



ALINE'S STORY

Mayrig is a family. It's not just a restaurant with employees and customers, it's a family of different ethnicities, race, mentalities, and histories. It's a story and an experience that ties together whoever steps through those doors, be it for five minutes as a customer or years as an employee and it embeds a commonness in them all. You can eat food anywhere, but that sense of belonging and the positive energy that comes with it is a rare commodity that makes people's smiles that much brighter and allows them to leave with a type of satisfaction that doesn't come from simply finishing their plates. That sense of family, of togetherness, paired with resilience and persistence played a key role in allowing Mayrig to survive all it did.

The story starts with a young girl cooking in the kitchen with her father. Rich Armenian dishes crafted with that delicate love and peace, begging to be released beyond the boundaries of their household. Vegetables were sliced, olive oil was drizzled, and dreams of allowing others to taste the marvel they were creating were discussed – especially by the father. Dreams of opening a restaurant and introducing people to the true natures of this cuisine that were unfortunately never accomplished by the father. But that's one of the many beauties of dreams – they can be passed on. His young girl grew up and went through her fair share of tough experiences, pushed through and financed her education, and applied for loans to achieve her father's dream. She put everything into achieving it. Mayrig and Batchig were the reality and accomplishments of Aline and the dream of her father. It didn't stop there. Aline is now an ambassador not just for Armenian cuisine but for the entire heritage, spreading the moving story and intricate history through her franchises, books, and YouTube channel. She allowed herself to build on this dream and go steps further. The essence of showing people the true nature of these dishes ran steady and true, but Aline wanted to do so without harming the environment or relying on anything processed.

In this world you're either a giver or a receiver. One is not better than the other, but they are interconnected and reliant on each other for their existence. Aline is a giver. She gives during her good times and her bad times. She gives a little and she gives a lot. It's easy



for her. What isn't as easy is receiving from others, and after the August 4th explosion, she had to experience her fair share of it. Her house, her offices, Mayrig, and her cars were all gone, only Batchig was spared due to its distance from the port. That was not the worst part. The worst part was the injuries of her employees and team – of her family. Twenty-five of them incurred injuries, some of which were permanent or caused partial disabilities. Injuries so severe they impacted a person's job. But they were *family*, and when that is meant genuinely, it brings in with it support, understanding, and doing whatever you can to ease the pain of your family. So, a bankrupt Aline now had hospital bills to pay, homes of employees and her own to reconstruct, and an entire restaurant to rebuild. This required receiving support, whether financially or emotionally, but she was also still giving. When she found herself in Mayrig, hungry and thirsty with nothing to quench this thirst or alleviate this hunger, she contacted her chef in Batchig and asked for him to send sandwiches to the team. These sandwiches quickly became hundreds to feed other volunteers, and then eventually evolved to 2,500 hot meals. The terrace of Batchig was filled with tents for people who lost their homes to have a place to stay together and a duty to volunteer and help others while helping themselves get distracted, even just for a little bit. Aline gave and received. A mere twenty-nine days after the explosion, she finally reopened Mayrig's terrace, with an opening dinner just for the Mayrig family.

A year after the Beirut blast, Mayrig is still standing sturdy. The entire team is still there, with adjustments made on some people's jobs to accommodate for their injuries but ensure that their place is not gone and will not be anytime soon. Although they survived the terrors of the blast, it wasn't the end of the strife. As the pandemic hit and lock down after lock down rained on Beirut and the world, some members of Aline's team were stuck abroad in one of her franchises in Saudi Arabia. Quickly thinking, Aline decided to trust her instinct and open another Mayrig branch in Faraya – a seemingly rash decision in the moment, but a life altering one now. The new location helped pay the salaries during the lock downs in Beirut and was that extra leg to lean on and offer support. Aline was open with all her employees during this economic crisis. She shared the details of their finances with them, encouraged them to persevere and work hard, and maintained the loving and warm relationship between them by guaranteeing it did not go sour with competition. Furthermore,



Aline started selling Mayrig's frozen meals through GrabnGo and Toters and opened up Lahmajun – a dark kitchen concept. Everything they sell during the day is turned into dollars at night and used to buy fuel for their generators – a decision that allowed them to be the first to open their doors to anyone that needed to charge their phones during the electricity crisis.

If stuck in the middle of the ocean, just start swimming. The direction doesn't matter as long as you stick to it, otherwise you won't get results. That was Aline's strategy. Just open, move forward and fight through. She believed and proved that she made the decisions in her life and for her business, not external sources. She chooses when to close, when to move, and what to do. Right now, she chooses to stay, and be a literal beacon of light, for those already in her family and those that can be, in these dark times.