



PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND

# SIRENELLA RISTORANTE INC.

**ITALO MARZARI** has a taste for adventure and the determination to succeed. When he opened Sirenella Ristorante in Charlottetown in 1992, he continued a rewarding career in the profession he has grown to love.

Italo left his home in Northern Italy in 1967 to make his way to Canada and a promising future. He spoke little English or French and, though trained as an engineering technician, took work as a restaurant busboy. His career path changed forever.

As his language skills improved, Italo progressed from busboy to waiter and eventually he became maître d' of the prestigious Royal York hotel in Toronto. By the early 1980s, Italo was managing a successful restaurant in Halifax, Nova Scotia, and just a few years later, he opened his own restaurant, The Continental, in Saint John, New Brunswick.

Seeking yet another challenge, Italo moved to Prince Edward Island to become an instructor at the respected culinary institute in Charlottetown. When a downturn in the economy occurred, Italo was faced with two options – move off the Island or create his own employment.

He decided to open Sirenella Ristorante, a dining room specializing in Northern Italian dishes and seafood. Sirenella, means “mermaid” and was also the name of a northern Italian inn owned by Italo’s uncle.

“There really aren’t many serious opportunities for people in my position,” explains Italo. “I’ve had the opportunity to work in restaurants... to manage them... to teach about them... and even to own one. Once you’ve achieved all that, it’s hard to go back to working for someone else.”

The first step in starting his restaurant was to find a good location – a



Barnett and Mackay

setting that would complement the ambiance he wanted to create so that his clientele would feel truly welcomed. Knowing he wanted to offer guests a unique experience, he then set to work developing his menu. “I learned a lot with my first restaurant and had a lot of experience before

long hours, even when you’re suppose to be off.”

There are a few rules to follow to succeed in business. Italo says the first is to know your business inside and out. “Know your product, your customers, your finances, and maintain your food quality and service. Then be

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that, so I didn’t have any serious problems opening Sirenella,” he says. “It just took knowledge, a bit of money and a lot of hard work.”

As chef and owner, Italo realizes there are great advantages to owning your own restaurant. “You get a chance to show your creativity. You can do whatever you dream. You make your own decisions – and take responsibility for them. But it takes a lot of work, so count on spending

prepared to work HARD. Next, find – and keep – good staff.” The right people in the right jobs, he explains, are a resource you just can’t be without. Most important, he observes, is to enjoy what you do. “You’re going to spend almost all your time doing it, so you should choose something that gives you enjoyment.”

Sirenella Ristorante employs 15 people during the summer and nine in the off-season.

Italo Marzari

**WHERE TO REACH ITALO MARZARI**

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