

R **New York** *Restaurant Insider*

Donatella

**A RETURN
TO GLAMOUR**

Le Cirque New York III
THE NEXT GENERATION



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LETTER FROM THE EDITOR



I have to admit that I've been a fan and occasional beneficiary of dumb luck and sheer coincidence most of my life. It's how I explain my occasional good fortune, such as becoming involved with this magazine, or being blessed with a wonderful family. I've also become a devotee of the television show "Lost" (along with 99% of the country, it seems), whose plot twists raises coincidence to new levels. A large group of seemingly unrelated people on a plane crashes in a remote area, and most survive. As they chew on the island's local culinary delights (generally coconuts and unidentifiable leafy substances), they talk to each other (spare time is aplenty), and gradually discover that they all share mysterious connections with each other. One possible flaw in the show's plot, however, is that with all the famous chefs flying back and forth between LA and Australia these days, why weren't there a few of them on that plane? While a star chef on "Lost" would certainly be a colorful and popular addition to the cast, the show's creator J.J. Abrams might want to consider a follow-up version of the show, where a boat full of real chefs and restaurateurs are dropped off on a deserted island, only to find that they, too, are all mysteriously connected. As they get to know each other, coincidences mount, alliances are formed, and yes, perhaps a few chefs will join the evil "Others" and create mayhem.

I found out halfway through our lead story on Donatella Arpaia that my great-grandfather grew up in a tiny town in Italy called.... You guessed it, Arpaia. When I spoke with Lello Arpaia, the famous restaurateur and Donatella's proud father and guiding spirit, I discovered that before he came to the United States, he had worked with Sirio Maccioni, our other main feature story this month, as a waiter and captain at Oscar's Delmonico's in New York in the early 1960's. Both of these facts are just quirks of chance, of course. And while they are certainly not wild coincidences to rival "Lost's" imaginative storylines, there are many times when real-life connections tend to feel less like coincidence.

There is no coincidence in Donatella Arpaia's ascent in the restaurant industry. Her achievements are the result of many years of consistent hard work, blended with talent and tremendous family support. She has been called the Martha Stewart of her generation, and with a television show in the works and a product line of food items bearing her name coming out soon, her star is rising fast.

We were honored to feature Sirio Maccioni in our first-ever issue back in April 2005. I could not be more delighted to see him back in our magazine, and at Le Cirque's grand opening on May 18th, where he once again was smiling and greeting old friends in his famous restaurant's new home. A lifetime of making others comfortable has made him and his family comfortable as well, and his three charming sons and their families are clearly blessed.

NYRI would like to welcome new advertiser Level Vodka this month, a product of Absolut, and we'd also like to welcome the fine dining restaurants of Fairfield County, who are now receiving our magazine. Well into our second year publishing, we are delighted to have become one of the most widely-read publications in the New York Metro area's fine-dining industry.

MATT DELUCIA

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FEATURE STORY

Donatella Arpaia

A RETURN TO GLAMOUR

BY MATT DeLUCIA

The beautiful Manhattan restaurateur opens Dona NYC, and sets her sights on becoming the style and entertaining spokeswoman for her generation.

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Shiitake Stuffed Quail

Chef David Burke of
David Burke and Donatella

Photography by Jerry Ruotolo ©2006





*Donatella
Arpaia*

A RETURN
TO GLAMOUR

BY
MATT DeLUCIA

A

midst the rest of us in this city of glamour, there are a precious few who seem to possess the gift to instantly change a room's atmosphere by merely stepping into it.

They can somehow create instant buzz, a tempered and mesmerizing electricity so powerful you can almost sense the hum of current running through them. When these extraordinary people become entertainment celebrities, they tend to demonstrate the ability to captivate large audiences. When they run for political office, which is a rarity, entire populations can become hypnotized by their words and their leadership. And if they are restaurateurs, customers will find themselves returning time and time again for reasons they often don't fully understand. Yes, they enjoy the food, but their true motive for making this recurring journey is because they know that the owner or the maitre d' will be there. Even if it is just to greet you for a few fleeting moments before you're seated, or for a touch on the shoulder and a few words between courses, it is enough of a calling. They feel at home, somehow elevated and respected, and even needed.

But what if you take the uncommon talent of that restaurateur, throw in the shrewd wisdom of an attorney, and sprinkle in the beauty and allure of Donatella Arpaia? You have someone who can light up a city block with her charisma, someone who finds it second nature to charm the most difficult customer with her glamorous style, someone whose career is currently on a dizzying elevator ride straight

up. She may not hypnotize political constituencies, but with a television show in the works, it is quite likely that she will soon be captivating large audiences.

The word "Dona" is Italian for "to give, or donate", and Ms. Arpaia surely has an uncommon gift for running restaurants with her own defining elegance. She just closed Bellini, the restaurant she opened nine years ago at the age of 24, and in three months converted it into the elegant Dona restaurant within the same space. Dona opened this past March. She is co-owner of the prestigious restaurant David Burke and Donatella, located a mere 9 blocks uptown. But restaurants aren't opened on glamour alone, and they are not kept running on personality and charm. The house must have talented people both in front and in the back.

Most chefs who are working at a fine dining establishment and have a reasonable budget generally have access to the latest tools and the best ingredients that can be found. But the handful of elite restaurants in the 4-star category are not the only ones who enjoy this access - there are literally thousands of chefs who can afford to purchase the best equipment and the freshest ingredients, and do so regularly. Therefore, it's a surprise to no one that the chefs who stand out above the rest do it for one reason: technique.

The word "technique" is almost a cliché, a glossy noun used to describe the basic grasping of skill within so many creative arts. To a chef, it implies the subtle



Scallops Benedict

Chef David Burke of

David Burke and Donatella

Photography by Jerry Ruotolo ©2006



Bittersweet Chocolate Mousse
tahini caramel, black sesame chocolate gelato
Chef Michael Psilakis of Dona NYC

Photography by Diana DeLucia ©2006

application of various tools upon his or her ingredients, using the deft touch of experienced hands and fingers. But the skills that define a successful restaurateur, the techniques of a maitre'd at the front of the house, are more difficult to characterize. Some say that it's important to have sex appeal and charm. Others point to the unteachable capacity to sense what each dining party is looking to accomplish at their meal before and after seating them. One must possess the ability to solve problems quickly and deal with difficult customers, and be able to smile and greet each customer who walks into your small world as if they are special, so that they begin to feel as if they had been personally invited to join their hosts for supper.

