

CREAM RISES TO THE TOP

Larry DiPasquale's recipe for success

By Jenna Capra

A painting of San Pascual, the patron saint of kitchens, appropriately hangs in all of Larry DiPasquale's businesses, watching over the hard work that he and his staff put in everyday at Epicurean Culinary Group's multiple locations around the state. His company has risen to become one of the most highly regarded in the industry; dubbed one of the "Top 25 Caterers in the World" by Special Events Magazine, and named Colorado Meetings and Events Magazine's, "Best Caterer," for three years running, among numerous other accolades. As Founder and President, Mr. DiPasquale has likewise been the recipient of Colorado Meetings and Event's Magazine's prestigious Lifetime Achievement Award, honored by National Catering Magazine as their "Top Entrepreneur," and of course, many others, including several of Andiamo's very own "Primo Awards of Excellence" and a spot in the Colorado Italian American Hall of Fame.

Mr. DiPasquale can only describe his phenomenal accomplishments as being "blessed," but it's clear he has put a lot into bringing his dreams to fruition and he shares his recipe for success without reserve.

"The most important ingredient is first and foremost, hard work," he states emphatically. "You have to set your goals high and be uncanny in your pursuit- challenge yourself constantly. There will always be 101 excuses why you can't do something, but in the end it all comes down to you. Success is a marathon, not a sprint." By the time DiPasquale was 22, he had already worked in several restaurants, learned how to cook, and had risen from waiter to the Director of Food and Beverage at Harrah's in Lake Tahoe, overseeing all of the five-star casino's food facilities. "Bill Harrah taught me what it meant to go above and beyond for customers and staff alike." In 1981, Larry DiPasquale moved to Colorado and put all his experience to work to begin his own business, the Epicurean Culinary Group.

29 years later, the company is thriving; giving testament to the things Mr. DiPasquale considers his next batch of ingredients for success: Perseverance, and Optimism. When he was just developing Epicurean, Larry was determined to be the best and never strayed from his goals even when facing obstacles. "I never considered myself an over-achiever," he explains, "I just like to achieve. I've always been highly motivated and I think I inherited an entrepreneurship from my father." He has seen his business through good times and bad, but firmly believes you play the cards you are dealt with in life. "You can't let your visions be derailed by hardships." Epicurean Culinary Group has been through its share of disappointments, letdowns, and hard economies, but has only continued to evolve and grow stronger as a result of Mr. DiPasquale's passion and hope for his company, cumulating most recently in the opening of Epicurean's restaurant and gathering place, Mangia Bevi Café.

"Of course," he adds another ingredient to the mix, "what makes everything actually work and ultimately worth doing are the relationships you develop as you go." In addition to Bill Harrah, Mr. DiPasquale cites his business partner, Sharon Magness Blake, assistant, Colleen Lagomarsino, his numerous wonderful managers, and all of his devoted staff as essential for success. "They're more like an extended family. They don't work for you, they work with you. You expect a lot from them and they give a lot in return. I'm lucky to have such amazingly talented and passionate people around me who are committed to being the best." Equally cherished to Mr. DiPasquale, are the relationships he develops with clients as he seeks to make each and every event he is a part of unique and special. "There are just so many people who have become loyal clients and, in turn, close friends. My success is really just a reflection of the community embracing my journey in a very personal way."

In the end however, the key ingredient, win or lose for Larry DiPasquale is the support of loved ones. He points specifically to his wife, Jill DiPasquale as his mentor for her genuine passion for life and people and recalls one of his proudest moments was seeing her receive the Leukemia and Lymphoma Society's "Woman of the Year" award. "Giving back to the community is something both of us are deeply committed to, but she is just incredible at it." Their wonderful children, 17 year old Christina, and 15 year old Rusty, are also sources of happiness and inspiration for him, and each has a menu item named in their honor at Mangia Bevi, along with several other family members he pays tribute to through his food.

When Larry DiPasquale grew up in his large Italian family, meeting every Sunday for a traditional dinner, he was surrounded by a true love for food and entertaining though he had no indication they would become the keystones of his career. An incredibly warm and generous man, Mr. DiPasquale is also a keen business leader and visionary who above all else, just believes in doing things "the right way." He hopes to take the Epicurean Culinary Group and Mangia Bevi ever further, to keep impacting and reinventing the industry as he has done so often in the past, while always continuing to give back to the community. And someday, perhaps, he even thinks he might retire to a dream home on the Italian coast.

As San Pascual looks on in the background over the bustle of his businesses, Larry DiPasquale adds one last ingredient for success in life with a laugh, "You know... it probably couldn't hurt to have a dash of Italian luck on your side as you go!" ■ *Photos by Steve Crecelius of Wonderworks.*



Larry DiPasquale and his wife, Jill.



Epicurean Culinary Group's building.

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