



**FLORIDA
RESTAURANT &
LODGING
ASSOCIATION**

WATERSHED
HOSPITALITY CONCEPTS
#WESERVEHOSPITALITY

CASK & ALE



PIZZA 3.14

BLASÉ
MARTINI BAR

PIE ON MAIN
BAR & PIZZA

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Florida Restaurant & Lodging Association Awards Mike Quillen Restaurateur of the Year at Annual Hospitality Stars of the Industry Gala



October 22, 2025//: DESTIN, FL – On Tuesday evening, the Florida Restaurant & Lodging Association (FRLA) honored its 2025 Hospitality Stars of the Industry Hall of Fame Winners during an evening gala at the Henderson Beach Resort. Among those recognized were Mike Quillen, President of Watershed Hospitality Concepts and Gecko's Hospitality Group in Sarasota and Bradenton and Cashiers Restaurant Holdings in North Carolina.

"It is a privilege to honor those whose lifelong dedication has defined excellence in Florida's hospitality industry," said **Carol Dover, President and CEO of the Florida Restaurant and Lodging Association**. "FRLA's 2025 Hall of Fame inductees have shaped and strengthened our industry through decades of leadership, vision, and innovation. With more than 140 years of combined service, their legacy of excellence continues to inspire and set the standard for future generations of hospitality professionals. Congratulations to our outstanding Hall of Fame winners!"

Said Quillen, "I'm deeply honored to receive this award from the Florida Restaurant & Lodging Association, an organization that has played such a pivotal role in shaping the direction of my career and any success I've achieved along the way. I share this recognition with the incredible team members that I've had the privilege to work alongside of over the years. Our shared dedication, passion for hospitality and hard work have made this possible and I'm grateful to share this award with them."

Michael Quillen grew up Sarasota. He is President of three independent restaurant groups operating 15 locations across Florida and North Carolina, including Gecko's Grill & Pub, Dry Dock Waterfront Grill, Tripletail Seafood & Spirits, Cask & Ale, Pie on Main, Blasé Martini Bar/Pi Pizza, Lefty's Oyster & Seafood Bar, Red Barn Bar and Micas Mountain Kitchen. Since opening the flagship Gecko's Grill & Pub in Sarasota in 1992, Quillen and his partners have cultivated award-winning concepts with over 800 employees, low management turnover, and a hands-on leadership style that emphasizes hospitality, community engagement, and promoting from within.

Classically trained in corporate, franchise, and family-owned restaurants, Quillen blends business acumen, operational expertise, and a strong work ethic to create thriving, polished casual dining experiences. His leadership has earned multiple “Best Of” guest awards, the National Restaurant Association’s *Florida Restaurant Neighbor Award* five consecutive years, and the *National Restaurant Neighbor Award* in 2017. He personally received the *Florida Cornerstone Humanitarian Award* four years in a row.

Quillen serves on the boards of FRLA, the Greater Sarasota Chamber of Commerce, Marie Selby Gardens, The Argus Foundation, Visit Sarasota County and the Sarasota County Sheriff’s Office Charitable Foundation. He is a graduate of Leadership Florida. Quillen studied History and Political Science at New College and attended State College of Florida on a tennis scholarship. He and his wife, Mary, have two daughters.



(L-R: Hotelier of the Year Heiko Dobrikow; Restaurateur of the Year Mike Quillen; Supplier of the Year Jordan Beckner; Lifetime Achievement Award Winner Dick Rivera)

About FRLA: The Florida Restaurant and Lodging Association is Florida’s premier non-profit hospitality industry trade association. Founded in 1946 as the Florida Restaurant Association, FRLA merged with the Florida Hotel and Motel Association in 2006. FRLA’s more than 10,000 members include independent hoteliers and restaurateurs, household name franchises, theme parks, and suppliers. The association’s mission is to protect, educate, and promote Florida’s nearly \$112 billion hospitality industry which represents two million employees. Dedicated to safeguarding the needs of the membership, FRLA provides legislative advocacy to ensure the voices of its members are heard and their interests are protected.

The **Watershed Hospitality Concepts** family of restaurants serves Hospitality. We are committed to creating welcoming experiences through quality, locally inspired fare, featuring seasonal local crops from our farm partners & crafting innovative cocktails. WHC employs 100+ hospitality- driven team members in our four restaurants. WHC offers our community casual, lively gathering places to savor the timeless ritual of sharing a meal and a toast. <https://watershedhospitalitysrq.com/>



(L-R: Chair of FRLA, Nick Sarra, Restaurateur of the Year Mike Quillen; Lifetime Achievement Award Winner Dick Rivera)