

Influential Women Highlights Kiara Ivette Mena: Building A Career In Culinary Leadership, Real Estate, And Resilience

TX, UNITED STATES, August 20, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Young Culinary Professional Draws on Hard Work, Faith, and Determination to Break Barriers and Create Opportunities Across Hospitality and Business

Kiara Ivette Mena is a culinary professional and emerging entrepreneur whose career reflects determination, resilience, and a commitment to continuous growth. With a foundation built through hands-on kitchen experience and rapid advancement throughout the hospitality industry, Kiara has established herself as a versatile culinary professional while simultaneously pursuing opportunities in real estate.



Kiara began working in food service at a young age, taking on roles ranging from cashier and server to line cook. Her early positions at restaurants including Mimi's Cafe and Las Fuentes Mexican Restaurant provided her with a strong foundation in high-volume service, kitchen operations, and the discipline required to succeed in demanding hospitality environments.

As her experience developed, Kiara transitioned into fine dining and luxury hospitality, where she expanded her culinary skills across multiple stations and production environments. She worked as a banquet cook with The Ritz-Carlton Hotel Company, L.L.C., and later as a line cook at Bel-Air Country Club. Through these experiences, she gained exposure to pastry, grill, garde manger, and banquet production, allowing her to become a more adaptable and well-rounded culinary professional.

At 19, Kiara became one of the youngest team members in her role at The Ritz-Carlton, marking

an important milestone in her early career. Her ability to take on responsibility at a young age reflected the work ethic and determination that have continued to shape her professional journey.

Today, Kiara serves as a Garde Manger Sous Chef at The Fort Worth Club, where she manages cold kitchen operations for banquet services in a fast-paced private club environment. Her responsibilities require organization, consistency, attention to detail, leadership, and the ability to perform under pressure.

Alongside her culinary career, Kiara is pursuing a path in real estate through Colibri Real Estate, expanding her professional skill set into property and business development. Her decision to pursue real estate reflects her broader ambition to build a multifaceted career and create opportunities beyond the kitchen.

Kiara's success is deeply connected to the environment in which she was raised and the lessons she learned from her family. She grew up as the eldest daughter of a single Mexican mother. Despite not having a lot of help and guidance and being surrounded by gang affiliations, dysfunction, and addiction, while relying on food stamps and government programs, Kiara strongly believes she inherited her mother's work ethic.

She never saw her mother quit. Her mother always provided for the family and continued working through difficult circumstances. Although her mother was hard on her, Kiara now understands why. Those experiences taught her discipline, responsibility, and the importance of continuing forward regardless of circumstances.

As the oldest daughter and sister, Kiara has also felt a strong responsibility to find ways to break generational cycles. She works hard to achieve her dreams not only for herself, but also to show her siblings that where someone comes from does not determine where they will go. She believes people get to choose who they want to become and what path they want to take in life.

Her journey has included significant challenges. Kiara was homeless at 19 and understands what it means to have nothing handed to her. She has had to work for everything she has achieved. Living independently in a city where her closest family member is two hours away, while the rest of her family remains in California, has taught her resilience and independence.

Being young and navigating life largely on her own has required Kiara to learn how to figure things out for herself. Rather than allowing those circumstances to limit her ambitions, she has used them as motivation to continue growing.

Her willingness to take risks has also been instrumental in her development. Moving from California to Texas to pursue opportunities in culinary arts management and real estate required courage and a willingness to step outside her comfort zone. The experience has allowed her to develop both personally and professionally while building a future based on her own goals.

Kiara also credits the mentors and friends she has encountered along her journey. She remains grateful to the people who gave her opportunities, saw something in her, believed in her, and invested in her development. Those relationships have reinforced her belief in the importance of recognizing potential in others and providing support when opportunities arise.

A positive mindset is another central part of Kiara's philosophy. She believes there are no problems, only solutions, and that perspective has helped her overcome challenges and pursue opportunities with confidence. She believes that anything and everything is possible as long as people are alive and healthy.

A Spanish expression that has particular meaning for Kiara is "para todo hay solucion menos la muerte," meaning there is a solution to everything but death. The philosophy represents her belief that challenges can be addressed and that difficult circumstances do not have to determine a person's future.

Faith is equally important to Kiara. She is deeply spiritual and prays every morning, putting her trust in God to make things happen. She believes God is great and plays a vital role in her life and achievements. Her faith provides a foundation for her decisions, her ambitions, and her ability to remain hopeful during difficult moments.

