

## Elegance On The Beach

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 The 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

she was tasked to prioritize color, which has been a core element of our iconography ever since the resort opened in 2006 when we debuted our trademark red umbrellas and vibrant green lawns directly next to the sea. Our newly opened oceanfront fitness center called AcquaFit features vibrant green marble reminiscent of the turquoise sea that wraps several spaces. The fitness center was outfitted with all-new state-of-the-art cardio and strength equipment by Technogym ARTIS collection and ECO flooring.

**How do you describe the Acqualina experience?**

Acqualina is a Mediterranean-inspired resort open to the sea with all of the luxurious necessities and the warmth of European charm. It is beyond a resort, but more of a home environment and feel that provides a

respite, well-being, and expansive amenities for everyone in the family to enjoy. We strive to give all who walk through our doors the greatest urban resort living experience, modern conveniences, and longevity. Our beachfront setting is our hallmark and our happy, dedicated team members are graciously welcoming and many of our guests love the experience so much they buy apartments at Acqualina or at our sister residential properties.

**What can guests expect from Acqualina's new three-bedroom suite?**

The new three-bedroom suite was designed in collaboration with Isabel Tragash and Virgilio Mariano, founder of Ideal Casa Italian furniture. The new suite features sleek furniture, modern bathrooms in marble with covetable amenities, exquisite light fixtures in every room and an expansive private terrace that offers breathtaking views of the Atlantic Ocean. The suite exemplifies Acqualina's commitment to offering an unmatched stay for

**Acqualina Resort & Residences is known for a culture of continuous improvement and reinvention. Will you discuss the recent developments that have taken place at Acqualina?**

We recently completed a renovation of our entire Mezzanine floor which includes our Fitness Center, Board Room, and intimate Ballroom spaces. We set out to provide our guests and residents with an even greater level of luxury living. We are continuously inspired by our oceanfront setting and our passionate team members who go above and beyond to deliver exceptional experiences. In 2024, Acqualina was named the #1 Resort in the U.S. by *U.S. News and World Report* and received the #1 Hotel accolade as well. It is important to us to ensure our facilities are not only well maintained, but improved by creating an even more special environment for our customers to enjoy. With this in mind, we set out to elevate our gathering and event spaces with enhancements that include the finest materials in the world. We commissioned Isabel Tragash, principal of STA Architectural Group, one of South Florida's leading architecture and design firms. Isabel has been our lead designer at Acqualina for more than two decades and



Acqualina's lush grounds feature outdoor living room settings with sumptuous furniture on seashore paspalum grass and are dotted with umbrellas in the resort's signature red color (top); The new three-bedroom suite is located on the 31st floor of the beachfront property (above)



*The reimagined ballroom at Acqualina is the perfect backdrop for events of all kinds*

guests, particularly those who are looking for extra room without sacrificing style. We created spaces that call to our coastal surroundings yet stand out with sophisticated elements that resemble a high-design villa in Europe. The entryway of the suite extends to two separate living areas, where a soothing neutral backdrop showcases ocean views. The living spaces and dining room are dotted with Ideal Casa Italian furniture offering both a rich heritage and contemporary design, including a statuesque console with walnut drawers and silver finishes. The main living area features a sculptural sideboard and fluted coffee table with a bronze glass top, and velvet diamond-designed “Alison” armchairs. The living space is further enhanced with two mosaic calm abstract area rugs. The suite offers a full gourmet kitchen outfitted with everything one would need for a long stay. The three full bedrooms feature Acqualina’s white sateen linens and a duvet cover in a champagne trim, and elegant drapery. The bathrooms all have Venio Oro marble and modern fixtures. A favorite part of the suite is that you can see the sunrise from the terrace that faces the ocean and the sunset from the terrace that faces the Intracoastal waterways.

