



**Board of Directors:**

Governor Brendan Byrne  
Governor Jon Corzine  
Governor James Florio  
Governor Thomas Kean  
Governor James McGreevey  
Thomas Calcagni, Esq.  
Father Edwin Chinery  
Joseph Hayden, Esq.  
Bishop Reginald T. Jackson  
Michael Kempner  
Leslie K. Franks McRae  
Chief Justice Deborah Poritz

**Executive Director:**

John Koufos

**Corporate Office:**

Martin's Place  
398 Martin Luther King Jr. Dr.  
Jersey City, NJ 07305  
P: 551.222.4323

**Reentry Sites:**

Elizabeth  
Hackensack  
Jersey City  
Kearny  
Long Branch  
New Brunswick  
Newark  
Paterson  
Toms River

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

December 18, 2017

**Media Contact:**

Stefanie Campolo, 551.256.9022  
[scampolo@njreentry.org](mailto:scampolo@njreentry.org)

## **New Jersey City Restaurant is Being Opened by Former Prison Cook**

***New restaurant owner Candido Ortiz was granted clemency on a 49-year term by former President Obama; grand opening to be held on December 19***

On Tuesday, December 19, 2017 at 11 a.m., Candido Ortiz will host the Grand Opening of his new restaurant, El Sabor Del Café, which is located at 31 Martin Luther King Jr. Drive, Jersey City, N.J. 07305.

Mr. Ortiz was incarcerated in January 1990 with a sentence of 49 years and six months. While in federal prison, he served as head cook, managing a culinary team of 20 and preparing meals for as many as 2,500 inmates each day. In December 2016, he was released pursuant to federal clemency by President Obama as part of an ongoing effort to release prisoners with disproportionately harsh sentences.

During his incarceration, Mr. Ortiz enrolled in cooking classes, earning several culinary certifications and soon becoming head cook. He believes his dedication to learning and cooking is what led him to be released 18 years early. He says his incarceration also led him to receive a call from God; he became an avid reader of the bible and participated in bible studies.

The same month that Ortiz was released from prison, he enrolled in the New Jersey Reentry Corporation's (NJRC) program, where clients receive addiction treatment, structured sober housing, job training and employment, linkage to legal services and healthcare, and spiritual mentoring. After orientation, clients traditionally receive case management services for a six- to nine-month period.

Within a week of completing NJRC's orientation, Ortiz was employed as a cook at the Light Rail Café in Jersey City. With years of experience cooking for large populations, he came to the Light Rail Café with a positive outlook. "It's a small place, but I feel comfortable because I learned something different. In life, it's never too late to learn something," he said.

Now, Candido Ortiz is accomplishing a longtime goal. "When I was in prison, I decided to one day start my own restaurant," he said. "The [NJRC] program helped me. My mentor, Reverend Flores, helped me to get my own restaurant. I thank God, President Obama, and Governor McGreevey for what they do in my life."

Candido Ortiz invites the community to come to El Sabor Del Café, which features Spanish, American, and international cuisine and offers a la carte, catering, and delivery options.

"Cooking is my life, and I put love into everything I prepare," he said.

###