

## **Interview with Lydia Cruz, Executive Chef**

**Q: Please tell us a little about your background and what drew you into pursuing culinary?**

**A:** I was born in New York City and my parents are Puerto Rican. As a little girl I always wanted to cook like my mom. As I grew older, my passion for food grew and I decided to attend the New York City School of Fine Arts & Restaurant, where I graduated as a certified chef in 1980. I was hired at the Ritz Carlton Hotel in New York City as my first job. It was such an experience working along some of the greatest Executive Chefs in New York City. At Ritz Carlton, we were awarded the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award two times. After Ritz Carlton, I decided to make a change and moved to Peninsula Hotel in New York City, a “Five Star” Hotel. At Peninsula, I worked along legendary world Executive Chefs and my professional training and skills developed to a new high. I have also worked at many different Hilton properties in New Jersey as well. I have enjoyed thirty years of making people smile as they enjoy eating my food.

**Q: What do you enjoy eating or better yet what’s your favorite type of food to eat?**

**A:** I’m Puerto Rican at heart. I enjoy Caribbean cuisine! Nothing like a good plate of Rice and beans, and pork chops. I also enjoy all types of Spanish and Portuguese foods.

**Q: What is your favorite type of food to prepare?**

**A:** I enjoy preparing Spanish cuisine as my favorite, but Italian dishes fall second best. I enjoy cooking, so there’s really nothing that I don’t enjoy cooking.

**Q: What are your plans for the restaurant? Will you be changing anything with the menu?**

**A:** As I mentioned before about my New York experience, I would like to bring a rich New York City flavor and improve food quality. I will be upgrading the menu to offer diversity.

**Q: How long have you been in Philadelphia and what do you think of the city?**

**A:** As a new comer to the city of Philadelphia, I have found it to be an exciting, beautiful hidden gem of a city that offers just about the same level of energy, and eateries as New York City.

**Q: What do you think is the biggest difference between Philadelphia and New York dining?**

**A:** New York City has so much diversity when it comes to food. You can come across many different cuisines within three blocks from each other. Philadelphia is building up their diverse cuisines and gaining a great reputation as a restaurant city, and I'm excited to be part of it.

**Q: Any changes we can expect in the restaurant itself?**

**A:** Renovation design and plans has been submitted to ownership. The plan is to have all the renovation completed by the end of January 2018. We will be focusing on changing the completed menu and implement more of a Spanish Caribbean flavor. Our hotel also offers a beautiful banquet room on our 10<sup>th</sup> floor that features floor to ceiling windows offering panoramic views of the city. The view is breathless at night when the city lights up. The banquets space is prefect for weddings, birthdays, wedding rehearsal dinners and all kinds of occasions. I personally would like to invite all brides or event planners to stop by and see this for themselves.