

## Gruppo Italiano (GI): Authentic Italian Cuisine Rises to New Heights

Tommaso Cartia (March 24, 2017)



At New York's Italian restaurant Il Gattopardo, owner and restaurateur Gianfranco Sorrentino hosted a Members & Press Cocktail Reception for the non-profit organization Gruppo Italiano (GI), which promotes authentic Italian cuisine in the US. The night featured many guest speakers and the presentation of the GI Scholarship Program. Part of GI's mission, in fact, is to assist Italian students and professionals to come and work in the US, where they will learn how to tell their country's culture through dining experiences. i-Italy by the way, is glad to announce its media partnership with GI, whose mission it shares in full.

A true all-round Italian experience. This is what Gruppo Italiano promises to offer here in the US. The restaurants that are joining the group are committed to make you feel as you were in Italy from the very moment you set foot in any of them.

[Gruppo Italiano \(GI\)](#) [2], is the natural evolution of the original Gruppo Ristoratori Italiani (GRI), founded in 1979, which had carried out significant work in supporting the Italian food industry in the



United States. Throughout the years, the group has become a benchmark for Italian products, importers, distributors, and the Italian restaurant scene with a special focus on hospitality and culinary education.

GI is bringing the old group to new heights with a renovated program for its members and a wide range of new opportunities in advertising, networking, and staffing solutions for businesses in the United States dealing with authentic Italian products, from food to wine.

### **The Event**

The elegant cocktail reception at [Il Gattopardo](#) [3] featured speeches by Maurizio Forte, Director for the USA of the [Italian Trade Commission](#) [4], [Charles Scicolone](#) [5], a wine consultant who is often called the “Maestro of Italian Wines,” journalist [John Mariani](#) [6] who authored the book “How Italian Food Conquered the World,” and Sorrentino himself.

i-Italy, which just announced its media partnership with the association, was there to cover the event.

Sorrentino explained the new group’s mission. He focused on the importance of Italian culinary tradition and the new educational efforts that the organization is providing both for Italian and American students.

“A few years ago the Italian dining scene was quite different. Most of the Italian restaurants used to serve what is called 'Italian-American cuisine,' which was created by Italian immigrants with local ingredients,” Sorrentino began, “Now the Italian restaurant scene is way more vibrant, contemporary, diversified, sexy and glamorous. We did a lot in 30 years to improve the image of Italian cuisine, but we still have a lot to do. We think that in times of glocalization, with Nouvelle cuisine being the future, the GI feels the need to promote authentic Italian cuisine, which is not static but is in constant evolution, but evolution needs to respect our tradition and culture.”

### **The GI Scholarship Program**

The restaurateur then talked about the GI Scholarship Program, which, for 35 years, had been providing almost a quarter of a million dollars in scholarships to culinary and hospitality students from across the US.

“This scholarship enables American culinary students to travel to Italy and to participate in intensive educational programs in order to study the cuisine, viticulture, and products of Italy.”

But that’s not the only initiative that the GI has in terms of education. It is, in fact, important to support American students who want to have a real touch of Italy before coming back to work for the Italian dining scene in the US, but it is also vital that more Italians can come to work in the US.

### **The Importance of an Authentic Italian Staff**

The GI Board provides direct access to agencies throughout Italy that give the chance to host Italian culinary students, cooks, and chefs for research and development.

As Sorrentino stresses, “It’s also important to bring Italian students and Italian professionals here in America. We provide them with accommodations and visas, and they start to work in our restaurants.” It’s a great opportunity for Italians who want to bring the Italian food industry in the US to new heights of excellence. Very often, even in the most authentic Italian restaurants in the US, we find a staff which is not from Italian origins. Dining in an Italian restaurant should be an immersive experience for the clients. A restaurant should tell the story of a culture and a country. That’s why it’s important the staff comes from a specific background. GI is trying to fill this void by simplifying the process for Italians to work in Italian restaurants in America in order to bring their natural Italian vibe to those dining establishments.

### **Consumer Education and Italian Companies Aggregation**



Maurizio Forte also talked about the importance of education, this time targeting it more towards the consumers.

“Educating our consumers around the world about authentic Italian food is very important. We want to be a platform for spreading knowledge about Italy and for selling our products. That’s why we also associate with the distributors and the importers. We work very hard in promoting authentic Italian cuisine and restaurants with the conviction that entering into an Italian restaurant must feel like traveling to Italy, despite being in the US”.

Then Forte pointed out how important it is for smaller Italian companies and artisans to come together as a group and to establish their footprint in a market where the larger chains have always had more power.

Catch more about the event on our upcoming episode of [i-ItalyTV](#) [7], with exclusive interviews with the protagonists of the night.

i-ItalyTV airs every Sunday @ 1:00 PM on NYC Life, Channel 25 (HD ch 525)

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- [1] <http://iitaly.org/files/spaghettiljpg-2>
- [2] <http://www.gruppo-italiano.com>
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- [4] <http://www.italtrade.com>
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