

Valeria Molina

(Translated from the Spanish with Google Translate.)

Prepared by Program Assistant, Valeria

Valeria has worked since she was fourteen years old providing her services in customer service in different restaurants. She has been a waitress, bartender and the friendly face of many businesses throughout her life.

She was an audiovisual production student at the Tecnológico CESDE in the city of Medellín and an entrepreneur.

Her first business arose when she was 19 years old due to the need to pay for her university and cover her own expenses such as tickets and others. She devised a low-budget proposal with the money that she managed to obtain in tips and payments in the restaurants where she worked as a waitress at that time, in order to increase her earnings.

Her initial idea was to create a product that would be easy to sell while she was studying and working, so she thought of designing t-shirts that could be given as souvenirs focused on tourists visiting Santa Fe de Antioquia, the town where she lived at the time in the year 2018.

With a savings of \$30, she was able to buy and print her own designs on six shirts, each one she would sell for \$10.

Once they were done, she proceeded to go to places where she had friends working and as a favor she asked that they displayed them in some corners, so the people who frequented these places would see and buy them. She chose to go to places where there was a large influx of tourists and made a deal with each one of the owners, the base price was \$10 but they could increase a percentage so they would sell for \$12 dollars and \$2.00 would be the profit for the place where they were selling and thus profit both parties.

Little by little, she increased her income and recovered her investment. She saved up and continued to make them in small quantities, only producing them when they had completely sold out.

Sometime later, with the savings she made, she decided to visit Ecuador and work seasonally while she was on vacation from the university. While there, she saw an opportunity for growth since she could volunteer at the Roadhouse Restaurant, with which she would cover her lodging completely free in exchange for working.

Tips were her source of income and over time she decided to look for a part-time job that could cover her needs.

It was so that in 2021 she started working at the Pink Iguana restaurant located in Olón where she was able to earn and save some money with the aim that at some point she would make an investment to set up her own business.

The opportunity came to her in the year 2022 when she saw a small venue for rent in one of the main streets of the town. With fear, she decided to close the deal for the value of \$600 dollars that she had at the time, without knowing exactly what she was going to do. She took a risk and while she continued working at the Pink Iguana, every week with what she received she bought goods, and little by little she created a space called ARENA.

The name that was inspired by her maternal surname in honor of her grandmother and that, contrasted with the environment where she currently lives, works perfectly with the beach, where

she began to sell breakfasts in the morning, while she continued working in the afternoons and at night at the Pink Iguana.

Months later people began to come to the place more and more, and Valeria was forced to resign from her other job to focus on hers.

It has been running for a year and a half now and with good reviews, although it has not been easy, she is growing, and learning each day.