**What have been the keys to Acqualina’s strength with its food and beverage product, and will you highlight this offering?**

We offer an exquisite selection of outdoor dining experiences overlooking the Atlantic Ocean. Costa Grill, which is exclusive to hotel guests and Acqualina residents, is a true gem with a unique location directly adjacent to the beach, offering a diverse menu of Floridian cuisine with Mediterranean influences. The

dining tables are shaded by elegant palms and vibrant red umbrellas. Costa Grill provides stunning views of the Atlantic Ocean in a casual, family-friendly dining atmosphere. Our three restaurants open to the public do not disappoint and include the renowned Il Mulino New York, the acclaimed Italian restaurant, that captivates diners with its energetic ambiance. There is indoor and outdoor dining on an expansive terrace with a retractable roof. Just off the Acqualina lobby is Ke-uH, a Japanese fusion cuisine restaurant serving a menu tapas style, using only the finest quality ingredients. This elegant and modern dining setting offers guests indoor and outdoor seating with views of the Atlantic Ocean. We also offer beachfront dinners perfect for couples and families. Acqualina is proud to feature Avra Miami, a Greek and Seafood destination restaurant located at The Estates at Acqualina and connected to Acqualina Resort by an exclusive sky bridge. The airy space boasts a sophisticated yet warm atmosphere and features a glamorous aesthetic. A fun fact – each of our dining venues features ocean views.

**Will you highlight Acqualina’s event space and capabilities?**

Our renovated Mezzanine level is meant to feel as though you are in a Grand Penthouse Apartment with the most luxurious textiles, glamour, and pristine white sand cream colors. I love the luxe feeling of how designer Isabel Tragash manages to blend different materials that complement each other and play off of our oceanfront setting. Our furniture pieces offer clean lines and natural shapes. Each piece is sophisticated and timeless. The materials throughout the space are onyx, marble, stone,

and wood providing high quality to all of the areas. The color palette features various shades of warm white with champagne and bronze metal trims. The custom flooring features large-format marble tiles and bespoke rug inserts. The color and textures are very soothing. Every detail from the luxurious wall-covering to the accents in champagne pull you into each event space. We incorporated modern touches and technology in all of the glamorous meeting rooms. The ballroom can accommodate 100 people for a reception with the adjacent oceanfront view terrace offering space for another 50 persons. The ballroom can be sectioned into smaller spaces that hold up to 40 persons. Our Board Room accommodates 14. Our new meeting and event spaces are perfect to celebrate your personal and professional milestones at Acqualina. We set out to balance modern elegance with a timeless aesthetic, selecting neutral colors with accent shades. The result is elegance on the beach.

**Will you discuss Acqualina’s investment in its team and commitment to training and service standards?**

We make our team member engagement initiatives a priority with recognition and gratitude for each person on the team. We embraced artificial intelligence and automation, giving our team more time to spend with our customers. We focus on elevating successful learning and development programs and initiatives using technology to create courses that ensure the continuous development of our leaders. The main objective is to ensure continuous development and succession planning for our workforce and provide team members with the tools to deliver a Five Star performance with remarkable consistency. This has helped us continue to achieve a 95 percent guest satisfaction score. At Acqualina, we have always pursued relentless excellence embracing Kaizen principles of continuous improvement, respect, and teamwork to build a highly effective organization. We are constantly looking for ways to gather data to determine areas for improvement in processes, quality, efficiency, etc. We embrace collaboration to generate potential solutions and process improvements, and test and implement the most promising solutions. We also monitor results, adjust as needed, and standardize successful changes.

**What has made leading Acqualina so special for you?**

The team members that I am lucky to call my colleagues who deliver great care and attention not only to our customers, but to each other as well and our common will to go the distance. Being surrounded by dedicated individuals fuels me and having the unwavering support from my partners Eddie, Jules and Stephanie Trump for their trust and confidence and for always believing that nothing is impossible. It is a dream come true to be part of a story behind every facet of what we have accomplished from the creation of the brand to our continued growth. ●