

Hotelier Atef Mankarios

PASSION... Always In Fashion

by Robin Steinberg



Las Ventanas in Los Cabos —Elegant and Yet Sensual

PASSION is defined as "an intense, driving, or overmastering feeling or conviction." Atef Mankarios has brought these feelings to the hospitality industry with extraordinary results.

For 30 years, Mankarios has guided the development and management of some of the world's most acclaimed hotels. He has assembled a team that shares his passion for opulence and excellence, and it is reflected in each and every project they leave their mark on.

To meet Atef Mankarios is like walking into one of his hotels – warm, hospitable, elegant. Articulate and charming, demanding but fair, Mankarios seems blessed with an innate sense of fashion and an eye for detail. Applying these gifts in the development and operation of hotels has resulted in the "it" list of places to stay around the world.

The Egyptian-born Mankarios began his career as the overnight manager of a small two-star hotel in Paris. Eventually, he worked his way into the Rosewood family of hotels, where he turned a small, marginally-profitable company into one of the top hoteliers in the world. The Mankarios-led Rosewood developed a literal "who's who" of hotels and resorts—The Lanesborough in London (his best), Dallas' renowned Mansion on Turtle Creek, Las Ventanas in Los Cabos, Le Port Palace in Monte Carlo, Palazzo Arzago Hotel in Italy, just to name a few.

Creating a memorable experience for guests while increasing profitability for ownership has become Mankarios' trademark and the mission of Mankarios Partnership. His track record has earned him international renown and respect, and his "passion for excellence" is recognized worldwide. At our recent interview, Mankarios sent his plate back to the kitchen of a local (un-named) hotel – two former staff employees from the Mansion came up and said hello and said when they saw a plate going back they thought he was there.

When asked the secret of his success, Mankarios mentions the words passion (see a trend?), dedication, emotions and effort. He calls the hospitality industry a "24/7" profession, emphasizing that one must be a people pleaser—sensitive and understanding, demanding but fair.

As a hotel developer, Mankarios expects the best, and teaches his employees the best — it's the little things, from food presentation to employee attire, to walking guests to their destination and never pointing! Along with this demand for excellence, Mankarios will note, you must be sensitive to management's need for profitability. He likes to call it financial "savvy."

Mankarios believes that the industry will see demand for bigger hotel rooms and bigger bathrooms. Small and "hip" are on the way out. Instead, he says, people will spend their money on larger, elegant spaces. He sees "trendy" food giving way to healthy, good-tasting food.

His expectations for his staff? Extremely high, but fair. No compromises! He expects 100 percent, noting that if you expect only 95 percent, you will soon start getting 90 percent. According to Mankarios, you must strive for perfection and you will achieve excellence. His track record speaks for itself. The ultimate goal is customer service. Visit any hotel or resort developed or managed under the direction of Mankarios Partnership and you will experience this philosophy.

Mankarios tells the humorous story of a young chef who once prepared a delicious meal, but whose food presentation was lacking. The chef initially refused Mankarios' request for a "do over." Mankarios told the chef he would have to let him go but asked him to go back in the kitchen and think about it. A short while later, the chef returned with a beautifully-presented dish. "Now let's see if it tastes good," quipped Mankarios.



Fifteen years later, that chef still runs the five-star restaurant.

Mankarios' talents earned him a two-year stint with the prestigious St. Regis Hotels Corporation. He worked from Dallas because he didn't want to move to the corporate office in White Plains, New York. When St. Regis insisted upon his relocation to New York, he refused and started his own company.

Why Dallas? Mankarios considers Dallas a very friendly, gracious city and regards it as a top restaurant city. An admitted "foodie," Mankarios finds Dallas a sophisticated food and wine market with an abundance of fine restaurants and talented chefs.

Mankarios says he has no specific mentors. He learned his craft picking up bits and pieces from several people and places throughout his stellar career. It seems that he is merely blessed with an inner knowledge of elegance and perfection. "Life has to be lived in elegance" he said. This philosophy describes his lifestyle and his work.

PASSION is also described as a "love or devotion to some activity, object or concept." In his manner, and in his work, Atef Mankarios expresses his passion—his love and devotion for people. And we are all able to experience it. *Lucky us!*



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