

FEATURED RETAIL

# Florida Bakery marks 1st year in Central FL with plans to open new location in '22.

Cecilia Figueroa July 16, 2021



Kiara Delgado and Rafael Román.

**Orlando, FL** – Puerto Rican couple Rafael Román and Kiara Delgado, owners of Florida Bakery & Restaurant are determined to bring their delicious 'pan sobao' and menu to one of the fastest growing areas in Central Florida, known as Lake Nona.

On July 15, 2020, they opened their first store in Kissimmee, in the heart of the Puerto Rican community in Florida, and they are not only celebrating their first anniversary, but have ambitious plans to open the first Puerto Rican bakery in Lake Nona in 2022 and another in the Altamonte Springs area, in the northern part of Central Florida.

"We want to be the first Latin bakery in Lake Nona, we want to do something different and appeal to these markets, where customers ask us for our products," said Román.

And without fear and taking risks under a structured work plan, the spouses opened their first bakery in Kissimmee in 2020 at the onset of the pandemic but that did not stop their entrepreneurial spirit.

"We did something different in the middle of the pandemic, we opened the bakery in Kissimmee, and everyone told us we were crazy, but we did it and here we are," he said enthusiastically.

With an approximate investment of \$1 million for their next store in a space of 3,500 to 4,000 square feet, they hope to "please and conquer" new customers with their freshly brewed coffee, breads, donuts and typical island pastries and food with the quality that characterizes them.

"We're identifying a building smaller than this one and see where we're going to locate it, we're also making sure we have the space for a drive thru, so customers can buy their freshly baked 'sobao' bread from their car," Román said.

For the businessman, one of the biggest challenges now is to get staff and he hopes that for a in a more months, they will be able to get the 35 employees needed to run the store.

The bakery and restaurant provide a diverse breakfast and lunch menu, and a variety of desserts and options. Fresh brewed coffee that is brought directly from Puerto Rico is a must here in this store.

### Working non-stop

During the pandemic, they worked non-stop for their responsibility to their customers, especially in those times, "we knew that our customers wanted their bread, we couldn't stop, they trust our products and my employees are warriors, we comply and give our best."

His bakery has won over the taste of locals and tourists who go to get their coffee, bread, breakfasts, lunches and freshly made products in the store that opens every day, with an average of 800 to 900 clients during the week and an estimated of 1,200 clients on weekends.

The greatest motivation to continue in the business comes from the customers, he said, stressing his dedication to the quality of his products and at affordable prices.

"I see the very satisfied customer, who thanked us, who told us that they needed a place like this. There are some that we already know, this is their stop every day and they get up early to have their bread. This is an expansive wave, we know that we're making an impact not only with the people but on the local economy," he said.

Florida Bakery & Restaurant is part of Rafael Román Bakeries, the largest family bakery chain in Puerto Rico, with 17 years of successful experience on the island.

It has bakeries in the northwestern area of Puerto Rico: Barceloneta; Arecibo; Manati; Hatillo; and Isabela.

Meanwhile, his wife mentioned that the business has moved forward while facing challenges such as substituting shifts, working longer hours. While Román may be preparing the bread, Delgado handles the administrative part.

"We take stock because we have had to make these sacrifices, but we know that this is a family business and during the pandemic we divided up: I looked after the children from home and worked while Rafael could dedicate more time to the store. It's a business that we know from Puerto Rico, and we enjoy it together," she said.

Román's emphasizes on the fact that he follows his wife's vision for the business, "because of her, the 'sobao' bread is here, with the bread bags bearing the slogan 'Food for all.' We're a business in Florida to offer food to everyone, not just Latinos, but to everyone."

And he stressed that even North Americans come to the business after discovering the taste of the bread and especially of desserts like the "mil hojas." Delgado specializes in the details of filled donuts and says she loves to receive praise from mostly Anglo customers, who seek out her fresh donuts every day.

"As soon as we take them out to the showcases they're taken from the tray, they finish them right away," she said.

"There are people who wake up early at the bakery and wait for the guava- or Nutella-filled donuts, to come out. It's incredible. Even many North Americans who weren't familiar or had tried oats, creams, corn starches, cream of wheat, and after trying them they became our customers," added Delgado.

"They come from all over the world, we like to serve them and make them feel good, everything we do is fresh every day," she said.

**AUTHOR DETAILS**

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With almost 20 years of experience in the world of communications and the digital world, Cecilia Figueroa is a Multimedia Journalist for several media outlets in Florida, Puerto Rico and other countries. She has worked producing bilingual (English and Spanish) content for traditional and digital media.

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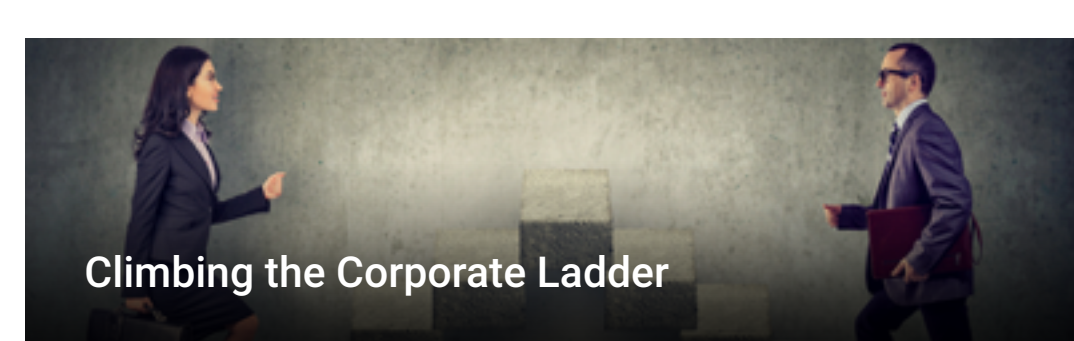
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