

## Memorable Moments

An Interview with Deborah Yager Fleming,  
Chief Executive Officer & Partner, Acqualina Resort & Residences on the Beach

**EDITORS' NOTE** Deborah Yager Fleming joined Acqualina Resort & Residences on the Beach in March 2004 after having served as Vice President, Sales & Marketing, at Island Outpost where she managed marketing campaigns for 12 boutique hotels. She also garnered valuable experience in New York at Leading Hotels of the World where she held senior management positions and implemented the design of worldwide sales strategies and innovative marketing programs.



Deborah Yager Fleming

**PROPERTY BRIEF** With a lushly landscaped 4.5 acres of seaside bliss, world-class restaurants, curated amenities and spacious rooms and suites, all with balconies and water views, Acqualina Resort & Residences on the Beach ([acqualinaresort.com](http://acqualinaresort.com)) is at the center of Miami's Sunny Isles Beach providing an exclusive experience and an ultra-luxurious beach lifestyle. The property is the recipient of the coveted Forbes Five Star Award and the AAA Five Diamond Award. Acqualina was recognized by the Global Biorisk Advisory Council, a division of ISSA – The Worldwide Cleaning Industry Association – as a confirmed GBAC Star accredited facility acknowledging Acqualina's increasing best practices and protocols for sanitation during the COVID-19 pandemic. Additionally, Acqualina is Sharecare Health Security VERIFIED™ with Forbes Travel Guide.

**Will you provide an overview of Acqualina Resort and how the property is positioned in the market?**

Acqualina is a family run, luxury beachfront resort located on 4.5 acres in pristine Sunny Isles Beach, Miami and features 98 guest rooms and suites and 188 residences with views of the Atlantic Ocean. At Acqualina we are committed to providing a great living experience in a gorgeous Mediterranean Villa lifestyle environment with plenty of amenities for our guests to enjoy. We feature four destination restaurants, an award-winning spa, three oceanfront swimming pools and an innovative children's program. Our grounds feature outdoor living room settings and umbrellas with our signature red color on Seashore Paspalum grass just steps from the sea. We have a Dream Maker Culture empowering our team members to personalize experiences. This has garnered many awards including the number one Luxury Beachfront Hotel in the U.S. by TripAdvisor.

**Acqualina Resort has a strong suite product. Will you highlight this offering and what guests can expect from the suites?**

Acqualina is known as a great family resort experience. We have 36 two-bedroom suites and 4 three-bedroom suites. These suites feature large living rooms, kitchens, oceanfront terraces, and many have their own private offices. We recently enhanced all of the rooms and suites at our resort by introducing new bathrooms with Venio Oro Marble and Molteni Vanity Cabinets and, most recently, we introduced new furniture to offer a modern fresh look that blends with our beautiful signature classic pieces. We have replaced the sofas in every room and suite with a modern Italian design by Ideal Casa. Our accommodations all feature new desk chairs and side tables in bronze metal with glass tops.



The suite's dining areas have a Spin Dining Table with a central steel column covered with full-grain leather in a spiral pattern with visible stitching. The upper part of the column is in visible stainless steel and the tabletop is made of transparent tempered glass. The new wood dining chairs have an enveloping backrest. Our kitchens feature Italian Lapitec stone counter tops with waterfall bar areas. The new bar stools are characterized by a curved oak structure with a sinuous design.

Acqualina is a brand that continuously looks for ways to improve and implement new services and amenities for our customers to enjoy, from design to food to activities, and this is what



Suite living area (above) and a table at Costa Grill overlooking the lawn and Atlantic Ocean (top)

differentiates us, coupled with our friendly and heartfelt service.

**How has Acqualina Resort approached its food and beverage offering and what are the keys for a resort to be successful in this area?**

We believe in partnering with great restaurant operators that are iconic, share the same service philosophy, and whose cuisine is appealing and approachable for an everyday experience. We are excited to welcome the acclaimed Avra Estiatorio of New York and Beverly Hills with a spectacular new restaurant overlooking the Atlantic Ocean which opened in November within our community. Avra's cuisine is inspired by the seaside tavernas dotted all over Greece's coast and more than 200 islands. The menu offers iterations of fresh fish as well as rarer Mediterranean gems like fagri and lithrini. Designed by STA Architectural Group, Avra spans 12,000 square feet and has a 330-seat main dining room. The airy space is chic yet inviting with its floor-to-ceiling windows, high ceilings, white color tones and brass finishes. Diners will be able to hear the waves crashing while they eat alfresco and savor oceanfront views.

