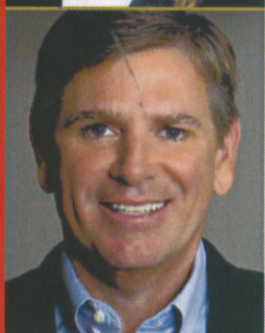




OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE FLORIDA RESTAURANT & LODGING ASSOCIATION

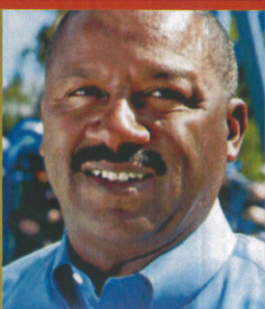
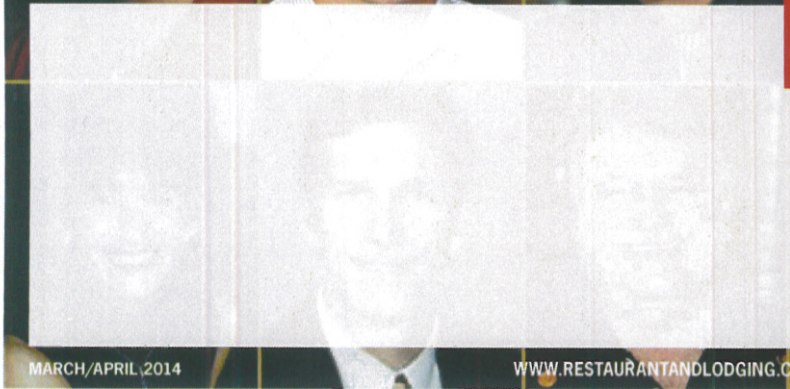


# FLORIDA RESTAURANT & LODGING

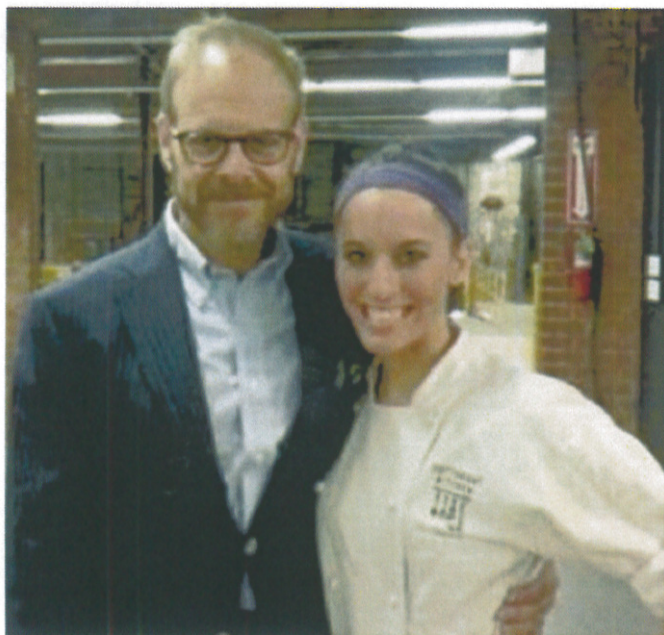


## FACES OF HOSPITALITY

...and What They Say About the Economy, Jobs, Tourism  
and What's Next for Florida's Hotels, Motels and Attractions







## FMI's Nickell Places 2nd on Cutthroat

**A**shley Nickell, Chef de Cuisine of FMI Restaurant Group recently participated in *Cutthroat Kitchen*, a Food Network Television Show. During the Show, Ashley competed against several Chefs and ended up coming in second place! Congratulations!!!

## Melting Pot Raises \$766K for St. Jude

The Melting Pot Restaurants, Inc., raised \$766,359 for St. Jude Research Hospital in their 2014 Thanks and Giving Campaign. These monies will be donated to the Hospital. Since 2003, The Melting Pot has donated more than \$8 million dollars to St. Jude. Bravo!

## Florida Restaurants Expected to Post Growth Despite Sustained Challenges

The restaurant industry in Florida is expected to post 4.5% sales growth in 2014 to reach \$34,695,955, according to the National Restaurant Association's (NRA) 2014 Restaurant Industry Forecast. Florida restaurants will employ 899,000 this year, and create an additional 134,600 jobs in the next decade.

