

# 2020 Rhode Island & New England Minority-owned Small Business of the Year: The Family Cake

by [Anthony Cormier](#) | Sep 30, 2020 | [In the News](#)

Juan Lantigua's path to opening the Family Cake is an uncommon one. Born in the Dominican Republic, Juan played professional basketball in his native country, being named rookie of the year in 1992. In 2001, Juan and his wife Wendy immigrated to the United States in pursuit of the American Dream. Upon arrival in the U.S., Juan set out to find a job in Rhode Island, and focused on learning English in order to help expand his opportunities.



Juan has proven that the entrepreneurial spirit transcends all barriers, and that success, even in the toughest of time, is out there for those willing to reach for it.

By 2014, Juan had secured a career as a Sales District Manager for a multi-national consumer products company, but as his family began to grow, he began looking to the future. He wanted to create something that would provide a better future for his children and decided to start a wholesale baked goods business: The Family Cake. He and Wendy began baking their goods at the Hope & Main food incubator in Warren. Juan only worked part-time at the business while Wendy made it her full-time occupation.

As 2017 began, the Family Cake had outgrown Hope & Main and the couple began looking for a larger facility. Juan would reach out to the Rhode Island Small Business Development Center and began working with the Providence Director Manuel Batlle. "I had my first meeting with Manuel when I was starting to outgrow my baking facilities

and initiated my search for a new location,” said Lantigua. Juan and Manuel would work together to find a perfect location while also looking for the right lender who would help them secure the funding the company would need. This was the beginning of a working relationship that continues to this day.

“Juan was never afraid of hard work and showed a commitment and determination to succeed right from the start. For quite some time, he worked a full-time job for a major corporation while also sowing the seeds for his bakery. He understood that he would have to make sacrifices, work long hours at two jobs, and make time to take advantage of the services offered by the RISBDC and other resources. I nominated Juan for Rhode Island Minority-Owned Small Business Owner of the Year award because he has the fire and entrepreneurial spirit that it takes to succeed,” said Batlle.

Lantigua would approach Buck Harris of Community Investment Company (CIC) securing an SBA-back Community Advantage loan. The loan allowed Juan to finance a new baking facility and storefront in Providence. The new facility opened in August of 2018, and by mid-2019 Juan would leave his job to dedicate 100% of his time to the company. The new facility allowed the Family Cake to expand its offerings in both its wholesale and retail arms. On the wholesale side, they began distributing baked goods including tres leches, bread pudding, rice pudding, corn pudding (majarete), custard (flan), cakes and Colombian bread to customers in Rhode Island, Massachusetts, and Connecticut. On its retail side, the Family Cake sells a line of South American and Caribbean baked goods and sweets such as empanadas, Colombian bread, buñuelos, tres leches, and cakes for special occasions such as birthdays, quinceañeras, and weddings.

The move opened new sales avenues on the retail side of the business and the Family Cake has reaped the rewards. From 2017 to 2019 the Family Cake witnessed an astounding 553% gross revenue growth and expected this year’s gross revenue to reach \$1 million prior to the outbreak of COVID-19. Despite doing his best to remain open, Juan was forced to shut down in March.

“In the beginning, it was incredibly tough. I had to send half of my employees’ home so we could survive,” said Lantigua. Juan secured a Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) loan from Bank of America, the funds from the program offering the relief the business needed. With his workforce back Juan began looking into other SBA resources, including an Economic Injury Disaster Loan. With the EIDL funds, Juan was able to pay off high-interest credit cards he had used to keep his business going, purchase a new truck to expand his delivery routes, and purchase a commercial refrigerator to extend the shelf life of his products.

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