"It's anticipating your guests' needs, not just doing what you're supposed to do," says Ms. Arpaia, "And I try to teach that. There are rules, but there

aren't rules. You have to know when to break them and when not to break them, and that's just studying people and psychology. I'm very attuned to people; I can turn any situation around. I can make somebody really work for me because I make it about them, I care about them. You have people who do that, and they're fake, you know the difference. You have to look in a person's eyes when you speak to them, not everywhere else."

Like another successful Italian maitre d' and restaurant owner, Sirio Maccioni, Ms. Arpaia has a deep understanding of her food, her staff, and her customers. While she literally grew up around restaurants, she was also sheltered from a life inside one by her father. Lello Arpaia had immigrated to New York from Naples, Italy in 1960, and worked his entire life to build a successful restaurant business that included La Tavernetta on Long Island and Scarlatti and Lello



in Manhattan.

“Donatella was always fascinated by the glamour of the restaurant business,” Mr. Arpaia said. “One of the things she used to do when she was much younger, she used to come to the restaurant and say ‘Daddy, all you do is walk through the dining room back and forth, you’re really not doing anything.’ And I’d say ‘I’m doing a lot you’re just not seeing it.’ And now she sees it, it’s a lot of work.”

Although Mr. Arpaia seems to have passed on his business acumen and family work ethic to his daughter, he nevertheless imagined a better life for her, which to him meant a traditional corporate job. It was a dream steeped resolutely in love, amidst memories of a lifetime of 16-hour days, so who could blame him? How could he possibly have foreseen that being a restaurateur would bring his daughter such success, both financially and spiritually, and that the career path from corporate lawyer to restaurant owner was no longer a step down, or even a lateral move?

“Growing up, I was surrounded by the restaurant business. But I was never allowed to wait tables like any kid wants to do as a summer job. My father had just worked so hard and he felt that the restaurant life was so tough, and his dream was that I would be a professional - a lawyer or a doctor, whatever education he could afford for me. But that doesn’t mean we didn’t go to restaurants every week. That doesn’t mean I didn’t help with the openings. I was part of the discussions; it was all he talked about. I think you become what you think you want to be, because your parents influence you so much and then one day you’re an adult and you say, ‘you know, I really don’t want to do this.’”

Ms. Arpaia followed her father’s dream and attended St. John’s School of Law, graduated, and started practicing. The problem soon became apparent to her - she hated it. And

just months into her new career as corporate lawyer, she began to actively look for restaurant locations, without her father's knowledge.

"I really love real estate, and I used my contract negotiation skills and found this location. It was a restaurant that was failing and the lease was about to be up. After the deal was pretty much done, I presented it to my father and I told him I was going to do it."

Ms. Arpaia, the young Manhattan lawyer, was in court the day she found out that the lease for her first restaurant, which would soon become Bellini, was now hers. She couldn't wait to give notice the next day. She had lasted only seven months as an attorney. But she was happy, and never looked back.

"It was really kind of crazy on my part, and if I knew then what I know now, I don't know if I would have had the guts to do it," she recalls.

With help from her father ("He's a master with construction"), who would become her first chef, a solid

month of working day and night led to Bellini's opening. Ms. Arpaia quickly found out how important it was to be entirely dedicated to her new career. While her 24 year old friends were out partying, she was at Bellini working almost non-stop. When she did have free time, she spent it taking classes at the French Culinary Institute. Her "family dinner" was now a daily 3 p.m. meal she shared with her staff before the dinner rush.

"I was extremely driven and hard working. There was no way this was going to fail. I had put all my life savings into it. I got my hard knocks and I suffered and I learned and I got screwed and sometimes I got swindled. Then I developed my own sense, and my voice could be heard. I wrote handwritten thank you notes to customers. And people really started to back me."

She often went back to her family for help and advice, a tremendous advantage to any 24 year old, no matter how talented or determined. But gradually she found that in order

for her venture to prosper over the long term, she had to find her own voice and her own identity. And that meant weaning herself away from the style of restaurants she had known all her life, away from these very successful businesses her father had spent his life building. The restaurants she had grown up in had formed the backbone of her industry knowledge, but they nevertheless were not the essence of who she felt she was.

"I learned a lot from my father, but at the same time I had so many different ideas. I was conflicted about whether I should go with my instincts. I'd think, 'but he knows better, he's been doing this for 40 years.'"

Ms. Arpaia and her Bellini restaurant quickly became well known for its outstanding service, and it eventually developed into a hot spot for celebrities and the wealthy folks of the Upper East Side. She soon discovered that one of her greatest challenges would be in making sure her new "family" of service people around her shared her vision and philosophy. When she



Donatella with her staff at Dona NYC



The Dining Room at David Burke and Donatella

Photography by Jerry Ruotolo ©2006



Kumamoto Oyster

pink grapefruit, salty ginger, pink shallot vinaigrette



Sea Urchin

burrata, caviar, fava bean puree



Chef Michael Psilakis of Dona NYC

Photography by Diana DeLucia ©2006



opened her second restaurant, David Burke and Donatella, she saw that everything around her had to be a reflection of who she was. She had to get people who shared that philosophy, and that warmth.

“I’m in the service business and I’m not the boss. The customer is the boss. That’s the one thing I’m unforgiving about. If someone is rude to a customer or a client, they don’t have the warmth or the sense of hospitality that I feel is needed in this, I can’t have you work for me, because that’s something usually that doesn’t change. I can teach you my philosophy, but I can’t teach you that.”

She talks about how she feels she may be tougher on the women than the men who work for her, and wonders out loud if she does that because she wants them to succeed, to empower them, to be completely professional when problems arise. She brings up a quote from a book called “The Prophet” by New York poet and philosopher Khalil Gibran, which seems to summarize her personal and work philosophy very neatly. “Work is love made visible,” she says, quoting the Lebanese-born writer. The final two paragraphs of that particular verse, originally published in 1923, reads like a perfectionist’s proverb:

Work is love made visible. And if you cannot work with love but only with distaste, it is better that you should leave your work and sit at the gate of the temple and take alms of those who work with joy.