"We take great pride in Florida's restaurant industry, which under Governor Rick Scott's leadership and pro-business initiatives is continuing to expand its workforce and in turn, spark economic growth in our state," said Carol Dover, President and CEO of the Florida Restaurant and Lodging Association.

"This industry forecast indicates that the Sunshine State's foodservice industry is among the top in the nation, creating more employment opportunities for Florida families and multiplying choices for consumers across the state."

While the restaurant industry is expected to grow in 2014, operators will continue to face a range of challenges. The top challenges cited by restaurateurs

vary slightly by industry segment, and include food costs, labor costs, and the economy.

For more information about the NRA's 2014 Restaurant Industry Forecast, visit [www.restaurant.org/forecast](http://www.restaurant.org/forecast).

## FRLA Members Donate Reusable Inventory to Florida Corrections

*The Florida Restaurant and Lodging Association Develops Public-Private Partnership with Florida Dept of Corrections*

The Florida Restaurant and Lodging Association (FRLA) is proud to announce a new partnership with the Florida Department of Corrections (DOC).

The collaboration is designed to help save taxpayer dollars through the donations of reusable inventory, such as bed sheets, pillowcases and washcloths to prisons across the state.

"FRLA members are stepping up to the plate by voluntarily contributing the necessary resources that allow our state prisons to function properly," said Carol Dover, President and CEO of FRLA. "We believe by providing these materials, it will not only save taxpayer dollars, it will allow the DOC to allocate those dollars toward public safety initiatives."

"The Department values its partnership with the FRLA and appreciates the generosity of its members," said DOC Secretary Crews. "The donations of these items help us stay focused on cost avoidance initiatives and efficiencies that result in significant savings to Florida

*Dickens & Hawthorne*

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# FACES OF HOSPITALITY

This edition of the Florida Restaurant and Lodging Magazine features our 2014 FRLA Faces of Hospitality. They are Florida's leaders that represent the most dynamic hospitality industry in the country and are the people to watch this year. We have also included lawmakers that are influential decision-makers for our industry's business climate.

To complement this feature, we asked many of these leaders several questions about FRLA, in particular: what is most valuable about membership in FRLA, what should hospitality leadership employ to reach the Governor's goal of 100 million visitors to Florida, and what is the "state" of the industry. We have provided to readers some of their thoughts.

...and What They Say About the Economy, Jobs, Tourism and What's Next for Florida's Hotels, Motels and Attractions

## Darryll Adams

Hotel Manager,  
The Ritz-Carlton,  
Amelia Island

*"It's just a wonderful group with so many resources and so many benefits, and it's just a great group of people to be a part of."*



## Roger Amidon

General Manager,  
Palm Beach  
Marriott Singer  
Island Beach  
Resort and Spa

*"The network of available resources that is just a phone call or click through the website. In addition, being a member of an association such as FRLA and being able to work through challenges that may impact our business such as protecting uses of bed tax revenues."*



## Pam Avery

General Manager,  
Quorum Hotels &  
Resorts, Tampa

*"I think the state of Florida's hospitality is very good and the future looks bright. Our hotel has remained very busy with constant business travelers but we are also seeing more vacationers that are of every age and income level. Florida has become a hip place to visit with interesting restaurants, hotels and attractions."*



## Bruce Craul

Chief Operating  
Officer, Legendary,  
Inc.

*"Our business is strong and can continue to grow. There are only two kinds of people out there: those that have visited Florida and can't wait to come back and those that have not been here yet and are trying to figure out how to get here. With a united voice and a united passion about where we live, we will continue to grow way beyond our expectations."*



## Zach Curry

General Manager,  
Tampa  
Airport Marriott

*"As a member of the FRLA I am able to connect and build relationships at the local and state level. Our combined voices join together to ensure the tourism industry remains at the front of the line when legislation is being considered. Being a member and an active participant gets you a seat at the table and your voice heard."*



## Dan Enea

President and  
CEO, Sunshine  
Restaurant  
Partners

*"Our membership in the FRLA allows us to stay current on the issues which are most likely to affect our business. Which, in turn, gives us time to prepare for possible changes to our business model, and in most cases enough lead time to create strategies to mitigate possible negative impact to our business."*





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## Maryann Ferenc

**Owner, Mise en Place, Inc.**

*"Connection – it is important to stay connected to others and other aspects of our industry. The FRLA provides a smart and insightful way to stay connected."*



