

At The Intersection Of Nearly A Century Of New York History

An Interview with Luigi Romaniello, Managing Director, Waldorf Astoria New York



Luigi Romaniello at the Waldorf Astoria New York

EDITORS' NOTE Luigi Romaniello's illustrious 30-plus year career includes leadership roles at prestigious hotels worldwide where he has demonstrated exceptional skills in openings, renovations, repositionings, and concept development with a focus on delivering a world-class guest experience. In his new position, Romaniello plays a pivotal role in redefining the next era of Waldorf Astoria New York, further delivering on Conrad Hilton's vision of the hotel as the "greatest of them all." He is responsible for all aspects of operations for both the hotel, Waldorf Astoria New York, and Waldorf Astoria Residences New York, the hotel's newly introduced residences. Romaniello is focused on delivering on the brand's commitment to providing unforgettable experiences and extraordinary service to guests from across New York City and around the world.

Will you discuss your career journey?

I was born and raised in Rome, and my journey into hospitality began with a degree in hotel and restaurant management from the University of Houston. Over the past three decades, I've had the privilege of leading historic openings, landmark renovations, and transformative repositionings at some of the world's most iconic luxury hotels.

I spent more than two decades with Rosewood Hotels & Resorts, where I served as Managing Director for the openings of Rosewood Baha Mar and Rosewood Abu Dhabi. My career then brought me to New York as Managing Director of The Plaza. Today, as Managing Director of Waldorf Astoria New York, I have had the privilege of leading the hotel through its historic restoration and reopening. I couldn't imagine a more meaningful culmination of my three decades in hospitality than stewarding one of the most significant hotel restorations in history, a project that has drawn on every lesson and experience I've gained throughout my career.



Peacock Alley with Cole Porter piano

Will you provide an overview of Waldorf Astoria New York, and how the property is positioned in the market?

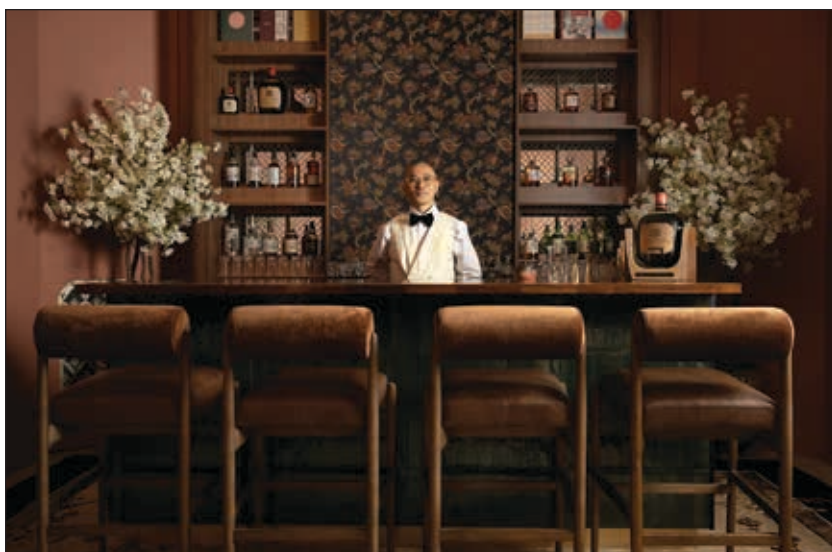
Waldorf Astoria New York reopened in summer 2025 after an extensive, multi-year transformation led by Skidmore, Owings & Merrill and interior designer Pierre-Yves Rochon. Our positioning is rooted in Conrad Hilton's original vision of the hotel as "The Greatest of Them All." We're not just a hotel; we're a landmark and a residence.

The painstaking renovation truly achieved that, from the thousands of craftsmen and artisans brought on to restore every detail of the hotel to its former glory, from the murals dating back to the 18th and 19th centuries, to the original double-wide elevators connecting the hotel's event spaces, and everything in between.