Kiara's work ethic has been equally crucial. She has learned to be the hardest worker in the room and allow her work to speak for itself. Her career has involved long hours, demanding environments, and significant responsibility, but she believes the effort has been worth it.

At only 21 years old, Kiara was already running her own kitchen, becoming one of the youngest individuals to lead in such a demanding environment. The accomplishment remains a milestone she is particularly proud of and reflects the rapid advancement she has achieved throughout her culinary career.

One of the best pieces of career advice Kiara has received is to be the hardest worker in the room and figure it out. She believes that when someone consistently works hard, eventually that effort becomes visible. People begin to recognize the quality of the work, and respect follows.

That mindset has been especially important for Kiara as a young woman working in the male-dominated culinary industry. Gaining respect from older crew members has sometimes been challenging, but she has learned that working hard and allowing her work ethic to shine can overcome many of those barriers.

Kiara encourages young women entering the industry to ask themselves how badly they want it. She believes it is ultimately a matter of determination and personal commitment. She encourages women to become comfortable with being uncomfortable because the industry can involve late nights, early mornings, tears, frustration, and failures.

Rather than allowing those difficulties to become reasons to quit, Kiara believes women need to keep going. She also considers finding a mentor to be crucial, particularly when navigating unfamiliar professional environments. Having someone who can provide guidance and help navigate new waters can make a meaningful difference.

Kiara believes that setting a clear goal, maintaining a positive attitude, and working hard can open doors. She also emphasizes the importance of faith. For her, prayer and trust in God are part of the foundation that supports her ambitions, while determination and work ethic ultimately drive her actions.

Her experiences have also shaped her perspective on opportunities for women. In real estate, Kiara sees expanding opportunities for women to build successful and independent careers as the industry continues to grow and evolve. She believes young women can bring valuable qualities and perspectives to the field while creating financial and professional independence.

The culinary arts, by comparison, remain a highly male-dominated environment where gaining recognition and respect can still be challenging for women. Kiara has experienced the difficulty of earning the respect of older crew members, particularly as a young woman.

She believes that being young and attractive can sometimes work against women in environments where credibility is closely tied to experience. However, Kiara has found that consistent effort ultimately becomes difficult to overlook. When she focuses on the work, maintains discipline, and continues showing up, people begin to recognize what she brings to the team.

For Kiara, persistence, skill, and confidence make it possible for women to earn respect and thrive in the kitchen. She views both culinary arts and real estate as spaces where women can continue breaking barriers and creating meaningful, lasting impact.

Helping others is another value that remains important to Kiara. Her professional growth has allowed her to financially support members of her family, including her siblings and grandmother. As a Latina, she recognizes the importance of supporting family and takes pride in being able to use her career development to help take care of the people she loves.

Kiara's approach to life remains grounded in the belief that life is beautiful and that everything represents an opportunity to grow. She strives to lead by example, work harder than those around her, and remain open to new possibilities.

Today, Kiara continues to develop her career as a culinary leader while expanding into real estate and entrepreneurship. Her journey from growing up with limited resources to taking on leadership responsibilities at a young age demonstrates the impact of resilience, discipline, faith, and determination.

Known for her versatility, drive, and willingness to work through challenges, Kiara Ivette Mena is building a career that extends beyond a single industry. Through hospitality, culinary leadership, real estate, and her commitment to family, she continues to pursue opportunities that allow her to grow, create independence, and inspire others to believe that their circumstances do not have to define their future.

Kiara recently achieved a major milestone by purchasing her first home in Texas in late June using only her income and without a co-signer. For her, homeownership represents more than a house—it is a powerful step toward building generational wealth and breaking generational cycles.

The achievement is especially meaningful given her childhood. Kiara, her mother, and her sister once lived in a women's and children's shelter under protective custody after fleeing for their safety, traveling by train with their belongings in black trash bags. The experience forced her to grow up quickly and shaped the resilience that continues to guide her today. Having her mother with her at closing and being able to offer her a home of her own created a deeply meaningful full-circle moment.

Kiara is also pursuing a career as a personal trainer and working toward her license. A firm believer that "health is wealth," she works out daily and credits fitness with strengthening her discipline, mindset, and perseverance. She hopes to help others reach their physical goals while supporting them through exercise and nutrition.

As a chef, Kiara can also provide meal-preparation guidance, combining her passion for fitness and food. She sees the value in developing multiple skills, believing that the more skills you have, the more opportunities you can create and the more value you can offer.

Learn More about Kiara Ivette Mena:

Through her Influential Women profile: <https://influentialwomen.com/connect/kiara-mena>

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