

MILESTONE YEAR

Stephanie & Maurizio sit at the bar at La Frasca - it's a rare catch-up moment for the Bertossi husband-and-wife team. Maurizio has just come from the kitchen at one of their 4 restaurants; Stephanie has arrived from another. They divide and conquer - it's just another great day. And then it dawns on Stephanie - they've been doing this together now for 30 years!

"It's amazing to realize we've been in business so long," says Stephanie Bertossi, who with her husband Maurizio, have opened, owned and operated 10 restaurants in the HRM over the past 3 decades. "But it feels like it was just yesterday," says Stephanie, with a chuckle. "We get so much great support from our community which is one of the best things about having a successful business in Halifax."

IN THE BEGINNING

Stephanie, from Dartmouth, and Maurizio, from Italy, met in Calgary in 1981, and the restaurant talk started right away. "Sparks started flying, restaurants started flying," laughs Stephanie. "We thought our first restaurant would be in Calgary," she says. "But the opportunity arose with La Perla in Dartmouth in 1984, and we went for it."

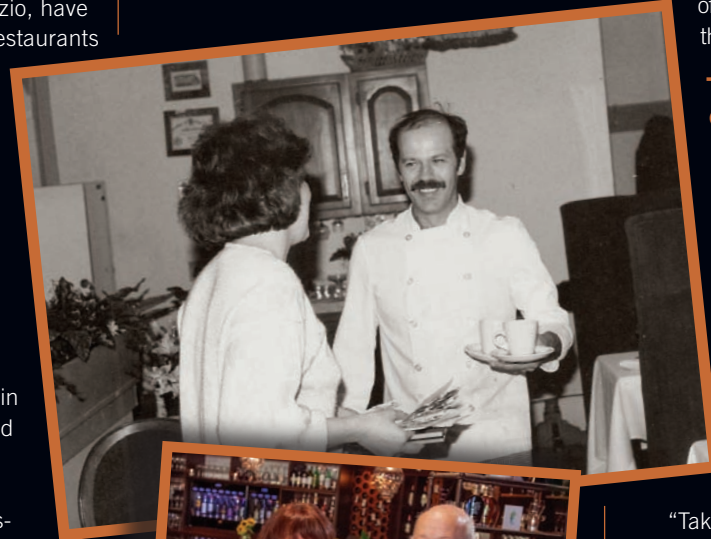
"I still remember cleaning the bricks with acid and learning how to drywall, while Maurizio was building the kitchen from the ground up," she says, laughing and noting that at the time they were "total novices" at construction. La Perla opened and thrived for years before they sold it in 1988 and started their next great venture in Halifax.

In 1988 they opened Da Maurizio in the Brewery Market, which became the benchmark for fine dining and all things Italian. In 2007, they sold Da Maurizio to Tanya and Andy King, the restaurant's chef and manager respectively, and it continues to flourish today.

In 1994 the fabulously popular il Mercato Trattoria on Spring Garden Road was created, followed by the upscale Bish World Cuisine in 2001 at Bishop's Landing. A second il Mercato Trattoria location at Sunnyside Mall in Bedford was opened in 2003. And of course, Ristorante a Mano, also in Bishop's Landing, "just happened along in 2007," laughs Stephanie.

The constant quest to renew continued with the opening of The Bicycle Thief in 2011. "And that's Maurizio on the bike by the way," Stephanie points out, referring to The Bicycle Thief's logo. La Frasca on Spring

30 YEARS OF BERTOSSİ FLAVOUR



Garden Road is their latest venture, opened in May of 2013, featuring authentic cuisine from Friuli in the northeast of Italy, where Maurizio was born.

DETAILS MATTER & EVERYTHING'S PERSONAL

When it comes to concept and design, it isn't only their hearts and culinary talent that go into the restaurants. Examine a book shelf or take a closer look at the walls - chances are the book, the painting or the photograph that catches your eye is one of countless items culled during their travels through Italy. On a Sunday this month, in the couple's home kitchen, Stephanie is creating new music mixes for all the Bertossi restaurants while sorting through new china samples. She personally manages every detail of her customers' experience.

The service team brings the hospitality to the equation - brilliantly and masterfully", Stephanie adds, "They grew with the

company." "We are lucky to have so much talent," says Maurizio. Many of the staff have moved from entry level to senior management positions. "Some have become company shareholders", she says, citing Hakan Uluer, Manager of The Bicycle Thief. "We foster development and growth - we see the value in everyone," says Stephanie. "Everyone who works with us has unique talents."

Always looking to bring in people who add value, Dean Leland recently joined The Bertossi Group as General Manager, bringing his wealth of business and operations experience to the table.

THE LOCAL BUSINESS CONNECTION

Stephanie & Maurizio recognize the value of using local ingredients as well as teaming up with local talent. "We've had the privilege to meet and collaborate with many people over the years, and developed great business relationships and lasting friendships. We have long-term relationships with all of our suppliers, and a great many of the people that we work with I grew up with in Dartmouth", says Stephanie.

"Take Mike Hanlon at Hanlon Marketing Design, for example." Hanlon's been behind all of their graphic materials since 1988. Similarly, RCS Construction, Mac Interior Design and Mattatall Signs are just a few of the players on their "go-to" team when building or renovating.

"Jim Spatz of Southwest Properties is the icing on the cake," says Stephanie, "building three restaurants with us since 2001. Bish World Cuisine was the first tenant in Bishop's Landing, and Jim literally moved heaven and earth to enable us to meet our opening date."

IT'S A FAMILY AFFAIR

The couple marvels at the sheer breadth of their customer base. They've literally served generations of families. "I'm outside a Mano on a Saturday afternoon, and I see all these strollers parked outside. Of course I know the mothers of the children in the strollers, plus their mothers." Stephanie says. "Sometimes I even know their mother's mother. It's so rewarding to have both multi-generational clientele and multi-generational staff".

Back at La Frasca, the couples' chat and reminiscing abruptly ends. "The phones are ringing, people are coming in, and it's time to give up our seats at the bar," says Stephanie. A quick peck on the cheek, the exchange of "Ciao," and the couple is out the door, readying for another evening of dinner and a show, Bertossi-style