For if you bake bread with indifference, you bake a bitter bread that feeds but half man’s hunger. And if you grudge the crushing of the grapes, your grudge distills a poison in the wine. And if you sing though as angels, and love not the singing, you muffle man’s ears to the voices of the day and the voices of the night.

While not exactly the advice you’d

read to the average waiter or line cook, to Donatella it means that everything is important, and without the stubborn desire for excellence, the cohesive unit that is a working restaurant will falter.

“The restaurant business is like a puzzle. Every day it is falling apart and you have to put it back together again. There are so many pieces of the puzzle that can go wrong. And it’s the one detail that you forget that bites you about a week later. It always comes back to haunt you. So you really have to be a master of details and a perfectionist in this business. If you make a mistake it’s fine. But when you are arrogant or rude to a customer, I can’t tolerate it. Because that’s my lifeline.”

Glamour & Clothing

With success comes scrutiny, and when Ms. Arpaia walks the floor at DBD Restaurant or Dona, she is the butterfly, chatting with some patrons, sitting down with others, smiling at everyone. But if there is something out of place or an imperfection somewhere, her eye catches it instantly, and like a cat she pounces. Problem solved. All the while, she realizes that she is being watched by a crowd that will notice if she wears a dress twice in the same millennia, if her hair is different, or if she happens to look a bit tired that evening.

“I have a very expressive face. Everything shows on my face. I remember when I first came here, now I am on a bigger stage, there’s so much pressure on me and I have to look perfect every night. Everyone expects me to be smiling and bubbly all the time. They don’t know that the air conditioning just went down or the bathroom had a problem. They don’t realize that. I can’t have an off day. I always have to have my make up on and I always have to look 100%, because people are unforgiving. They will tell me, ‘I don’t like how you looked the other day’ and ‘you cut your hair short or longer’ or ‘you gained 5 pounds,’ or ‘you lost 5 pounds’. And I’m thinking, wow, everyone is looking, observing every part of me.”

How Donatella looks, what she is wearing that night, and how well she entertains are all part of her allure, and the popularity of her restaurants grew along with it. She was constantly inspired and affected by the beautiful women who came into Bellini every day. This reputation for style and service led to her success, along with David





Cumin Spiced Hawaiian Tuna

cracked bulgur wheat and thassos olive salad with a creamy feta vinaigrette

Chef Michael Psilakis of Dona NYC

Photography by Diana DeLucia ©2006

Burke's fantastic culinary skills ("he's the most creative man I've ever met," Donatella says of Burke), of her second restaurant, David Burke and Donatella. But soon she realized that Bellini was not completely faithful to the person she had become. She decided it was time for a change, and arranged to have it shut down and redesigned. But before that, she became involved in a Soho restaurant named AMA, with which she is no longer involved.

"I walked away from a successful business," she said, explaining why her relationship with AMA and its chef owner Turibio Girardi didn't work out, "and I was not happy. Even though I created it and I was pretty much responsible for it, I knew that it wasn't going to work. We had such a different philosophy. My reputation is everything, and I didn't want anyone to hurt it, so I didn't want to be associated with that restaurant anymore. And it was taking away from my energy here. So I walked away."

With the successful opening of Dona and her prudent decision to bring in Onera chef Michael Psilakis as chef and part-owner, things are moving smoothly enough now so that she has set her sights on the future. Could that mean another Manhattan restaurant? "I'm looking, yes, and I have two spots I'm looking at seriously. I may also consider Vegas or Atlantic City," she says. But while running restaurants will remain her fundamental livelihood, her knack for stylistic entertaining has led her toward some very different, albeit related directions. She has created a demo for a television show, and is close to signing an agreement for its production. It's not all about food; it will essentially combine all that she has learned as Manhattan's premier restaurant hostess. Or as she prefers to say, "It'll be like Sex in the City meets Martha Stewart. But I'm definitely going to be in stilettos."

She believes that there is a growing niche for someone to become the voice for her generation when it comes to entertaining, cooking, and domesticity. While there are others in this field ahead of her, Donatella seems to have distinct advantages over each of them. Although she admires Martha Stewart tremendously, she doesn't feel that Ms. Stewart represents women her age.

"Martha Stewart is an icon, but I don't relate to her, she's not my generation. I would never be caught with a glue gun. I would never



Chef Michael Psilakis with Donatella

bake my own wedding cake. But I can tell a woman that she doesn't have to be grilling turkey burgers and microwaving, I don't believe in that either. I think that if I impart my knowledge about buying and shopping, knowing who your butcher is and your fish person and cheeses and learning about products, that's half the battle. If you learn how to shop, you know how to cook. And the women will relate to me, because I do work. I'm tired, I'm busy, but I do want to show people that I know how to entertain, and it's fabulous when I do it. I don't hide my femininity at all."

She is also working on a book that will include all this knowledge on cooking, buying, and entertaining. She refers to it as "kind of like the girlfriend's guide to entertaining." The book began its life as a cookbook, but she decided that a glamorous book that combines food, cooking, and entertaining would be more insightful, not to mention more fun.

Some of the Restaurateurs that she admires the most are Daniel

Boulud, Jean-Georges Vongrichen, and Lidia Bastianich, a selection that indicates that she appreciates style and elegance. She recalls one evening when she took her managers to dinner at Jean-Georges restaurant, and her cell phone battery died just before she had to make an important call. The restaurant didn't have a spare charger, so Jean-Georges took the battery out of his own cell phone and let her use it. She left the restaurant that evening impressed with his gesture, and blown away by the service and food. "I think he's a genius, and the level and style of food that he serves has influenced so many other chefs, and it's seen everyday now," she said. And yes, she did give the battery back.

But the real measure of Donatella's success was in pleasing her toughest critic and biggest supporter, her father Lello. "I'm very proud of her and my other two children because they're great human beings first," said Mr. Arpaia. "And I think that is the real wealth that a father can identify with. The rest is business, and they're doing very well at that too."

Products

To see her new products, especially her line of tomato sauce which will be carried exclusively by Whole Foods for three months before being offered everywhere else, is to make her philosophy visible in everything she does. She bemoans the tendency of other chefs to put their names on food that they would not use in their own restaurants. Her sauce will be made without any preservatives, using fresh tomatoes and ingredients from Italy. It will be created the slower, old fashioned way, which in Donatella's mind is the only way.

