



# INDUSTRY SPOTLIGHT

## The Oyster Bar Restaurant

**Owner:** Justo Barrientes Jr. | **General Manager:** Mary Lompra

**Location:** South Texas | **Established:** 1950 (original location)

MARCH 2021

### How did you get your start in the alcoholic beverage industry?

Initially, we started by offering a mixed drink or beer to complement our food. One of the benefits of selling alcohol in a restaurant is that you will be able to attract customers that may have gone elsewhere. There are many people who enjoy a good drink with their meal, or those who enjoy relaxing over drinks after work.

### What makes your business unique?

The food, service, the management and staff, the surroundings, the general ambiance. And being so close to the coast enables us to offer the freshest of seafood.

### How are you dealing with the challenges your business has faced because of the COVID-19 pandemic?

It has definitely been a challenge — from the shortage of personnel to managing customers that do not understand or feel the need to follow the safety guidelines that we [were required to] operate under just to remain open. We are constantly sanitizing and disinfecting all potential surface areas that customers may come in contact with. This results in a great deal more focused work with less personnel.

### What are you looking ahead to?

I'm looking forward to everyone being vaccinated and being able to come back to a more comfortable environment where you can go to a restaurant, enjoy a good meal and relax over an alcoholic beverage with family and friends.

### What's the one thing you would tell somebody who wants to work in this industry?

The restaurant business is a very hard, competitive business, but if you are willing



to put in the extra time, it can be a very satisfying and rewarding experience. Oh, and there's never a dull moment!

### Do you have one story about your business that you'll never forget?

I have so many stories. The Oyster Bar restaurant has been in business since 1950 [when the original restaurant was established] and through the years we have seen many customers come through with their children. We now have several generations that have been loyal customers through the years. I can think of no greater compliment!

— Mary Lompra, General Manager