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**CHEF SPOTLIGHT: AN INTERVIEW WITH CHEF FERNANDO FRANCO**

*The Argentine head chef at Hyatt Regency Trinidad continues to WOW guests with food that is a flavorful fusion of International and Caribbean cuisine*



**PORT OF SPAIN, Trinidad (September 16, 2015) –** Executive Chef Fernando Franco's name may not be as globally recognizable as that of restaurant tycoon Wolfgang Puck or television personalities Bobby Flay and Gordon Ramsey but, to individuals within dining distance of [Hyatt Regency Trinidad](#), his star power shines just as bright. Anyone who has been fortunate enough to taste his culinary creations -in the hotel's full-service restaurant, its lobby lounge, sushi bar, or the rooftop bar and grill - enthusiastically sings his praises in between indulgent bites.

Born in Argentina, a country of diverse culinary influences, it almost seemed predestined that he would eventually make a seamless transition into life in the equally eclectic Trinidad. For the past eight years, Chef Franco has been using his love for food and his dedication to his craft to produce memorable and tasty meals in downtown Port of Spain.

In the following interview, Chef Franco discusses his early inspirations, his global experience, and his intense passion for the culinary arts.

**How old were you when you knew you wanted to be a chef and why did you decide on this career path?**

I was 21 years old. I had just finished high school and I was still undecided about my future so I was doing odd jobs related to cooking to earn pocket money. Fortunately for me, I landed a job

at Las Leñas, one of the largest Andean ski resorts in Argentina and there I had the privilege to work with many of the best chefs in my country. I enjoyed it so much that the experience set me on the path I am still on today.

**What were your biggest food influences while growing up?**

My biggest influence was my father. We spent a lot of time cooking and bonding over food when I was growing up. But the truth is, I also grew up in a country where eating and drinking are deeply-ingrained pillars of our culture. Unlike the fast-food type trend that has caught on in many places today, back in Argentina we take our time in the preparation and enjoyment of our meals. It was routine to go to a butcher to buy meat and then visit separate markets for poultry, fish and produce. Plus, mealtimes were unrushed affairs when friends and family got together to catch up on each other's lives.

**You have an illustrious 27 year work history and because if it you've lived in many different countries. How have your experiences in Spain, Portugal, Italy, Brazil, Chile, Uruguay, Hawaii and now Trinidad impacted your love and appreciation for food?**

My love for food began before I ever set foot on a plane but working in several countries and traveling to others gave me the opportunity to learn about many different types of cuisines. As my knowledge grew, so did my understanding and appreciation of the international language of food. Working with other chefs who also shared my passion certainly added to the experience.

**What attracted you to Trinidad and Tobago?**

Before I moved here, I had never been to the Caribbean before so I was very thorough in my research prior to deciding to relocate. I was attracted to Trinidad and Tobago because of its many festivals, and its rich diversity and culture excited me. The local foods also seemed like a culinary adventure that would only expand my repertoire.

**Trinidad is home to innumerable culinary influences that melt together in a multicultural pot of scents, tastes, spices and aromas. How does that inspire you to create new recipes?**

The variety of local spices and produce, as well as the aroma from the Indian influence in the dishes and the way in which they are marinated with different meats all provide great inspiration for me. Fusing those elements with Hyatt's food philosophy creates memorable dishes and flavors and tasty seasonal treats.

**What are your best kitchen moments?**

The moments associated with the opening of the meal period. The adrenaline rush I get from preparing multiple dishes side-by-side while adhering to the finest standards for all of them is unparalleled. It gives me true purpose in the kitchen.

**What is your biggest worry?**

That a guest may not be totally satisfied with my dishes. I am not successful if the diner is not pleased with what we have prepared. I enjoy meeting the hotel guests and getting their

feedback as it allows me to understand their likes and dislikes. Those open exchanges give me the impetus to be even more creative with my menus.

**Are there any emerging trends on the food scene you'd like to tell us about? What types of menu inclusions are travelers requesting more of?**

I think travelers are aiming to eat healthier foods and they increasingly expect their meals to be prepared by utilizing only the freshest ingredients. Here at Hyatt Regency Trinidad, we receive a lot of vegetarian and vegan requests from our guests and we have included a separate section on our menus for these options. Travelers also look forward to tasting the new spices and flavors used but they are not limited to any particular fruit or product. As food and beverage is also critical to the success of international meetings and we do so many of them here, I also ensure our menus reflect cultural or religious dietary needs and I inject local elements wherever possible.

**Final question: do you have a favorite cook book? If so, what is it?**

When I was younger, my favorite cook book was "La Cocina del Mercado" by Paul Bocuse. He is a famous French chef who is known for the high quality of his restaurants and his innovative approaches to cuisine. After I left the Culinary Institute of America (CIA), I added "The New Professional Chef" to my must-have list. I think any aspiring chef should have both.

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**About Hyatt Regency Trinidad**

Designed as a premier meeting, convention, business, event and leisure travel property, the 428-room Hyatt Regency Trinidad is situated in the Port of Spain International Waterfront Development. The Hyatt's versatile event space showcases a 16,000 square-foot grand ballroom, and a 10,000 square-foot ballroom with translation facilities. Other guest facilities include one full-service restaurant; a lobby bar and lounge; a fitness center, and the 9,000 square-foot Spa Esencia. For more information and reservation, please visit [trinidad.hyatt.com](http://trinidad.hyatt.com) or call 1-800-233-1234. High-resolution images may be downloaded from [newsroom.hyatt.com](http://newsroom.hyatt.com).

**About Hyatt Regency**

Hyatt Regency encompasses the full spectrum of hotel types, which are conveniently located in urban, suburban, airport, convention and resort destinations around the world. Properties range in size from 200 to more than 2,000 rooms, feature intimate and large meeting spaces, and offer a full range of services and dining options tailored to serve the needs of conventions, business travelers or resort vacationers. Hyatt Regency enables all guests - whether they are traveling to work, unwind or gather in celebration - to feel productive and revitalized. For more information and reservations, visit [www.hyatt.com](http://www.hyatt.com).