"I'm extremely traditional in certain ways and extremely modern in certain ways. And I think that reflects everything I do, from my design, which is modern and yet traditional elements as well, from my products that I use. I'm this modern urban woman, and the products I use are very old world. I'm looking in the past for my future."

Her advice to other women who dream of being a restaurant owner is to educate themselves, and obtain well-rounded experience in both the front of the house and the back and in all aspects of the business, so that they can be an effective owner. But the most important thing can't be learned at a culinary school. You have to really love it.

"It's really a way of life and it's more than just a job, so you have to be passionate about it. I really think that you should not listen to everybody. And women too, I think there's a tendency to try to act like a man if they're unsure of themselves, because it's such a male dominated industry. I think they should really know who they are and be proud of their talent, their professionalism to be the best at what they do. And if you are perfect at what you do, then everything else falls into place." ✂



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When Temperature Matters





Michael Psilakis of Dona NYC

Calamari and Pignoli "Salad"

chunky english pea puree and garlic bread crumbs

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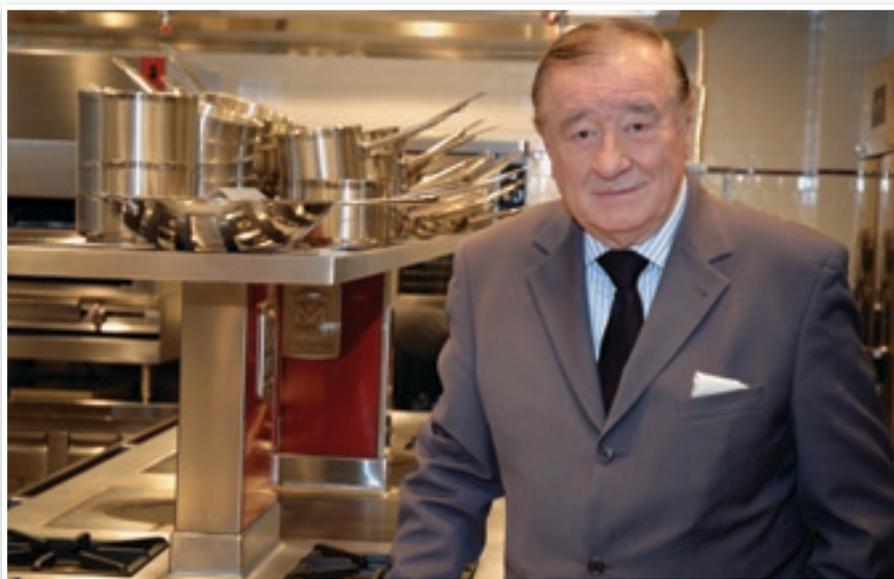
SAVINGS • SERVICE • SELECTION • 7 DAYS A WEEK

THE RETURN OF SIRIO AND LE CIRQUE TO NEW YORK

by *Matt DeLucia*

On Tuesday evening, May 30th, 2006, millions of New Yorkers will finish their frantic day as usual, dashing home to shed the burdensome weight of their daily pressures and upgrading their attire to prepare for their reward – an evening of dining out. Some will walk uptown, or more likely downtown, to 58th street, toward the latest towering model of excess and architectural prowess that is One Beacon Court. For those fortunate enough to own a residence between the 32nd and 55th floors, an elevator ride down to street level will suffice. Pushing onward through the seven-story elliptical glass courtyard, the orange circus big-top suddenly comes into view, easily spotted between the soaring vertical veins of ice-blue windows. Once inside, they will be greeted with warmth by a familiar face, by someone who has been terribly missed from New York restaurants since New Years Day 2005. A hand will greet the gentlemen, a smile and a compliment will welcome the ladies. Just as elegantly as he has done for 35 years, Sirio Maccioni will once again lead his guests to their seats in the new and ultra-modern Le Cirque restaurant.

Mr. Maccioni had already accomplished more than a restaurateur could dare to dream when he closed down Le Cirque 2000 on December 31, 2004. Although the Le Cirque name lives on in Mexico and Las Vegas, most of New York would have forgiven him if he had packed it in after a lifetime of successes and gone on to enjoy life in a quieter, less frantic jungle. Although he admits to being tired and wanting to be free of the demanding pace of Manhattan, the smile that greets his friends, new and



Sirio Maccioni in the new Le Cirque kitchen

old, is a genuine one. He cannot hide the delight of being back in business.

Before our interview, Mr. Maccioni asked me how much time my small digital tape recorder could hold on it. When I told him that it had a 2 hour limit, he informed me that the newer ones can now hold up to 15 hours. I wondered if he was implying that my device would not be adequate to record all that he planned on divulging that afternoon, but a busy schedule and his sore throat kept the interview to a mere hour, leaving my techno-wimp recorder with plenty of minutes to spare. It had been 14 months since we last interviewed the celebrated restaurateur, and at 72, Mr. Maccioni has barely lost a step. His knack for the dramatic remains a considerable specialty, as does his ability to make those around him feel comfortable, which is arguably his strongest skill. He still speaks with unwavering eloquence, sprinkling every sentence with humor and emotion, and loves to communicate not only by flirting, conjecturing and politicizing, but also by using his hands and perhaps

unknowingly, with his expressive eyes. Although the huge project of rebuilding Le Cirque from the ground up has taken an enormous amount of energy, he appears confident that the new venue will make his job easier.

“I’m always tired, I’m tired mentally. But I can say that when I work, I try to do my best. I don’t want to be here and not want to be here. The last year at The Palace, I really didn’t feel comfortable. I did things - now I am remembering - sometimes if people were leaving, I was sitting there and - not that I did that on purpose not to look at them - but I didn’t get up and say goodbye, which is the thing that you have to do. So here, it’s going to be different, because when the people come in, it’s smaller, it’s under control - visual control I’m talking about.”

He often talks about his last restaurant as if it is a troubled child with whom he no longer speaks; one he still has the chance to set right with the proper amount of reflection. He likes to compare his first location on 65th Street, seemingly his favorite, with his second on Madison and

51st, and when encouraged, with his new location. He bounces seamlessly from one to the next, as if he is speaking not of three restaurants but of three sons, all different, all with strengths and weaknesses, all of whom he loves in different ways but somehow equally. He spoke of the complaints among his customers, many of whom 51st Street was already too “downtown.” Their drivers would bring them to Le Cirque 2000, where they had to walk through the courtyard to reach the entrance, a journey made all the more complicated by the lack of a hotel doorman to protect them from foul weather. The new restaurant’s entrance on 58th street will improve that, and add valet parking to boot.

