

Food

A 'Bridge' to success



Daily News Photos by Jeffrey Langlin

Above: Trevini Ristorante owner Gianni Minisini and Marco Uperi discuss wine pairings for menu items. Top: A selection of wines imported by Uperi, grandson of the founder of Old Bridge Inc.

Family's Italian wine business spans an ocean — and three generations.

There is the oft-repeated tale of people who visit Palm Beach and are so enchanted they never leave. That's what happened to Antonio Minisini when he came for a vacation during the 1970s.

By 1980, Minisini had moved to Palm Beach and opened a boutique on Worth Avenue. He sold hand-crafted Florentine shoes made by Salvatore Ferragamo.

This was the golden era of Italian couture. The world went to Italy, and especially Florence, to buy elegant clothes and luxury leather goods. They also discovered sophisticated food and the world-class wines of Tuscany.



Roberta Sullivan

WINE FINDS

Old Bridge wines can be found on wine lists at The Breakers, Renato's, Cucina dell'Arte, Cafe Saporì and Vagabond. Selected wines also are available at Artici Market.

as Renato Desidero, owner of Renato's restaurant, because to great he decided to give up fashion for the wine business.

He closed the shoe store and opened Old Bridge Inc., a boutique wine importer. His goal was to develop a portfolio of fine wines from Italy. He maintained quality on both sides of the Atlantic with a "hands-on" approach. He cultivated a client base of Florida restaurateurs that reflected the high culinary standards of France and Italy. He would taste and pair wines with individual dishes on the menus.

His quest to import the finest Italian wines became a way of life that would become the foundation of his dynasty. Several times a year he would go to Italy to visit producers, attend wine exhibitions, discover the latest trends and fill climate-controlled containers in Livorno to be



From left, Filetto di Agnello al Primitivo e Verdure Scattane (Lamb fillet with Primitivo wine sauce and sautéed green vegetables), Orecchiette con Polpa di Granchio e Asparagi (Orecchiette pasta with cherry tomatoes and asparagus tips) and Insalata di Polpa con Patate (octopus and potato salad) from Trevini Ristorante.

shipped to Miami and delivered to his warehouse.

In 1993, he was joined by daughter Silvia and son (in-law) Franco Uperi. They had moved from Pisa to Palm Beach to work in the family business. Although Minisini died 10 years ago, the standards he set continued through the generations.

Marco Uperi, Minisini's grandson, joined the team a few years ago. He grew up in Italy and spent his summers with his grandfather in Palm Beach. As a child, he would play in the warehouse amid thousands of cases of wines. At night, the family would dine at their restaurant's establishment. His grandfather's passion for wine must have come through the genes because Marco spends his time, as his grandfather did, working with each client pairing wines with dishes on their menus.

"Being a native of Pisa, I have a preference for Tuscan wines," Uperi said, "but I appreciate wines from all different regions, wines that are identified for their strong particularity. I enjoy a nice Chianti Classico, a great Brunello di Montalcino or a well-rounded Super Tuscan — wines that are earthy with bold flavors, robust and strong in character. I appreciate food wines, those that need food to come alive."

He says that although there is a lot to learn from books, he goes more by

feelings, comparing and contrasting wines and using his basic knowledge to understand them, and being flexible and open minded.

"I love what I do and I try every day of our growing business," Uperi said. "Old Bridge has remained successful and of the highest reputation for more than 30 years because we are passionate and have followed our dreams."

RECIPES

The Apulia region extends over the heel and half the instep of the Italian boot. The principal port, Bari, hometown of Gianni Minisini, Uperi and Claudia Travisan are the owners of Trevini Ristorante at 150 Worth Avenue. The area has a strong tradition of homemade pasta made from durum wheat flour and water. The recipe below makes chewy firm pasta. The "little ears" of pasta hold the delicious sauce like a tiny scoop. You can find the pasta at specialty Italian grocers throughout the area.

Orecchiette Con Polpa Di Granchio E Asparagi (Orecchiette Pasta with Cherry Tomatoes and Asparagus Tips)

For the pasta:
 • Water
 • 1 tablespoon salt
 • 8 ounces orecchiette pasta

For the sauce:

- 2 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil
- 4 cloves garlic, finely chopped
- 8 asparagus tips
- 8 ounces jumbo lump crab meat
- 10 cherry tomatoes cut in quarters
- ½ cup Pinot Grigio or other dry white wine
- ½ cup vegetable broth
- Salt and pepper to taste
- 8 basil leaves

Bring a large pot of salted water to a boil, and cook the pasta according to package directions. Drain thoroughly.

In a heavy-bottom sauce pan, heat the olive oil, add the garlic and cook until the cloves are golden brown. Add the asparagus, crab meat and tomatoes. Sauté for 2 minutes. Add the wine and broth. Cook for 3 to 4 minutes, adding the basil leaves at the last minute. Salt, pepper to taste.

Divide the pasta on two plates, spoon the sauce over the pasta and serve immediately.

Makes 2 servings.

Wine notes:

Marchesi de Cordano, "Diamante" Pinotino 2009

This dish pairs perfectly with a wine made from Pinotino, an indigenous grape found in the center of Italy, in the Abruzzo and Marche regions. This indigenous white grape was brought back from the brink of extinction a few years ago. This wine is aged in 100 percent stainless steel to capture the pure essence of the herbaceous quality of the grape. It has a long mineral finish in the mouth.

Insalata Di Polpa Con Patate

- Octopus and Potato Salad
- 1 stalk celery, chopped
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- 1 tablespoon white vinegar
- ¼ pound octopus, cut in pieces
- 2 large Idaho potatoes, diced
- ½ black olives
- 2 tablespoons chopped Italian flat-leafed parsley
- 1 tablespoon lemon juice
- 2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
- Salt and pepper, to taste

In a large pot of water, add bay leaf, celery and vinegar. Bring to a boil. Add octopus and lower fire to medium. Cook for 45 minutes.

Please see FOOD, Page 11