

A Family Affair



Roseanna, Elaina, Marion, and Anthony Scotto Jr.

An Interview with Marion Scotto, Fresco by Scotto®

EDITORS' NOTE Marion Scotto was coordinator of special events for the Borough of Brooklyn in New York City and went on to do charitable and political fundraising. Known affectionately as "The Boss," Marion runs front-of-the-house duties at Fresco by Scotto restaurant.

RESTAURANT BRIEF Fresco by Scotto® restaurant (frescobyscotto.com) has been opened since November 1993. It's well known as the power broker's lunch and star-filled entertainment industry dinner. Fresco by Scotto® is owned and operated by the Scotto Family, which includes Marion, Rosanna, Elaina, and Anthony Scotto Jr. Fresco by Scotto® has received outstanding reviews in New York Magazine, Gourmet, and The New York Times, and three stars in Crain's New York Business. The Scotto Family can often be seen demonstrating cooking segments on NBC's Today Show, Live with Regis & Kelly, The Ellen DeGeneres Show, Extra, The Wendy Williams Show, and Fox 5 Good Day New York.

What has been the secret to the success of the restaurant?

We only have one restaurant and one FRESKO on the Go® – and there is always a Scotto on premises. We care a lot. We love this place. We love the people that we serve, so it's a lovefest.

How do you define the restaurant?

I consider us an Italian restaurant. We started out with a Tuscan focus. Right now, we have a combination of old-world Italian and Tuscan flavors, so we try to keep up. When we travel, especially to Italy, whatever we eat, we film and we bring it back and show the chef, so it's easy to replicate.

Many say that a family business can be challenging. How has yours worked so well? Are you all focused on different areas?

Yes, I work on the front-of-the-house, so that's about reservations and making sure that certain people have the right table, and of course, greeting people properly – and I run the parties upstairs. Anthony's job is running the restaurant – he has the hardest job because it's working with staff and the kitchen. Elaina runs On

the Go, and she does catering there, so we each have our own areas that we concentrate on.

Today, there is a heavy focus around healthy food and wellness eating. Can that also mean great taste?

Sure, on our menu, we have a vegetable plate for our vegetarians. We also have a pasta that is low-carb. Italian food is simple. There is nothing in it like heavy cream, for instance. Basically, it's olive oil, wonderful tomatoes, beans – it's easy food, and it is healthy.

How do you stay innovative while maintaining a menu with traditional favorites?

A lot of my corporate guys eat fish every day so we always have a special fish. But we also have salmon, cooked tuna, raw tuna, and Branzino, which is the Italian white fish.

People can get a variety of items when they come here. If somebody has a dietary need, we try to accommodate that.

How important are private events at Fresco by Scotto?

Barbra Streisand just had a party at the end of November. I was very nervous but she was so nice and so charming, and thanked us over and over again. She left a big tip for my staff, and everyone fell in love with her. The room is used almost every night by a corporation, usually for a sit-down dinner.

How did the cookbooks come about?

The first cookbook came about through a customer who had a very small printing company. He asked us to do a cookbook and we were so busy at the time that we almost missed out on the opportunities that the cookbooks have afforded us.

With our second cookbook, Jeff Zucker, who was running the *Today Show* at the time, asked me to come on the show. I said, I won't come alone, so we all went together. This is how it began.

A lot of people have come to us with ideas for reality shows. Jeff was the first to say we should not do it. He said he knows people who started out great family-wise but by the end of the season, they hated each other. He said he wanted us to keep the closeness we have. ●

An Interview with Elaina Scotto, Fresco on the Go®

EDITORS' NOTE A former PR fashion executive, Elaina Scotto has worked for such designers as Yves Saint Laurent and Bill Robinson. She runs all catering for Fresco on the Go® including Live Nation and the Barclays Center.

What makes Fresco on the Go® work so well?

We all try to stay in touch with the customer. We try to have a very friendly atmosphere, and we're on a first-name basis with most of our customers.

I tell our staff that it's the same chicken as everyone else's, so we have to make ours that much better. What makes it better is that we greet people in the morning and the afternoon, and we ask them how they're doing. People come in and say, I love your lentil soup, can you make it on Thursday? We say, sure, why not. We always say "yes." The word "no" is not in our vocabulary, and we try to make each day better.

I meet daily with management and discuss ways in which we may improve. Customer service is a key factor.

How innovative can you get with food offerings in a business that is on-the-go?

We have learned to think outside the box. We never anticipated working with Live Nation and having a refrigerated truck, or setting up a mini Fresco backstage at major arenas in the tri-state area, but this is what we do. It's a lot of work. It's a ton of work, completely time consuming, but at the end of the day, it has made a huge impact on our business.

What is it about the culture that has made this a place where people can have a career?

We always promote from within. My morning catering manager has been with me for 15 years. He started as a busser at the restaurant a few years earlier and came over when we opened Fresco on the Go®, when he was my barista in the morning. I noticed how much he cared. Also, my GM had been a hostess at the restaurant. Our employees care. We're like a family here. Many have been with us since the day we opened and hope to grow as our company expands. ●