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GEORGIA'S RESTAURANT BUSINESSES

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"I could just wring their necks!" muttered Georgia to herself as she trudged in the chilly and windy aftermath of a snow storm to her restaurant, Upside Down. Yet another crisis at the recently opened store had made it necessary for her to rush there on a Saturday morning. Her mood only worsened as she accidentally stepped into a puddle of icy water gathered at the street corner. Georgia would much rather have been at home with her children making their breakfast and taking them for swimming lessons, but she had no choice other than to go. The people incurring her wrath were both the employees at Upside Down and the partners who co-owned the restaurant with Georgia.

IT Professional to Restaurateur

Georgia's parents were typical immigrants who had come over from the "old country." They had worked hard to ensure a better future for their children, of whom Georgia was the oldest. Georgia went on to obtain a college degree in Computer Science. In defiance of her father's strictures to adhere to their cultural norms (daughters stay at home until they are married), she then obtained a job and left home. In the face of parental disapproval, Georgia's brother, Stephen, supported her and even moved in with her in a show of solidarity. Eventually Georgia married one of her classmates from college. In 1988, they moved to a small town upstate where both were employed as computer software professionals in a large multinational firm. Her husband Michael worked as a software programmer and Georgia worked in quality assurance and de-bugging code.

In 1995, Stephen brought a business idea to Georgia and Michael. He proposed that they take over a restaurant in a major metropolitan city. Stephen had established himself there as both a real estate developer and a restaurant owner. While he himself was not interested in taking on a new business at that time, he felt it had great potential. Georgia and Michael also felt it was time to make a move. They had enjoyed their work immensely and were happy with how well they were treated as employees at the firm, but it was the beginning of the outsourcing trend at their company and the future was uncertain for IT professionals there. They decided to take the plunge and become entrepreneurs; that was how "Food Station" opened that same year in the city.

In the beginning, Georgia and Michael had to work extremely hard to establish Food Station. The neighborhood was not well developed; for instance, construction of the road in front seemed to go on forever. They persisted and built the business up, customer by customer. Georgia recalled the first Christmas when she brought her infant daughter to the restaurant and spent the entire night mailing out holiday cards to customers. Many customers stopped by later to thank Georgia and mention that they had never received such a card before from a local business. Similarly, for Thanksgiving,