

MICHAEL CORDÚA

Founder & Chairman of the Board

CORDÚA RESTAURANTS

MICHAEL CORDÚA - A PIONEER OF THE LATIN-AMERICAN CULINARY MOVEMENT IN THE UNITED STATES - IS FOUNDER AND CHAIRMAN OF THE BOARD OF CORDÚA RESTAURANTS.

His eight award-winning Houston-area restaurants include Américas River Oaks, Américas The Woodlands, Churrascos River Oaks, Churrascos Westchase, Churrascos Sugar Land, Churrascos Memorial City, Amazón Grill and Artista. The company will have a ninth restaurant when it launches Churrascos in Champions in October 2014.

.....

Cordúa's restaurants have met with national critical acclaim. The original Churrascos was named one of the "Best New Restaurants in America" by Esquire magazine in 1989. Américas was named "Restaurant of the Year" by Esquire in 1993. Texas Monthly magazine named Artista "Best New Texas Restaurant" in 2004. Esquire named Churrascos one of the "20 Best Steaks in America" in 2008 and, most recently, Travel + Leisure magazine named Churrascos one "The Best Steakhouses in the U.S." in March of 2013.

.....

Born in Managua, Nicaragua, Cordúa moved to the United States in 1976 to study at Texas A&M University. He graduated in 1980 with a Bachelor of Science in Economics and a minor in Finance. While in College Station, he began to hone his cooking skills by preparing meals for his friends that reminded him of food from home. He also worked in the Sbisa Dining Hall at Texas A&M and got his first restaurant experience as a pot washer at Pepe Taco, a fast-food establishment.

Cordúa planned to return home to Nicaragua and work in banking after college but stayed in Houston in light of the 1979 Nicaraguan Sandinista Revolution. He worked in maritime shipping at the Port of Houston from 1980-85, which took him to London and other parts of Europe and exposed him to fine cuisine the likes of which he had never seen in his native country.

Searching for his next career, Cordúa nearly purchased a furniture store before opening his first restaurant on August 8, 1988, at 9788 Bissonnet St. on the western edge of Houston. He modeled Churrascos after the popular restaurant in Managua - Los Ranchos - hoping to bring Latin-American cuisine beyond Mexican food to a mainstream American audience. His menu centered on the Churrasco steak, which has roots in Argentina and Nicaragua, and blended the excitement of American ingredients with the discipline of European techniques of cooking. The food was and is today inspired by Latin American cuisine but not native to any singular country.

Within a year of Churrascos' opening, Cordúa was approved for a loan to open a second location in 1990 in River Oaks followed soon after by the first Américas restaurant on Post Oak Boulevard in 1993. Today, Cordúa works in tandem with his son, David, who joined the company in 2007 and now serves as Executive Chef. As Chairman of the Board, Michael continues to serve as the visionary and face of Cordúa Restaurants with a focus on maintaining the company philosophy as it continues to grow.

.....

A self-taught chef with no formal training, the Nicaragua native is the only Texas chef to be included in the prestigious Food & Wine magazine Hall of Fame, earning induction in 2008. He was named one of America's "Top Ten Chefs" by Food & Wine and received the Robert Mondavi Award for Culinary Excellence in 1994. He has been a James Beard Award semifinalist three times and was selected as one of Food & Wine's "Best New Chefs All-Stars" in 2013.

.....

One of the tenets of Cordúa's restaurants is "Cordúality," his personal spin on hospitality. Cordúa describes it as "the same hospitality that you would feel if you come and be served at one of our homes." He and his staff welcome guests with amplitude and open arms, hoping to anticipate their whims and needs while providing an abundance of food that is "yummy, Latin and artistic."

Cordúa has worked for 26 years with Casa de Esperanza, a haven for children in crisis due to abuse, neglect or the effects of HIV. He serves on the board of directors of Casa de Esperanza, the Houston Zoo, Houston Art Alliance and Houston Food Bank. He is a past member of the board of directors of the University of St. Thomas, Strake Jesuit Preparatory School, Catholic Charities, Save Our ERs, the American Leadership Forum and Houston Hispanic Chamber of Commerce.

Cordúa received his Master of Business Administration from Rice University in 2008. He lives in Houston with his wife, Lucia. They have four children: David Cordúa, Elisa Cordúa Tavera, Cristina Cordúa and Michelle Cordúa Mirshak; and two grandchildren: Amelia and Annelise Mirshak.

DAVID CORDÚA

Executive Chef

CORDÚA RESTAURANTS

DAVID CORDÚA – A NATIVE HOUSTONIAN – SERVES AS EXECUTIVE CHEF OF CORDÚA RESTAURANTS.

He oversees quality, execution, as well as menu development for Cordúa’s seven award winning restaurants and Cordúa Catering.

Born in Houston in 1982, Cordúa grew up in Meyerland and graduated from Strake Jesuit College Preparatory. His first restaurant experience came at the age of 15 in the kitchen of Américas, where he worked as a dishwasher and plantain peeler.

Cordúa graduated from Santa Clara University in 2004 with a degree in finance. While in college, he ran a university-financed soup kitchen, overseeing a team of about 15 volunteers. He also worked at the Hotel Valencia Santana Row in San Jose as a breakfast cook. He worked weekends in Sonoma at Popina Restaurant, where he learned about seasonality and the relationship of wine with food.

In 2005, Cordúa earned Les Grand Diplômes in Cuisine and Pastry from the prestigious Le Cordon Bleu in Paris. During his training in France, he learned the foundations of cooking and worked at La Tour d’Argent, one of Paris’ oldest restaurants, along with neighborhood bistro L’Auberge Brassane and a local pizzeria.

Cordúa returned to the United States in 2006 and worked as food and beverage manager at the Dolce Hayes Mansion Resort & Spa in San Jose where he managed the fine dining restaurant, lunch restaurant and bar at the hotel conference center.

.....
Cordúa joined his family’s restaurant group in 2007 as Vice President of Brand Development, helping to open Américas in The Woodlands. He helped re-launch Cordúa Catering in 2008 and became Executive Chef in 2009. He was named “Up and Coming Chef of the Year” by My Table Magazine in 2010, a month after opening Américas River Oaks.
.....

Active in the community, Cordúa serves on the board of directors for the Flock Committee at the Houston Zoo, Children At Risk and Health Care for the Homeless. He was recognized for his philanthropic leadership with an Ovation Award from the Houston Grand Opera in 2013.

Cordúa also had a passion for music before beginning his culinary career. He played in bands throughout high school, performing guitar and lead vocals at venues such as Fitzgerald’s in the Heights.