Avra marks the fourth waterfront restaurant at Acqualina, joining Il Mulino New York for authentic Italian cuisine, Ke-uH for exquisite Japanese fare, and Costa Grill for Floridian beachside dining. We know our customers look for the best of the best restaurant experience and we want to offer just that without having to go off property. Our guests have told us that we are a true culinary destination and this together with our beachfront experience and five-star service is very special.

**Will you highlight the strength of the spa offering at the property?**

Our luxurious 20,000-square-foot two-story Spa overlooks the Atlantic Ocean and provides guests and outside clients with a tranquil sanctuary. The Acqualina Spa combines the best of ancient and modern therapies with the latest and finest skin care advances. Our skilled spa therapists have vast knowledge and deliver treatments that leave you wanting to return. Some guests have told me they do not want to leave Acqualina so that they can go to the spa every day.

Our spa includes separate women's and men's relaxation lounges featuring Himalayan salt walls, heat experiences areas, which include crystal steam rooms, arctic ice fountains, experience showers, and Finnish dry heat saunas. Spa guests may also enjoy the co-ed spa pool and terrace, jet pool, and Roman waterfall spa overlooking the Atlantic Ocean.

These days we know how important it is to offer results-oriented treatments; therefore we have enhanced our extensive treatment menu with new facial treatments designed to target recovery and results. Our Collagen Sculpting Facial and Ultimate Performance use Swissline's foundation in cellular therapy and biotech innovation. With skin-identical ingredients including hyaluronic acid, pre-and probiotics, and niacinamide, the facial products are 92 percent pure collagen and 97 percent identical to the skin's own collagen, making them extraordinarily effective in lifting and firming. We also arranged for Aprize Beauty to offer aesthetic beauty and IV treatments.



*A newly renovated suite kitchen*

Each IV therapy is customized to meet guests' particular needs. Morpheus8 treatments are also available and provide a natural look to reduce fine lines, wrinkles, and sun damage.

**Will you discuss Acqualina Resort's focus on offering personalized service and a customized guest experience?**

Our success is largely built on extending personalized service to each of our guests. We have GEMs (Guest Experience Managers) assigned to each arriving guest who customize the services based on our guests' needs. We encourage our team members to identify what would make a guest's experience extra special. We believe it is critical to provide our team members with the tools, resources, and training they need to be successful, and also to recognize each of our team members for their efforts and contribution. We have a WOW story initiative providing memorable moments for our guests that are celebrated on our Employee Together App. Our employee engagement program is at the cornerstone of our management philosophy and the opportunity to acknowledge each of our team members is paramount to us.

**How critical is it for Acqualina Resort to build a diverse and inclusive workforce to mirror the diversity of the guests it serves?**

Equal representation in our workforce as well as our leadership is very important to us at Acqualina. We continuously take measures to make sure there is equality and have always embraced diversity and gender equality and want our team members to reflect this. At Acqualina we celebrate individual differences and embrace diversity and inclusion. We are committed to providing equal opportunities in all aspects of employment.

**What do you see as Acqualina Resorts' responsibility to the community it serves and to being engaged in the community?**

Acqualina is committed to the community in which we operate and supports the Miami Chapter of the I Have a Dream Foundation. The Foundation empowers children in low-income communities to achieve higher education and

fulfill their leadership potential by providing them with the skills, knowledge, and habits they need to gain entry to higher education and succeed in college and beyond. Each year, the principal owners of Acqualina, Stephanie, Jules, and Eddie Trump – no relation to the former U.S. president – host a major charitable gala where South Florida philanthropists join our Dreamers for a magical evening filled with dreams and opportunities ready to come true.

The I Have a Dream Foundation guarantees the Dreamers with an academic tuition at a Florida state university for a four-year degree or at an accredited trade school. The program adopts an entire class of Dreamers from early elementary school in an economically disadvantaged neighborhood.

**Do you feel that there are strong opportunities for women to grow and lead in the industry?**

Women certainly are inspired by companies that trust, empower, and encourage new opportunities and allow them to make a difference. The hospitality industry is always looking for new ways to delight customers and create experiences that will provide everlasting bonds, encouraging repeat business and loyalty. It's about taking an organized approach to getting results and knowing how to keep moving the goal post to achieve greater success. It's about an attitude and willingness to get the job done.

**What advice do you offer to young people interested in building a career in the hotel industry?**

Be patient and put in the work, and it will pay off. Managers are keen to promote individuals that are reliable, engaged, and care about the company's mission. It's a wonderful industry where one can connect with people, be inspired daily, and be surrounded by individuals that can provide guidance on how to build a career that would be the best path. It's an industry full of memorable moments where one can enjoy being a part of making dreams come true. ●