The last restaurant was “beautiful, a different interpretation,” says Sirio. “We had good men who built that restaurant. They had the courage to take from whatever was beautiful, and leave the beauty as what it was, and make it a modern attraction.” Although the move from the Palace Hotel took 18 months, a lifetime in restaurant years, Sirio still feels the desire to clarify, and justify, his reason for that move.

“I didn’t move away from the Madison Avenue because one day I woke up and said we’ll move. The place was beautiful. We really were very busy, we didn’t move because of lack of business. The business was there. But the interest of a hotel is different than the interest of the restaurant. The



mentality of the hotel and the hotel management is that the restaurant has always been some kind of a playground for the hotel, or for the management at the hotel. And I believe that we were too independent.”

The new 16,000 square foot space is more personal to him. It is as stunning as it is comforting, and in spite of the huge cost of creating it, “I believe that as beautiful as it is, you need things to come together to create the ambience where people feel comfortable.”

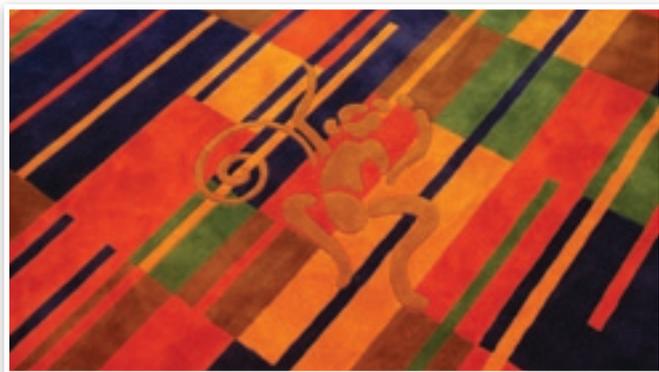
Sirio recognizes that this ambience does not come from warm carpet colors, comforting seat cushions, or high-end sound systems, which the new restaurant certainly does have. It comes from intangibles, from asking the right questions, and of course, by making sure everyone is happy even when problems arise. “On 65th street, even a mistake became a positive. We had a small table like this that was for 6 people, and we used it for 10, and everybody was happy. And they were all saying, ‘how can you complain when you’re sitting next to a beautiful woman or to somebody very important?’ It was incredible with the amount of people the restaurant was serving there. We were open 25



Le Cirque designer Adam Tihany with Sirio Maccioni

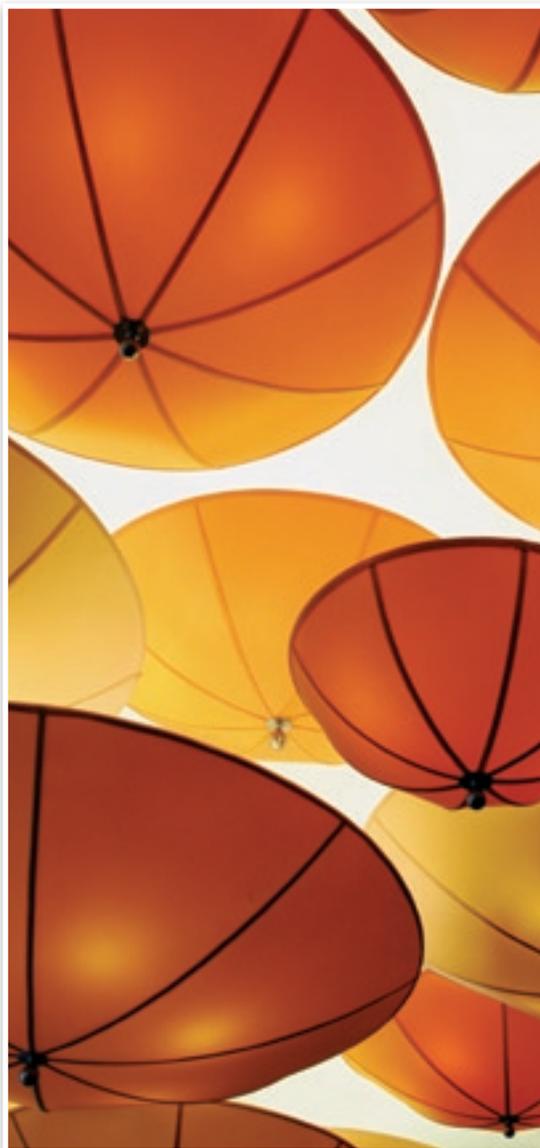
years and we had an average of 325 covers a day.”

Never one to be afraid to say what is on his mind (“because at my age, I can afford to tell the truth”), Sirio still delivers one-liners like an experienced nightclub comic. The new building: “I like this building because Bloomberg is here. And you know, I’m not politically correct, I like Bloomberg.” Fois Gras: “Why tell me that we cannot eat duck anymore? Who’s protecting the chicken? Okay, so we can kill the chicken, but we cannot kill the duck.” The new



female White House chef: “It was about time that they did something like that. I never had any problem with race, with nationality, or with sexual orientation, as long as they leave me alone.”

We asked if there will still be some of the classic Le Cirque dishes on the menu for the 90-seat dining room, and Sirio nodded and joked, “Yeah, I brainwashed Pierre. I hope it works.” Executive Chef Schaedelin will surely accommodate those customers who may ask for something that is not on the menu, which they have always done, or a diner who yearns for an old Le Cirque dish that is no longer on the menu. The 65-seat bar will have a smaller menu with smaller portions than the dining room, and the dress code, which applies to both areas, will be more relaxed than Le Cirque’s previous incarnations, allowing men to leave their ties at home as long as they have a jacket, even if happens to be matched with designer jeans. But whatever you do, don’t get Sirio started on the idea of a prix fixe menu.



“I don’t like prix fixe. To make somebody pay \$150,175, \$200, you are making them pay to breathe the air of your restaurant, to look at whatever you have there. But is it good to have it at those places? Of course. When you do a prix fixe, most of the time is to help the restaurant, because with the prix fixe, everybody will eat the same. It’s easier on the kitchen.”

