

EAGA Business Builder

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April 23, 2024

Today's speaker was Hass Aslami—Pizza 9 Franchises



This morning's breakfast meeting was held at Chello Grill. Our host and speaker was Hass Aslami. Hass came to America from Iran when he was 17 years old. His plans were to get a Civil Engineering Degree then return home and go to work for his cousin who owned one of the largest construction companies in that country. Right before his last year of college, Iran's political structure (and therefore the country itself) changed and it became very difficult for Hass to go back. Mr. Aslami really enjoyed growing up in Iran and still remembers it as a great country. He had a short video that emphasized how varied and wonderful Iran is. It is quite different than what a lot of us think we know about it. The video showed snow covered mountains, with ski areas; there were wonderful beaches along the Caspian Sea coast; forests; rivers and huge areas of green farm land. His pictures also showed the large variety of wildlife and exotic plants that exist in Iran. It was easy to understand why Hass had enjoyed living there. But with the noted changes, Mr. Aslami decided to stay in the USA instead of going back home on a permanent basis. He did get his degree, but never actually had a career in the engineering profession. While in college, Hass became very interested in the restaurant industry and that's the direction that he chose to go when his original plans were no longer available. Hass has now been in the restaurant world for nearly forty years and he has had a great variety of experiences, challenges and successes. He has more than a few stories to tell. From Hass' previous EAGA presentations we already know quite a bit about his Pizza 9 Franchise system, but today we were able to learn, from his presentation and via the meeting venue, about another one of his restaurant operations. It was a little over seven years ago when Hass and his group decided to open Chello Grill here in Albuquerque. They thought that a restaurant specializing in authentic Persian cuisine would present such wonderful change from 'usual' food in the area. It would be a real hit. Hass knew that we humans are creatures of habit, but he didn't realize how deep the "Land of burritos and tacos" (as he put it) really went. Establishing his Persian restaurant has been an arduous adventure. But with a lot of hard work, Chello Grill has seen business increase 20% to 25% each year, except for the couple of years during the pandemic era. In addition to the kabobs and gyros the Chello offers vegetarian and vegan dishes, gluten free options, and a large selection of old recipe Persian stews (with or without meat). Their humas is made fresh daily and all of the menu items are of the 'non-processed food' variety. Hass is sure that people will like what Chello has to offer—he just has to get folks to try it. Along those lines, Hass is always open to thoughts about how to encourage more customers to come taste the food, and he continually trying new, or different, advertising and promotions approaches. One time, he even offered free Louis Vuitton hand bags to ladies that purchased food from the restaurant. Currently they hand out gift certificates at golfing events to encourage participants (and their families) to stop buy and try the food. Social media is also a big part of Chello's advertising plan. When talking about the authenticity of the food, Hass mentioned some of the spices that they use. One of particular interest was saffron. That spice is made from the stigma of the saffron crocus flower. The plant is grown on huge farms that often yield 4 tons per acre. But it takes about 170,000 flowers to get a single pound of the spice. Harvesting has to be done by hand because each stigma (there are three per flower) have to be individually removed from the flower, and it can only be done during a very specific part of the day. The fact that the work is so labor intensive, and the processing so precise, the cost of saffron can be as much \$5,000 per pound. Needless to say, you won't find saffron sitting in bowls on the counter at Chello Grill. In the safe, maybe. Hass, and his restaurant manager, Maggie, have recently been developing quite a reputation as being a fabulous catering service. Last week they successfully pulled off an event for 700 people (and at an incredibly reasonable cost per person). In today's presentation, Mr. Aslami also offered a couple of thoughts about the restaurant world in general: First thing: anyone thinking about buying a franchise should go work for a couple of months in one of the franchise's already functioning establishments. Sitting at a dining table and watching how a restaurant operates does not get you any reality about the actual effort and energy needed to run a food service business. That method will not show the complications regularly encountered behind the scenes either. Only working 'hands-on' for a period of time will provide the insight needed to really know how things work. Second thing: A food service business that has an absentee owner (one not actually working in the facility on a day-to-day basis) requires a large volume of business to be successful. The costs of paying additional workers and management for the operation are much larger in an absentee owner scenario. Hass also spoke a little about how his restaurants are regularly involved in community services. He has even helped establish the Fundaxi program where restaurants looking to improve business by bringing customers to their facility on particular days, or at particular times can partner with fund-raising organizations that need exposure. The restaurants donate part of the money received during the specified times to the organization. Both entities benefit. The restaurant, by having revenue during normally slow times, and the organizations by receiving funds for their projects. See Fundaxi.com for more information.

We certainly thank Hass for the use of his restaurant this morning. Even though Chello Grill is not usually open in the mornings, Maggie and her staff did an excellent job of providing us with a fine selection of the usual, and the not so usual, options for breakfast.

- ◆ **Welcome to our newest member:**
BMC Tactical representative: Walter Bracken email: walter@bmctactical.com Phone: 505-318-0146
- ◆ Coach Bronco Mendenhall will speak at our meeting on May 7th. It will be an extended meeting, starting at 7am and ending at 8:30am and members must sign up if they plan to attend. Space is limited to the first 110 that get on the list and its on a first come first served basis. In addition to registering yourself, you may also sign up 1 key employee and a potential member candidate (note that any candidate must be approved by Mario before you put them on the list). If there are any seats left by April 30th, we will open up the event to spouses. See Mario if you have any questions.
- ◆ The EAGA 2024 Golf Tournament will be on Friday May 17th at the Santa Ana Golf Course. Shotgun start at 1:00pm. Brown bag lunch will be provided. Cost is \$20 for members and \$85 for guests. Hole sponsors are available for \$100. (All costs will be billed to the EAGA member's account). If you want to participate, but don't have clubs, contact Jerry. He can arrange for you to borrow a set for the event. Signup sheets will be at the Tuesday breakfasts. If you have any questions, contact Committee Chairman, Jerry Becker.
- ◆ The Summer Bash will be on Saturday, July 13th at the home of Kit and Toni Turpen. Mark your calendars now. More details will be provided as we get closer to the event date.
- ◆ **First announcement of a new member application:**
DKM Asphalt
Representative: David K Montoya
Category: Asphalt
Sponsors: Kevin Gullick

If you have an objection to this company becoming a member, or if you have information that you feel should be considered during the review process, please contact Membership Committee Chairman, Jack Zipper (via telephone number 505-259-5959 or email at jdzipper@comcast.net) as soon as possible.

Badge Board Greeters

Apr 30th
May 7th Michael Kourcek—Atmosphere Commercial Interiors
May 14th John McGee—NM CPAT
May 21st

Scheduled Speakers

Apr 30th Darryl Moreland—DLM Southwest Collision
May 7th Guest Speaker—Coach Bronco Mendenhall
May 14th Laurence Herrera—The Performance Ranch
May 21st Michael Kourcek—Atmosphere Commercial Interiors

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