

## The Heart of Casa Belvedere ~ Cucina Colavita

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A new addition to Casa Belvedere, the official home to the Italian Cultural Foundation ~ Cucina Colavita opens its doors to the public, offering cooking classes to amateurs and professionals alike.

[Casa Belvedere](#) [2], the official home to the Italian Cultural Foundation whose mission is to preserve, promote and celebrate all things Italian is now a proud owner of a state of the art kitchen.

Although major renovations of the mansion have kept the Staten Island Italian cultural center closed to the public since September, the official opening of “Cucina Colavita,” the facility's culinary school kitchen, certainly marks the beginning of a new era, bringing hands-on instructional cooking classes hosted by guest chefs.

The kitchen is the heart of a home, and what a marvel of a kitchen it is! Lets start with the location. Situated in [Grymes Hill](#) [3] neighborhood of Staten Island, Casa Belvedere, a magnificent historic landmark mansion surrounded by lavish grounds and boasts with rich history, and offers spectacular views of the New York City Harbor and the [Verrazano-Narrows Bridge](#) [4].



Back in November of 2008, Staten Island residents [Gina Biancardi-Rammairone](#) [5] and [Luciano Rammairone](#) [6] purchased the mansion with a determination of restoring it to its original grandeur and have since turned it to be an Italian arts and cultural center. The kitchen with its lofty ceiling, stainless steel finish and state of the art cooking equipment is the first step to creating a new destination for enthusiastic home cooks and professionals.

"This is just the baseline to getting an accredited culinary institution centered on Staten Island," states Gina Biancardi, president of the Italian Cultural Foundation at Casa Belvedere. "None of this would be possible if it was not for the support of the [Colavita family](#) [7], who has believed in me and this project from the start," she continued.

The induction cooktops, a steamer, deep-fryer, grill, pasta cooker, convection ovens, stainless countertops all set among hand-crafted custom cabinetry, perfected to the very last detail is all made possible by the [Colavita olive oil company](#) [8], hence the name "Cucina Colavita."

"A trusted family brand," – a slogan of the company, and it couldn't have been more true! Present for the official opening of the Cucina Colavita, was the company's CEO [Giovanni Colavita](#) [9] together with his uncle [Enrico Colavita](#) [10], founder of the company and his long time partner and friend [John Profaci](#) [11].

There is quite an amazing story behind the brand that is now known worldwide, as it distributes their products to over 72 countries. The story begins in Sant'Elia Pianisi, the province of Campobasso back in 1935. A small local company dedicated to olives and olive oil production is born. This small family business soon becomes vital to the local economy offering products, which are based on quality, local agricultural production, and authenticity.

So how did they conquer the world? Enter John Profaci, an Italian-American businessman whom Enrico Colavita encounters on his honeymoon in America. "I would like to sell my oil in the U.S.," says Colavita to Profaci. And Profaci replies: "Well, let's try and see if I can sell it." A new friendship and partnership is born and the Colavita name begins its American endeavor.

"First we gave demonstrations in stores, then in restaurants with Italian chefs. This was what they were looking for: quality and taste. Trends in this country do not start in supermarkets but in restaurants, but as long as you have a great product people will buy it.

Next comes the family bond that we have, we feel that that young generation wants to continue to promote our products and that speaks for itself," stated Profaci. During the June 30th celebrations of the opening of the Cucina Colavita, Profaci continued to call out from the crowd the vital members responsible for the prosperity of the company and therefore for their generous sponsorships of initiatives such as that of Gina Biancardi. Soon enough it became difficult to capture the whole Colavita-Profaci family in one single photograph.

It is amazing and very moving to see the support they give to one another and how much they value the family business and most of all the bringing forth of the Italian tradition. "The family spirit is evident in the encouragement and assistance I received from the Colavita brand," declared Gina Biancardi.

The Cucina Colavita will serve the Italian and American community providing interactive cooking sessions with a maximum of 10 students. We wish the Casa Belvedere the same spirits and determination in promoting Italian culture that their major sponsor company has demonstrated in the last decades.

Click [here](#) [12] for more info on cooking classes @ Cucina Colavita.  
More photos on i-italy Facebook page [>>>](#) [13]



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- [3] [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Grymes\\_Hill,\\_Staten\\_Island](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Grymes_Hill,_Staten_Island)
- [4] <http://www.mta.info/bandt/html/veraz.html>
- [5] <http://www.i-italy.org/13209/casa-belvedere-vision-reality-cultural-center-staten-island>
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