Argentine entrepreneur wins with sauce!

Marcos Cesar Perera Blasco adds Enterprise Corps to his ingredients for success

Marcos Cesar Perera Blasco grew up in a rural community in Argentina. Working on a farm was his main source of income. In his hometown of Pasteur, he handled everything from picking up fresh milk from local farmers to chopping wood to heat up the milk and produce mozzarella from start to finish.

Perera taught himself English and saved $5,000 to come to the United States 26 years ago, moving first to Miami, then Indianapolis. His dream was always to travel the world and food played a significant role.

Perera is the founder of Che Chori (translated to “people’s food”), an Argentine eatery established in 2020 on the west side of Indianapolis. In August 2024, Che Chori was featured on Guy Fieri’s show, Diners, Drive-Ins and Dives. Perera credits a large jump in business to the exposure this gave him. In fact, Che Chori is in line to see a 30% growth in revenue this year.

Perera says before he could build anything, he had to fight through “limiting beliefs, ridicule for dreaming bigger and years of emotional rewiring.” He grew up in a house with dirt floors and no mentors or resources. Last year, he found mentors, resources and confidence through Enterprise Corps, a collaboration between the IU Kelley School of business and other partners to profitably grow and scale small businesses.

Perera earned executive certificates for completing three of four courses taught by IU Kelley School of Business professors: Business Strategy, Financial Strategy and Organizational Leadership. He and his wife, Laura Perera, also won a $10,000 grant in a pitch competition, sponsored by Cummins, Kelley and the Indy Chamber. They outlined a four-pronged approach for getting ¡Hola Che! sauces to market: direct to consumers, retail, wholesale packaging and international importers.

The sauces can be purchased at Che Chori now, but with the grant, they can expand their reach. Perera has a global vision and

has done business in 60 countries. Before going out on his own, Perera met the family who owned Weaver Popcorn and started selling their products internationally. He used some of his earnings to buy property that he turned into rentals.

Indianapolis provided him with the opportunity to own 14 properties at one time. What the city lacked was an Argentine restaurant. So, Perera started cooking chorizos (pork sausages) out of his home, sharing them with family and friends.

"People kept telling me these are so good, you should sell them," he recounted.

That, in addition to his wife telling him she could no longer tolerate the house smelling like a butcher shop, led to them opening Che Chori.

About a mile from Indianapolis Motor Speedway, they discovered the site for Che Chori. He says the Indianapolis 500 is big in Argentina, so the proximity to the Brickyard fit culturally.

What did not fit culturally was that the existing structure was a drive-through. Perera had read that drive-throughs can increase business by 30-40%, but they do not exist in Argentina.

"I had to be taken away from my culture," he explained.

He believes entrepreneurs coming to the U.S. need to break from their culture from time to time and listen to what the customers want.

For example, his Hispanic customers were asking for something spicy, but Argentine food is not spicy. Perera says, generally, only salt is added to meat. So, he added ingredients to satisfy their palates for the sake of the business.

"Business is an evolution," Perera said. "You can adapt to the market and remain vigilant or go out of business."

Honoring his homeland and growing a business here calls for a balancing act Perera seems to be mastering. He is mindful of different perspectives. He uses inflation as an example.

"People in the U.S. are not used to it; people in Argentina are. I can be two people," he said proudly, pulling from his roots to navigate current inflationary fears.

Perera loves to read and do research. The newspapers that cover the walls of Che Chori were collected from Argentina. He is all about authenticity. Adding history and culture to the eating experience is important to him. Outside, you can see where his aunt is adding her personal touch to the decor.

After five years of drive-through and carryout business, Che Chori is expanding so that up

to 90 people can sit and eat on location. Shipping containers will be added to the property and they, too, will feature the history and culture of Argentina. Customers will also have access to bathrooms for the first time, as well as beer and wine.

When he opened five years ago, Perera was working 100 hours a week. That was during the COVID-19 pandemic. He had four people working alongside him. Now, he has eight on his team.

One of them is his wife, Laura. Perera says the growth of Che Chori would not have been possible without her support and partnership.

"While I'm focused on food preparation, recipe development and daily operations, she is the other half of this journey, managing accounting, social media and, of course, food tasting," he explained.

Then there is the general manager, Laila Ellaby, found in the kitchen most days. Perera took her to Argentina so she could experience the cuisine and culture firsthand.

"It was an essential step to truly understand the heart of what we do," he explained.

Ellaby also joined Perera for the Organizational Leadership course.

According to Perera, strategy can "make or break you." Enterprise Corps provided him with fundamental knowledge that, as a self-made business owner, he was lacking.

"It also reinforced key concepts I had learned through experience, but within a more structured, academic setting," stated Perera.

"Enterprise Corps has been crucial to taking the next steps, not only through the classes, but through one-on-one coaching sessions with IU Kelley professor Phil Powell," added Perera. "Powell tells you that you need to be working on the business, not in the business."

That advice from Powell is something that many of the business owners like to mention when talking about the impact of Enterprise Corps.

Perera is passionate about sharing his journey with others because he sees it as living proof that people can change their lives when they shift their focus from what they do not have to what they can achieve.

"The United States is an incredible place to find the resources that help make that possible," he said. "Programs like Enterprise Corps have been key for me, filling in gaps I had as a self-made entrepreneur."

Perera frequently returns to Argentina, not just for family, but also for the opportunity to visit high schools and inspire young people to become entrepreneurs. It is the kind of message he never heard growing up, but he has made up for it by taking calculated risks and seizing opportunities like those Enterprise Corps offers. He hopes everyone adds a belief in self to whatever they have cooking.

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