The restaurant was built by famous restaurant designer and longtime Maccioni collaborator Adam Tihany, whose touches include a 27 foot steel and glass wine tower, which acts as a connective element between the 80- person private dining room upstairs and the first floor. The main entrance is nothing if not dramatic, with soaring two-story ceilings, dark walnut tables, and Alexander Calder inspired wire-art that evokes the subtle circus feeling that Tihany and Maccioni were looking for. It is a dramatic enough departure to stand apart from both of Sirio’s previous restaurants, but with enough Le Cirque-ish features to please his fans.

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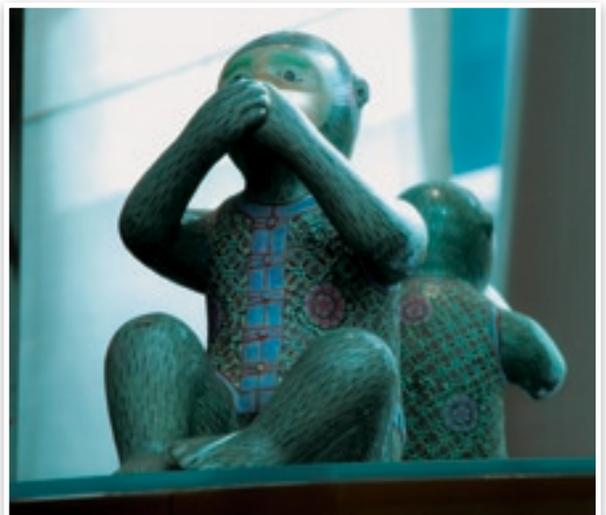
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"A restaurant has to change with time," said Sirio. "If you're able to change, people keep on coming. Doing the same thing now that we had done 10 years ago is madness. I like what we're going to have again now, something that you control visually, and physically if you want. I think as a restaurateur, but I also think as a person who walks into the door. When you walk into the door, what do you want to see? If it's beautiful, beautiful legs, that's very important." The beautiful legs will begin walking into Le Cirque starting May 30th.

The wine will be poured by an all-female sommelier staff, and besides Pierre, only a few employees still remain from the previous restaurant. Sirio's three sons Mauro, Mario, and Marco will be working the new restaurant, sharing duties in rotating three month shifts.

As we were wrapping up, I mentioned to Sirio that the beautiful and successful restaurateur Donatella Arpaia was this month's cover story. Sirio's eye immediately lit up. "Oh, I said to one of my sons, why don't you marry her? She's good, very good, because she decides to be very good. I always knew that women can do everything better than men. So I said to my son, go to Dona, please! Leave me alone!" Sirio laughed, unable to hide the joy he gets from talking about his family, who are so closely tied to him and his successes. ✕



LE CIRQUE AT ONE BEACON PLACE: GRAND OPENING GALA

Photography by Diana DeLucia



🍴 Daniel Boulud, Marco Maccioni and Guest

🍴 Adam Tihany with his Wife Marnie and their daughter celebrate Le Cirque

🍴 Susan Magrino of Susan Magrino Agency with Sirio Maccioni

🍴 Dr. Lucio Caputo and guest



Chef Pierre Schaedlin and his team happy to be in the Le Cirque kitchen again 🍴



🍴 Daniel Boulud, Restaurateur of the Year with
 Matt DeLucia, Editor of New York Restaurant Insider
 🍴 Michelle Connors takes a break with her Mom and Dad,
 John and Helen Connors
 🍴 Steven and Daryl Roth



Sirio Maccioni and guest 🍴
 Laurent Tourondel and guests 🍴
 Peter Bentel, Susan Nagle of Bentel and Bentel with guests 🍴
 Olya Neville, Alexander Dimitri and Helena Puvacic 🍴





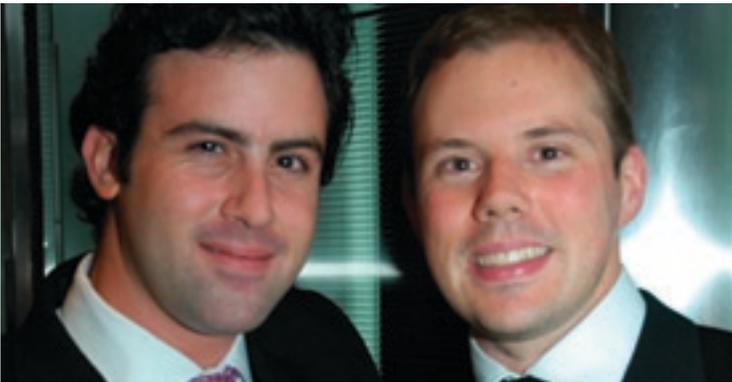
 Peter Elliott, Drew Nieporent, Matt DeLucia and guest

 James Curich and guest from Susan Magrino Agency



Mario Maccioni 

Mauro Maccioni (far right) and guests 



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President



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– *Jim Kohler*
Director of Marketing



– *Charlie Trotter*
Charlie Trotter's Restaurant



The 16th Annual James Beard Award Ceremony

PHOTOGRAPHY BY DIANA DELUCIA

The 16th annual James Beard award ceremony had a few surprises, a little romance, and a lot of contemporary and traditional New Orleans cooking. Hosted by New Orleans native and ABC news political journalist Cokie Roberts and held at the New York Marriott Marquis hotel ballroom in Times Square, the extravagant affair lasted over 4 hours.



Thomas Keller accepting The Outstanding Restaurant Award for the French Laundry

A portion of the event's admission price was to be donated to the Gulf Coast Renaissance Fund, which was set up to help rebuild New Orleans' restaurant community from the effects of hurricane Katrina.



Daniel Boulud and Emeril Lagasse

It was a particularly good night for New York's restaurant community, as many Manhattan restaurateurs and chefs came away with coveted awards, including Daniel Boulud (Outstanding Restaurateur), The Modern (Best New Restaurant), Alfred Portale (Outstanding Chef), Daniel Johnnes (Outstanding Wine and Spirits Professional), and Johnny Iuzinni (Outstanding Pastry Chef).

Thomas Keller's French Laundry also cleaned up, winning the prestigious "Outstanding Restaurant" award, and the "Rising Star Chef" which was awarded to his own Corey Lee.

There were five new inductees into the “Who’s Who of Food and Beverage,” including New York City’s own Café Gray owner Gray Kunz. Judith Jones, who for half a decade has been an influential editor both within and outside of the culinary world, was the recipient of the 2006 James Beard Lifetime Achievement Award.



