

Manhattan's oldest Italian eatery out



EAT'S OVER: Barbetta, the city's longest-running family-owned eatery, has served Italian cuisine in luxurious settings on West 46th Street's Restaurant Row since the 1920s, after first opening in 1906. Matriarch Laura Maioglio (below) died last month, and the restaurant is closing.

CIAO, CHOW, 'BETTA

By BROOKE STEINBERG

Manhattan's oldest Italian restaurant is about to serve its final meal. After 120 years, Barbetta will close its doors today.

The decision to shutter the eatery, which is also the longest-running family-owned restaurant in the city, comes after the death of longtime owner Laura Maioglio. She ran the institution until she passed away last month at age 93.

"With heavy hearts, we share that following the passing of Ms. Laura Maioglio, the heart and soul of Barbetta, the restaurant will conclude its remarkable journey, with our last day of service on Friday, February 27," the eatery said on its website.

Barbetta was founded in 1906 by Maioglio's father, Sebastiano, and uncle, Vincenzo. Originally named The Maioglio Brothers and located on 39th Street, it became known for serving good food at good prices to patrons of the old Metropolitan Opera down the street.

In the 1920s, after Vincenzo's death, Sebastiano moved the eatery to its current location on West 46th Street's Restaurant Row, where it was renamed Barbetta.

Brownstone landmark

The restaurant is spread across four adjoining 19th-century brownstones, which were originally built by the Astor family and rented to wealthy ship merchants. Sebastiano bought the houses from the Astors in 1925 for \$250,000 to take advantage of the burgeoning theater business in Times Square.

Laura Maioglio took over the restaurant from her father in 1962, turning its interior into a Piedmontese palazzo and importing antique chandeliers and furniture from Italian villas.

Upstairs, she preserved most of

the original Astor interiors for private dining areas, with marble fireplaces and doorknobs with peephole hinges from the 1880s.

The restaurant specialized in Piemonte cuisine from the northwestern Italian region, where the Maioglio family originated.

At the time, Americans associated Italian food with rustic joints full of red sauce, not regional cuisine — but Barbetta's dishes garnered as much buzz as its interiors.

It served elegant pastas, risotto and white truffles — sourcing truffles through its own hunters and truffle hounds in Italy for years.

Its wine cellar introduced many American patrons to Piedmontese wines such as Barolo and Barbaresco long before they became wine list staples.

Barbetta's garden patio, created in 1963,

was among the first open-air dining spaces in Manhattan outside of Central Park. It became one of the city's most highly coveted summer dining reservations.

The restaurant weathered the 1970s and '80s as nearby Times Square turned into the city's center of sleaze. It drew Broadway stars, opera singers, artists and politicians.

The Post penned an ode to Barbetta in 2015, in which Maioglio dished on celebrity diners, including Elizabeth Taylor, Madonna — a regular until a sommelier tried to take her picture and she threw a cup of espresso at him — and Toni Braxton, who hosted a family event when a fight broke out and one of the original Astor doors was damaged.

Woody Allen put the eatery in his film "Alice," while Dustin Hoffman, Robert De Niro and Bill and Hillary Clinton were also regulars.

Barbetta was even recognized as a historic establishment by Locali Storici d'Italia — the first restaurant in the US to receive the distinction.



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