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## Don Fox

**CEO, Firehouse of America, LLC**

*"Florida's restaurant and lodging industries are as diverse and robust as any state in the nation. It is our great operator community that has made this so, and as a member of the FRLA, you have access to people who have built incredibly successful businesses. The learning you can achieve from networking with them is priceless. With every day that passes, you are either learning and improving, or remaining stagnant and declining. Being an active member of the FRLA helps ensure the former, and avoids the latter."*



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## Don Gaetz

**President, The Florida Senate**

*"So much of Florida's economy is based on tourism, and the success of our tourism industry is inextricably linked to the skill of those who operate and manage our vibrant, world-class hospitality industry. In Tallahassee, our goal is to maintain a stable, pro-growth, low tax and limited-regulation business climate that minimizes government interference and provides private-*



*sector job creators the confidence to start, build, and grow the businesses that allow Florida's hospitality industry to thrive in a global economy."*

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## Erica Gordon

**Director of Government Affairs, Hilton Worldwide**

*"Governor Rick Scott has set a benchmark of attracting 100 million visitors to Florida in 2014, and with FRLA's leadership we can help achieve that goal. Facilitating travel, lowering taxes, and promoting all that the Sunshine State has to offer will create thousands of new jobs and stimulate Florida's economy."*



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## Julie Hilton

**Vice President, Holiday Inn Resort Paradise Found, Panama City Beach**

*"The stellar lobbying team of the FRLA keeps our industry in good stead with government and its members aware of political issues affecting our businesses - these are invaluable benefits of FRLA membership. Also, the industry educational opportunities and relationships among members are important benefits of being an FRLA member."*



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## John Horne

**President, Anna Maria Oyster Bar, Anna Maria Island**

*"Not only does the FRLA offer extensive education and training for every facet of the food and service industry, but it also serves as a platform where restaurateurs and*



*hoteliers have a voice, working hand in hand with Florida politicians, to protect the hospitality industry."*

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## Mark Johnston

**President and Chief Concept Officer, Front Burner Brands and President Burger 21**

*"I appreciate that FRLA supports and promotes Florida restaurateurs while also keeping us informed of issues facing the restaurant industry in Florida. FRLA also provides a great forum to network and exchange ideas with others in the industry."*



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## Peter Kacheris

**Managing Director, Waldorf Astoria Orlando**

*"I consider my membership to FRLA valuable for many reasons but the primary reason is FRLA's ability to lobby effectively on behalf of hospitality issues in the State of Florida."*



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## Joe Kadow

**Senior Vice President, OSI Restaurant Partners, Inc.**

*"I find the most value in FRLA's government relations work and advocacy for our industry – one of the most effective state restaurant associations in the nation. As the impact of government on our business continues to grow, FRLA's role becomes more important than ever."*





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## CEO *Profile*

FLORIDA RESTAURANT & LODGING ASSOCIATION



### Mike Lester, CFE President, The Melting Pot Restaurants, Inc.

*As president of The Melting Pot Restaurants, Inc., Mike Lester is responsible for the overall operations of The Melting Pot Restaurants, Inc. franchise system with nearly 140 restaurants in North America from the company's Restaurant Support Center in Tampa, Fla. In addition to his current role with The Melting Pot, Lester also helps to oversee the restaurant management company Front Burner Brands that supports affiliated concepts including The Melting Pot, Burger 21, GrillSmith and other new franchise concepts in development.*

*Lester joined The Melting Pot Restaurants, Inc., in July 2006 as vice president of restaurant operations. He was promoted to senior vice president of operations in June 2009 and to his current position in June 2011. Previously, Lester developed and operated 15 Outback Steakhouse locations as a joint venture partner from August 1993 to July 2006.*

*Lester studied microbiology at the Univ. of Kentucky. He received his Certified Franchise Executive (CFE) certification from the International Franchise Association (IFA) Institute of Certified Franchise Executives. Lester and his wife, Susan, have two children.*



Mike Lester

#### How did you get started in hospitality?

Like so many in the hospitality business, I started as a young teenager working a variety of hourly positions in restaurants. I started as a dishwasher and will never forget my first promotion to busboy. By the time I was old enough to start serving in a full-service restaurant, I had worked positions in all other areas of the restaurant. I always enjoyed the interaction with our customers so I was most drawn to positions that had that interaction like a server and then eventually a bartender. Toward the end of college, I had the horrible revelation that I didn't actually want to do what I had been going to school for, microbiology. It was then that my general manager, Bruce Drake, suggested I pursue a restaurant management position. He reasoned that he felt like I had at least some ability to do a good job and thought I would enjoy it.

