plate. Serve with your favorite dipping sauce.

Why did I select this recipe for the 2023 Hispanic Restaurant Top Chef Competition? As a youngster, my mother used to prepare empanadas for my school lunches, creating cherished memories. Throughout my life, I've relished her cooking, finding comfort in its simplicity and delightful flavors. Every time I prepare empanadas for my son, it warms our hearts. The dish transports me back to my childhood, evoking some of the most precious moments I shared with him. Empanadas, whether served for breakfast, lunch, or dinner, always make us feel like carefree kids again.

