

teaching note

High-End Mexican Food By Chef Enrique Olvera: An Entrepreneurial Examination

Case Synopsis

Mexican food is stereotypically viewed as cheap and of low quality. After Chef Enrique Olvera's entrance into the culinary landscape, perceptions of Mexican food are changing worldwide. After he graduated from the Culinary Institute of America in New York, Chef Enrique Olvera worked in Chicago then decided to take his knowledge back to Mexico and open a new restaurant. He now is a successful entrepreneur and continues to create new concepts throughout the US and Mexico. This case examines his story with a theoretical lens and provides potential challenges of growth in the future.

Target Audience

The content presented in this case study is suitable for college undergraduate student, as well as graduate students. Programs focused in hospitality, tourism, management, and hotels and restaurants might benefit the most out of the analysis presented about the managerial skills Chef Enrique Olvera implements in his restaurant. Additionally, students of culinary arts can learn from the example of Chef Enrique Olvera how to transition from student to chef to entrepreneur. Moreover, this case study explores the nature of entrepreneurship, providing valuable points to consider for students in a business major.

Learning Outcomes

Learning from real life examples provides credible and inspiring motivation for students to keep moving forward in their journey. After analyzing the path Chef Enrique Olvera took to move from being a Chef to own a worldwide famous restaurant, and change the way people see Mexican food, the students should be able to:

- Understand entrepreneurship fundamentals in the restaurant industry to comprehend
 - Change
 - Performance
- Evaluate the path to move from student to chef to restaurant owner/entrepreneur.
- Analyze Mexican cuisine and the differences between limited service and full service restaurants at multiple levels (quick service, fast casual, casual, fine dining).

Lesson Plan

Assign students to read case in class period prior to the next.

In-Class Discussion (20 minutes)

The story of the entrepreneurial path Chef Enrique Olvera had along with his strong culinary background provides some points to learn how to succeed, in addition to some points that may have been done differently.

As a new Chef who wants to become an entrepreneur, you have been asked to review Chef Olvera's actions to become a distinguished chef, and help a better appreciation of Mexican food worldwide. Then, you are asked to answer according to the following aspects:

Entrepreneurship

- *Provide your feedback of the entrepreneurial process Chef Enrique Olvera followed, which aspects seemed risky? Which seemed safe?*
 - Sample examples:
 - Risky - leaving Everest after only 6 months to open new restaurant
 - Safe - concepts Pujol and Cosme may seem similar based on price (albeit different menu styles)
- *What do you think Chef Enrique Olvera next move as an entrepreneur should be?*
 - Sample examples:
 - TV show or stronger media presence
 - Opening new concept in different niche segment
 - Venture capitalist
 - Chef perspective
- *What do you think that makes Chef Enrique Olvera's food special or different?*
 - Sample examples:
 - Patience – 1,000 day Mole Madre makes for a great story and publicity while maintaining tradition and authenticity
 - Traditional equipment
- *Do you think he did the right thing moving from chef to entrepreneur? Why?*
 - Sample examples:
 - More risk in opening your own concept where as Executive Chef you don't invest your own money. It paid off for him to take the risk of upscale Mexican cuisine.
- *What would you change or recommend to expand a positive reputation for Chef Olvera?*
 - Sample examples:
 - Potentially a cookbook so that people can experience upscale Mexican at home, maybe partner with a meal delivery kit.

Traditional Mexican food

- *Explain the benefits and drawbacks to the Mexican cuisine segment as a whole based on the changes Chef Olvera is making.*

- Sample examples:
 - Most casual Mexican restaurants have similar menus (enchiladas, burritos, tacos), adding something that people aren't familiar with could result in wasted product or the item not selling.
 - Benefits could include customer trying something new and creating more of an experience versus just a need fulfillment.
- *Given the conditions in which Mexican food is now being seen worldwide, what would you do to keep promoting it?*
 - Sample example:
 - Unfortunately, the growth of Taco Bell and items like Nacho Fries are continuing the stereotype of Mexican food. The idea of a meal delivery kit with traditional authentic Mexican food would expose people to new opportunities.

Small Group Activity (20 minutes)

Have the students create a new Mexican restaurant concept and ensure the following points are answered:

- What is the premise of the concept?
- What makes it different?
- What are some menu items you would include?
- How authentic would the concept be?
- Where is the restaurant located? Why did you pick that location?

Presentation (30 minutes)

Assign groups to make and present an analysis on two of Chef Enrique Olvera's concepts (Manta, Alta, Teo, Cosme, Pujol, Eno, or Criollo see enriqueolvera.com). Have students report and synthesize the following information:

- History of the restaurant
- Consumer base
- Menu analysis
 - Authenticity of food
 - Diversity of offerings
 - Menu prices
- Proposed kitchen equipment needed to execute menu
- Proposed labor needs
- Compare the two concepts to determine strengths and weaknesses of each concept
- Additional information required:
 - What are the unique differentiation points among each, which are the most sustainable?
 - What are the areas for improvement?
 - Have students utilize online customer reviews and glassdoor to have a 360 view of the restaurant.

Assignment (outside of class)

Using the information in the case and your own external research, complete the following table with specific examples of Chef Olvera's entrepreneurial change and performance focus. For example, an example of dissemination would be his workshops he offers young culinary students aspiring to work in restaurants.

Svejenova, Mazza, and Planellas (2007) model of entrepreneurial change in restaurants	Lee, Hallak, and Sardeshmukh (2016) model of entrepreneurial restaurant performance
Creativity 1. 2. 3.	Human Capital 1. 2. 3.
Theorization 1. 2. 3.	Innovation 1. 2. 3.
Reputation 1. 2. 3.	Entrepreneurial Self-Efficacy 1. 2. 3.
Dissemination 1. 2. 3.	Restaurant Performance 1. 2. 3.

Additional resources:

Chef Enrique Olvera on Munchies <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IHP6lyLKfhQ>

Chef Enrique Olvera featured on Chef's Table (available on Netflix: <https://www.netflix.com/title/80007945>)

Pujol on Opentable <https://www.opentable.com/pujol-enrique-olvera?page=1>