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Barbarini owners about to open new restaurant

November 4, 2014 | Filed under: Seaport Report | Posted by: Josh Rogers



Claudio and Linda Marini, lost their beloved Barbarini restaurant to Hurricane Sandy two years ago, but they were blocked from most storm assistance programs, and expect to finally open a new restaurant, Da Claudio at 21 Ann St. early this month. Downtown Express photo by Janel

By Janel Bladow | We marched through the second anniversary of Hurricane Sandy. The neighborhood, residents and businesses continue to bounce back. A slew of newspaper articles and television reports interviewed Seaporters about the damage and recovery. We continue to thrive.

A long haul back... While a lot of neighbors and businesses struggled to pick up the pieces since Oct. 29, 2012, few had as difficult time as Linda and Claudio Marini.

The co-owners of the beloved Barbarini Alimentari and Mercato were financially wiped out when the storm destroyed their Front St. restaurant and market. But with customer support and gritty determination, the couple chose not to give up but to rebuild. This time on higher ground.

Their new restaurant, Da Claudio, expects to open its doors at 21 Ann St., next to Theater Alley, for a soft opening within days.

“My husband and I knew from day one that we wanted to rebuild. Ours was a devastating loss. We lost all our assets and income,” Linda told Seaport Report.

Because they did not rebuild in the original location, they didn’t qualify for any of the aid programs offered to small businesses, and given their financial losses, she said, “No bank wanted to touch us.

“We didn’t want to be victims of the storm,” said Linda, who grew up in New York City and knew how tough it could be to find an affordable space to rent. They searched for a year before they came across the new building. “I love this place.”

They decided to build from scratch. And that labor of love took another year of hard work.

“No matter how low or down we were after the storm,” added Claudio, “every day people were asking us how we were doing and when we were going to reopen. That outpouring of love spurred us on.”

The couple said even their three children — 11-year-old twins (boy and girl) and 8-year old daughter — pitched in. They willingly gave up allowances and vacations.

“As a family we made sacrifices,” Linda said. “We saw this challenge as a life lesson for our children. We needed to set an example for them. We are a small business, essentially a mom and pop shop.”

While their journey is painful in many ways, the couple saw this fresh start as a way to rebuild and grow, not only their business but their relationship with the neighborhood. Starting in a newer area and a new location, gave them a second chance.

“We started with an empty slate,” said Linda. The raw space morphed into a modern, hip spot with three distinctive dining experiences for casual fine dining.

Up front is a deli case with imported cold cuts and cheeses for take-out, and small plates at the long, marble-topped bar. Behind the bar are high-top tables for casual drinks and eats. Midway through the large, airy spot are leather cushioned booths and tables that can seat large and small groups. And at the back is the spacious, open kitchen where chef Mattia Meneghetti works with his staff.

Meneghetti, like several servers and bar staff, worked at Barbarini and waited to come along with the Marinis on their newest venture.

“We have the staff of our dreams. They are as passionate about our story as we are and excited to turn a new chapter,” said Linda.

The menu too will be different. Chef Meneghetti worked at an Austrian-German restaurant during the past two years and is excited to include some of his newly acquired recipes in the mix.



Chef Mattia Meneghetti has returned to the Marinis and has a whole new menu for Da Claudio. Downtown Express photo by Janel Bladow.

Emphasis will be on fresh and healthy, farm to table, seasonal fare. The bar menu will feature Italian specialties such as little Italian puff pastry savory treats. Local seafood and farm-raised meats will headline the daily specials. Homemade pastas and desserts round out the menu.

Claudio, who will resume his spot upfront as host, said, “We’ve been here (Downtown) since 9/11. This is a special community to us. Everyday, people drop in and ask us when we’re opening, what they can do to help. We want to give back this love.”

“We waited two years,” added Linda. “Sandy didn’t knock us out. We are confident and coming back in a big, strong way.”

Learn the latest...To be part of the recovery, attend the South Street Seaport Public Forum on Monday, Nov. 10, 6 p.m., at Spruce Street School Auditorium, 12 Spruce St., to learn the latest about what is being proposed for the future of our neighborhood, including developments on the historic district, the Seaport Museum and the possibility of a farmers’ market return.

Expected speakers at the event organized by Save Our Seaport and the Metropolitan Waterfront Alliance are New York State Assembly Speaker Sheldon Silver, Manhattan Borough President Gale Brewer and City Councilmember Margaret Chin. [R.S.V.P.](#) to attend:.

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