That was literally the first time the thought of a career in the hospitality industry had entered my head. He was right, I did enjoy it so I decided to give it a try and at the very least it would give me some time to figure out what else may be out there for me. That was 24 years ago and that was the second best decision I ever made; the best, of course, was the decision to ask my wife to marry me.

#### Early in your career what was the most valuable lesson you learned?

I was a bartender in a restaurant while in college and by all accounts I did a really good job in many areas of my position. Many, but not all. I was quick, good with the customers and made the drinks right. However, I was not as good in other areas. I remember my manager sitting me down and telling me he expected better from me. Yes, he appreciated the things I did well but he wouldn't accept



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the things that I didn't do well. He told me I should not use my strengths as a crutch to excuse my shortcomings. I remember taking this talk very seriously and had to admit he was right. I immediately turned things around. I believe his only accepting the best from me helped me to be a better team member and ultimately opened the doors to my first position in management.

**Do you have any mentors who were instrumental in helping you achieve your goals, and if so please share any thoughts you have about your mentor that might be of interest to FR&L readers?**

You could say my management style is a melting pot of every leader I have worked with throughout my career. I learned something from just about everyone but there are two people who I have taken a lot away from as leaders. The first is Steve Overholt, (former president and owner of Cheeseburger in Paradise). He took time to help me become a good restaurant operator while helping me also become an effective leader. The other person is Bob Johnston, (CEO of Front Burner Brands, The Melting Pot's restaurant management company).

Since joining The Melting Pot, I have had the opportunity and good fortune of being able to do a lot of exciting and different things in the restaurant industry including steering the company's strategic growth internationally into the Middle East and Indonesia, in addition to expansion in North America. Bob has given me the latitude and trust to be an effective president but has offered counsel for me when needed.

**What is the single greatest factor in the success of your career?**

When given any opportunity, I would answer this question this way: A restaurateur's single greatest resource and reason for his or her success is with absolute certainty the restaurant's people. Sure, there are other important elements like effective leadership, a strong brand with great food and service and, of course, a culture of putting the customer first. But in our particular business, I know it is the good work done by our franchisees and their teams and by our team at the Front Burner Brands Restaurant Support Center that truly make The Melting Pot a success.

**Do you have any career-related advice that you would like to pass on to Florida Restaurant and Lodging Magazine's readers?**

Restaurant operators should learn to love

challenges! Operators are in constant search of the elusive "perfect shift" that, with really good preparation and a little luck, can occur but can still slip away when you least expect it. When those challenges occur, don't just shrug your shoulders and act as if "oh well, perhaps tomorrow will be perfect." Instead feed off this challenge as if you haven't eaten in days and devour it quickly so that the remaining part of the shift is perfect! Operators face challenges every day and they must not use those challenges as justification for accepting less-than-perfect results.

**How has participation in Florida Restaurant and Lodging Association positively affected your business?**

I have been an active member of the restaurant association in several states. FRLA is uniquely positioned to be a valuable resource to its members. I think many can agree that it has rarely been tougher than it is right now to be in the restaurant business. So many lines on our P&L's are under constant attack by things like food cost inflation, labor cost increases through wage and insurance issues and new burdens coming every day. I appreciate that FRLA is an effective voice in our local, state and federal governments representing the interests of restaurant and hotel operators, especially in this current economic environment.

**Is there anything you would like to share with Florida's hospitality industry members?**

With consumers cutting back on spending and dining out less due to the current economic conditions, we're all looking for new ways to bring guests into our establishments. I encourage all operators to adapt to the changing environment by evaluating how they communicate their brands and offerings to guests. Have you positioned your business as upscale and made guests perceive that it's too expensive? At The Melting Pot, we're addressing barriers for our restaurants by communicating our fondue dining experience and its value in a new way with a new menu that provides more flexibility and variety for guests and puts them in the driver seat of their dining experiences. The new menu emphasizes a wide variety of ways to enjoy The Melting Pot's offerings and allows us to communicate lower starting price points by shifting the menu's focus away from bundled, multi-course meals priced per couple.

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▶ OPEN TO READ IMPORTANT MESSAGE FROM CAROL DOVER, PRESIDENT & CEO, FLORIDA RESTAURANT & LODGING ASSOCIATION ▶