Gray Kunz, Jean Joho, Sue Conley and Peggy Smith accept the Who’s Who of Food and Beverage in America

A total of 70 award recipients were named in 2006, a complete listing of which can be found on www.NYRestaurantInsider.com, along with additional photographs of the presenters and the award winners.



Melanie Young and David Ransom steal the show with a surprise proposal

In the midst of saying goodbye to the 1600 people in attendance after fifteen years of putting together the Beard awards show, publicist Melanie Young suddenly found herself standing next to her boyfriend David Ransom. He was on stage unexpectedly, smiling smugly and holding a dozen roses, a small jewelry box, and a question. David’s marriage proposal shocked Ms. Young and everyone in the ballroom theatre, including Ms. Young’s mother, who knew nothing about the impending proposal. Thankfully, she said yes. ✂



OUTSTANDING CHEF
Alfred Portale - Gotham Bar & Grill
New York City

OUTSTANDING INTERNATIONAL COOKBOOK
Mario Batali

OUTSTANDING RESTAURATEUR
Daniel Boulud - The Dinex Group
New York City





OUTSTANDING RESTAURANT DESIGN

Designer: Carol Bentel, Paul Bentel, Peter Bentel, Susan Nagle
Design Firm: Bentel & Bentel Architects/Planners LLP
Project: The Modern



BEST NEW RESTAURANT

Danny Meyer, Gabriel Kreuther - The Modern
New York City

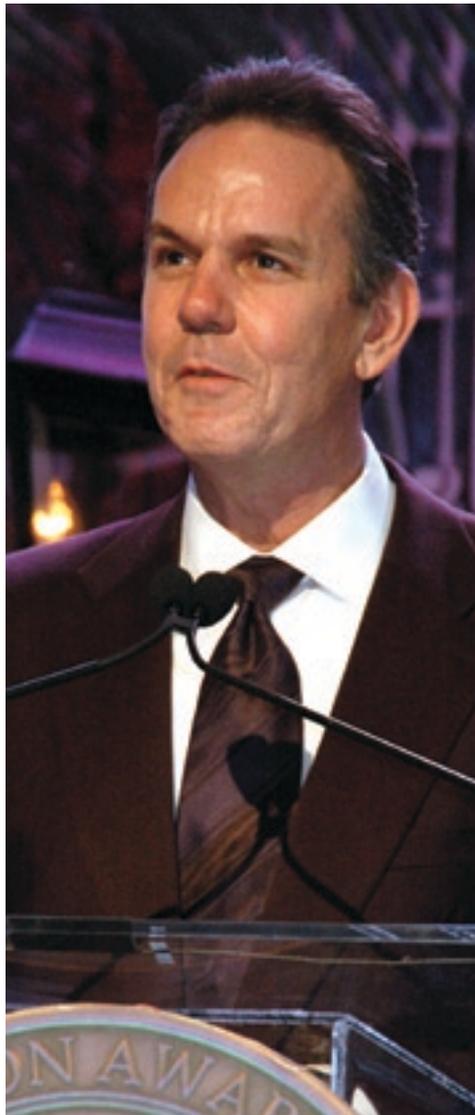


OUTSTANDING RESTAURANT

Thomas Keller - The French Laundry
Yountville, CA



Giada De Laurentiis of
Everyday Italian and *Behind
the Bash*, announcing the
Best Webcast award





OUTSTANDING WINE & SPIRITS PROFESSIONAL
 Daniel Johnnes - Dinex Group NYC
 (pictured at right) standing with Lee Brian Schragger of Southern Wine and Spirits

OUTSTANDING SERVICE AWARD
 Gary Danko - San Francisco
 Tony Esnault of ADNY with his wife Amy Esnault



Isabella Gerasole and Olivia Gerasole accept the award for Best Webcast for Spattulatta.com

OUTSTANDING PASTRY CHEF
 Johnny Iuzzini
 Jean-Georges
 New York City



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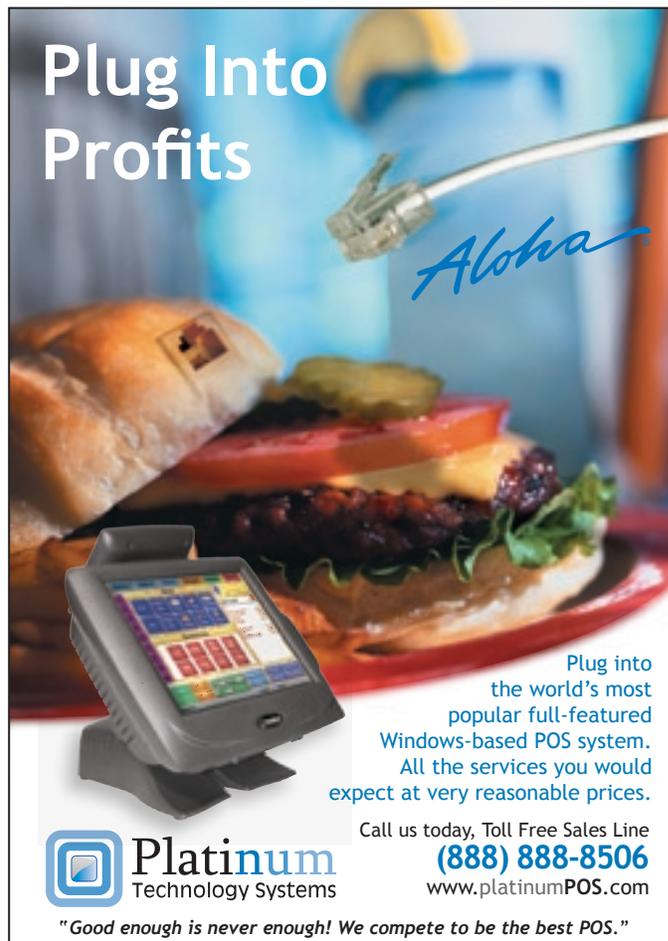
LAURENT TOURONDEL TO OPEN BLT IN D.C.

BLT Management announced that they will open the first outpost of BLT Steak at 1625 I Street NW, in the heart of Washington, DC. The 45-seat restaurant will be located one block from the White House.