The property includes both the hotel and Waldorf Astoria Residences New York, with interiors by Jean-Louis Deniot. We sit at the intersection of nearly a century of New York history, redefining luxury for this day and age in the heart of Manhattan. From thoughtfully reimagined experiences to accommodations positioned as best-in-class in today's high-end luxury market, we transformed Waldorf Astoria New York from 1,400 rooms to 375 spacious guest rooms and suites.



Waldorf Astoria New York Park Avenue entrance



Bar Yoshoku

Will you highlight the strength of Waldorf Astoria New York's suite product?

Our 375 rooms and suites are one of our greatest differentiators in Manhattan. They are among the city's most spacious accommodations, designed to offer a sense of openness that's increasingly rare in New York. Each one thoughtfully balances the grandeur of the hotel's original Art Deco architecture with Pierre-Yves Rochon's timeless, contemporary interiors. What makes them especially distinctive is how intuitively they function. Every suite was designed around the way today's luxury traveler actually lives. For example, guests can move between the bedroom, dressing area, and bathroom without having to pass through the living room – a subtle detail that many won't notice consciously but appreciate once they experience it. When you combine that level of thoughtful design with Waldorf Astoria New York's landmarked public spaces, rich history, iconic legacy, and the people who bring it to life, it creates an experience that simply can't be found anywhere else in New York.

How has Waldorf Astoria New York approached its restaurant/food and beverage offering, and what are the keys to being successful in this part of the business?

Food and beverage needed to be a destination in its own right, not simply an amenity for hotel guests. From the outset, our vision was to create restaurants and bars that New Yorkers would genuinely seek out alongside travelers from around the world. That philosophy comes to life through Lex Yard, led by acclaimed Chef Michael Anthony, and a world-class beverage program curated by renowned mixologist Jeff Bell, complemented by dining and cocktails throughout iconic spaces like Peacock Alley.



One-bedroom suite living space

Ultimately, the key to success is authenticity. You need exceptional talent with a distinct point of view and a genuine connection to the city, not concepts created simply to fill hotel space. When you get that right, you create places people return to whether they're staying at the hotel or simply looking for an extraordinary dining experience.

Will you discuss Waldorf Astoria New York's focus on offering personalized service and a customized guest experience?

Personalization is the foundation of luxury hospitality. It starts with remembering personal preferences, recognizing returning guests, and anticipating needs, but it's the genuine human connection that truly defines a luxury experience. I encourage our team to take a sincere interest in every guest and look for thoughtful ways to make each stay feel personal. Ultimately, luxury isn't just about the physical product; it's about making every guest feel seen, valued, and cared for.

What do you feel are the keys to providing a true luxury hotel experience?

Attention to detail, above all else. At Waldorf Astoria New York, that means everything from restoring the 148,000-piece mosaic in our Park Avenue lobby to delivering thoughtful, seamless service every day. It also requires grace under pressure and the ability to balance a property's rich heritage with the expectations of today's luxury traveler.



Waldorf Astoria New York Grand Ballroom

What has made the hospitality industry so special for you?

The people, without question. Few industries allow you to be part of so many meaningful moments in people's lives, from milestone celebrations to first visits to a new city. At Waldorf Astoria New York, that legacy is even more extraordinary, having welcomed iconic figures from Marilyn Monroe to Frank Sinatra. It's incredibly humbling to play a role in continuing that story. At the same time, hospitality is an industry that constantly teaches you something new. Every destination, every property, and every guest offers a chance to learn and grow.

What advice do you offer to young people interested in building a career in the industry?

Be curious, be patient, and never stop learning. My own career has been shaped by embracing opportunity and staying open to new experiences. I'd also encourage young people not to underestimate the importance of kindness, attentiveness, and genuine hospitality. Technical skills can be taught, but making people feel welcome and cared for is what truly sets great hospitality veterans apart. ●