

Hospitality

Il Mulino New York's Next 35 Years

An Interview with Jerry Katzoff,
Chairman, Il Mulino New York

COMPANY BRIEF

Founded in Greenwich Village in 1981, Il Mulino New York (ilmulino.com) originated as an intimate and esteemed eatery serving local foodies in the know. Today, Il Mulino New York has blossomed into a culinary empire with 15 luxury outposts across the globe that cater to taste makers,



Jerry Katzoff

celebrities, and dignitaries. It has also launched two innovative dining concepts, Trattoria Il Mulino and Il Mulino Prime, as well as the Il Mulino New York gourmet product line, which offers exquisite sauces, pastas, infused olive oils, and more (ilmulino.com/shop/).

Will you talk about the secret to keeping the brand so consistently strong and relevant?

First and foremost, the strength of our brand has to do with the quality of our cuisine. The décor and location certainly complement our culinary experience, but ultimately it is the dishes that have earned Il Mulino New York laurels for over three decades.

What differentiates you?

The history, tradition, and consistency of our refined cuisine form the foundation of our distinctive culinary benchmark. We significantly expanded the brand after purchasing it with Brian Galligan in 2001. We pay homage to the original recipes and maintain the sense of authenticity. It gives our dining experience timeless charm, and that really resonates with our customers.

Il Mulino New York has expanded into new markets. How important is maintaining that consistency and experience, and does it become more challenging with that growth?

Consistency is the key. There is no question that, as we expand, a priority is to train new staff thoroughly so that they can prepare the recipes in the style of our cuisine. One of the things I try to do every so often is to order the same dish at different outposts. That way, I can see that they're being consistently delivered across the Il Mulino New York brand.



Il Mulino Prime in SoHo, New York

For us, "pretty close" is unacceptable. We ensure that every outpost matches the impeccable standard of our corporate chef.

When you look at continued growth, are there certain markets you feel you need to have an Il Mulino New York in?

With the international renown of the Il Mulino New York brand, we rarely have to look for new locations. More often, we are sought out by developers as their projects materialize. We have several new deals in the works for 2017 and 2018.

Are you building careers and how hard is retention?

We have a tremendous retention rate. We're very fortunate. In terms of new hires, the excellence and history of our brand garners applications from the cream of the crop. Our staff is extremely dedicated to and enthusiastic about Il Mulino New York. They come here to stay, and we treat them well, so they have no reason to leave.

Will there be growth internationally or is the U.S. the key focus?

We have had Il Mulino New York in Tokyo for 10 years; we just opened in Macau, China. We have an opportunity to open a number of outposts in Mexico City, so we're actively exploring that possibility. We also have an interest in expanding to London and Dubai, but we always first like to connect with a local partner who shares our vision.

Will there be growth within the Trattoria Il Mulino brand?

We have three brands now: Il Mulino Prime, Il Mulino New York, and Trattoria Il Mulino.

Il Mulino Prime is an Italian steakhouse that we opened in SoHo across from the SoHo Grand Hotel. It has been so popular that we're now opening one in Chicago and looking to expand that brand, which features some Il Mulino New York classics but with a bigger slant on steaks.

Trattoria was designed for a younger market that wants to get the culinary experience and flavors of Il Mulino New York but in a more casual, chic environment. The cuisine is comparable to our other outposts, but the menu is curated with a millennial clientele in mind.

Will you talk about the offering when it comes to Il Mulino New York's focus on product and what can be bought online?

Lee Katzoff, Vice President at Il Mulino New York, started the product line with sauce, and now we also sell dried pasta, salts, infused oils, vinegars, and coffee, as well as gift baskets. Our products are offered at every high-end gourmet store, including Whole Foods and Fresh Market, as well as at smaller food boutiques throughout the country. They provide a way for our customers to bring a little piece of Il Mulino New York home with them.

We have built up the Il Mulino New York culinary experience into a luxury brand with a large and loyal clientele. Our product line is an extension of that experience. ●