Designed by Michael Bagley and Warren Ashworth, BLT Steak's design will integrate the traditional elements of a steakhouse with a stylish, urbane design. BLT's signature "blackboard" menu will be prominently featured highlighting the menu offerings of the day.

"I created BLT Steak as a more modern steakhouse – one that focuses on the best product and the most exact techniques," says Chef-Partner, Laurent Tourondel. "Keeping it simple and wonderful is the key for me...and I think Washingtonians are ready." "Washington DC is a logical market for us to expand into," says Jimmy Haber, Managing Partner of BLT Management. "The customer base is sophisticated and discerning and understands the value of quality and accessibility when going out to eat."

Bistro Laurent Tourondel Steak will open in August 2006.



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COMPASS GROUP TO SELL RESTAURANTS TO VALENTI, SPLICHAL, AND SHIDAX

Restaurant Associates CEO Nick Valenti has shuffled his deck of cards once again, announcing that Compass Group PLC, the London-based food conglomerate, has agreed to sell the restaurants that comprise its Restaurant Associates/Patina Group subsidiary to a group that consists of Valenti, Patina founder and star chef Joachim Splichal, and the Tokyo-based foodservice company Shidax Corporation. The new group will be forming a new, as yet unnamed, entity. Compass will remain an investor in the new entity.

Valenti, Splichal, and Shidax Corp. will purchase Restaurant Associates' New York restaurants, their East Coast foodservice outlets, and all the properties of Splichal's California-based Patina Group, which merged with

Restaurant Associates in 1999 and includes several high-end restaurants and a catering business.

Compass will take over all of Restaurant Associates' B&I (business-and-industry) and catering businesses in New York. Their sports and entertainment business will be transferred to the Chicago-based Levy Organization, which is 100-percent owned by Compass.

For Shidax Corporation, the deal represents their continued interest in the U.S. market. "We are very excited about this investment," said Ken Shida, CEO. "Nick and Joachim have assembled a superior management team and their future plans directly contribute to Shidax's mission of growing high quality restaurants and retail foodservice."

CHARLIE PALMER ANNOUNCES LUXURY LAS VEGAS BOUTIQUE CONDOMINIUM HOTEL PROJECT

LAS VEGAS – April 24, 2006 – Internationally recognized Chef and Entrepreneur Charlie Palmer announced plans today for a Las Vegas condominium hotel evocative of the standard of excellence offered by his ventures nationwide. The 35-story, non-gaming boutique property will be located at the corner of Tropicana Avenue and Dean Martin Drive, one block west of the Las Vegas Strip. Total development cost is approximately \$400 million and the project is scheduled for completion in mid 2008. This will be Palmer's second boutique hotel. Hotel Healdsburg in Sonoma, California was named in Condé Nast Traveler's Gold List 2005 of "Top Places to Stay".

Palmer is an integral part of Las Vegas' dining evolution as he was one of the first celebrity chefs to open a restaurant on the Strip in the 1990's. He's once again a part of the

ever-changing Las Vegas landscape with the opening of the Charlie Palmer Hotel. "As the city has become known for world-class restaurants, clubs, spas and entertainment, demand for luxury accommodations has grown equally," said Palmer. "The Charlie Palmer Hotel will surpass these expectations," he added.

"In the world of 3,000-room mega-resorts, this truly is a boutique product," stated Palmer. The property consists of 400 residences with a mix of studios, one bedroom and penthouses offering spectacular views of Las Vegas. Prices for the units start in the high \$400,000's. The resort will offer an event venue, night club, cigar bar and sky lounge as well as three Charlie Palmer restaurants, including his first sushi bar.

NEW YORK CITY TICKETING VALET PARKERS

Restaurant owners are complaining that New York City is handing out parking tickets to motorists during the brief period of time that it takes to leave their car with valet parking attendants in front of their restaurants. The apparent move to increase ticket quotas has angered local businesses.

In January 2006, the New York City Office of Collective Bargaining confirmed that the city used a ticket quota system to increase the number of traffic tickets issued. In a case brought by the Patrolmen's Benevolent Association, arbitrator Bonnie Siber Weinstock found that the Police Department maintained an illegal traffic-ticket quota system at the 75th Precinct in Brooklyn. The NYPD violated state labor law "by establishing and maintaining a summons quota for traffic violations in the precinct and by penalizing officers for failing to meet the stated number of

traffic violations," Weinstock wrote.

City parking ticket revenue has increased a whopping 50 percent in the past five years, from \$382 million in 2000, to \$578 million in 2005.

"The car is sitting there for two or three minutes generally ... and they know when to come, when we're busy," one restaurant owner said. Restaurant owners who pay the tickets for their upset customers wind up losing money at the end of the evening.

"A customer gives the keys to a valet parker out front, and traffic enforcement will pull up, scan the registration and hand the ticket over, and they're gone," said another owner.

Between swallowing the cost of parking tickets and paying more for valet parking, some restaurant owners are struggling to remain open.

FOIE GRAS BANS

In Chicago, the City Council unanimously approved a ban on foie gras on April 26th, making it the first US city to ban the delicacy, which is essentially a duck's fattened liver. California is the only state that has passed legislation to ban this controversial delicacy. Chicago now joins the state of California and a host of countries that have approved similar crackdowns. They include: the United Kingdom, Denmark, Switzerland, Finland, Norway, Sweden, Luxembourg, Germany, Poland, the Czech Republic and Israel. On Sept. 29, 2004, California Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger signed

bill S.B. 1520 into law. It bans the production and sale of foie gras after 2012.

New York City's Council members didn't seem too enthusiastic to follow Chicago's example. Brooklyn Councilman Simcha Felder remarked that "If anyone tried to do it here, I would bring chopped liver in every day." According to the Daily News, Queens Councilman Peter Vallone joked "I don't know how long the Council can duck this issue."

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A photograph of two hands, one from the left and one from the right, holding a small white seagull in the center. The hands are positioned as if they are gently supporting the bird. The background is a clear blue sky with a few wispy white clouds. The lighting is bright, suggesting a sunny day.

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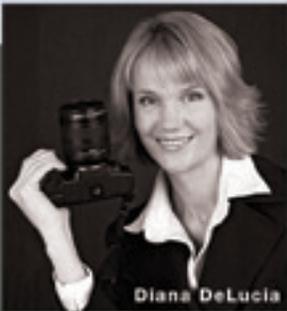
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