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**Brooklyn Restaurateur Joseph Chirico Passes the Torch to His Son:
The Marco Polo Ristorante for the Next Generation Re-Opens with an Exciting New
Look and a New Menu**

Marco Polo Ristorante, a Brooklyn landmark for 29 years, reopens with a new interior design and a new menu that will appeal to long-time customers, as well as to a new generation of diners.

The journey to Marco Polo began in 1964, the year restaurateur **Joseph Chirico** immigrated to New York from San Martino, RC, Italy. His first restaurant venture, a luncheonette serving Italian sandwiches, opened in 1968 at 349 Court Street. He was also the owner and operator of the legendary **Gage and Tollner** on Fulton Street, in downtown Brooklyn. Then in 1983, he opened Marco Polo Ristorante, named after the Venetian explorer. Chirico broke new ground by introducing fine Italian dining to Brooklyn and Marco Polo quickly became the power center for Brooklyn politicians and judges. Joseph was one of the pioneers in Italian cuisine, offering previously undiscovered ingredients such as *bufala* mozzarella imported from Italy, porcini mushrooms, and truffles.

In 2009, Joseph expanded the family business with his son **Marco** to include **Enoteca on Court**. Marco had an early start: He grew up in the restaurant at 345 Court Street and was bussing tables there by the time he was 12 years old. Marco could have followed any path, but he was passionate about wanting to follow in his father's footsteps, so he decided to attend the prestigious **Johnson & Wales University** in Providence, Rhode Island. There he studied both culinary arts and restaurant management. After three years of successfully running the Enoteca (which already earned a Michelin recommendation) he is ready to take the helm of the more formal Marco Polo.

The first step was the complete redesign of the Marco Polo dining room. Working with **Crown Design**—the firm behind the look of Orsay, La Goulue, Rabbit in the Moon, and Bar Italia—they have transformed the old school restaurant, giving it a complete makeover. The subdued dining room now has a very modern feel, with cream-colored walls, distressed wood floors and black and white photographs of Venice. There is also sidewalk dining and a banquet room for private parties upstairs.

Marco Polo explores new territory without leaving its history behind. The menu, in the hands of Marco, features both new world creations (modern interpretations of Italian cuisine) and old world classics. Regulars will not be disappointed: They'll continue to have access to the high-quality **raw bar**, favorite appetizers such as **seafood salad**, fresh pasta dishes including **fettucine al vino rosso** tossed in a Parmesan wheel and entrees such as **rack of lamb**.

The new menu features traditional Venetian cuisine such as **black seafood risotto**, as well as dishes with a Southern accent, such as **barbabietola**, a roasted red and yellow beets salad with hearts of palm, watercress, and cherry tomatoes. The appetizers focus on flavors that pop, and salads that will whet diners' appetites. For example, luxurious and classic **vitello tonnato**, thin slices of veal with creamy, pureed lemon-inflected tuna sauce will stir the palate; **lobster salad** with orange segments, radicchio, heirloom tomatoes, mache and orange vinaigrette is bright and refreshing; and crudo-fresh **tuna and salmon tartar** with salmon roe, seaweed salad and basil oil will wake up the taste buds.

In addition to these new dishes, you'll find beautiful presentations of some of the restaurant's most popular dishes including house-made **Calabrese sausage**, nicely spicy with a wonderful texture, accompanied by sweet and spicy eggplant and red pepper *caponata*; and **panzanella salad**, toasty chunks of bread tossed with fresh heirloom tomatoes with a zesty dressing.

At Marco Polo, the focus is on sourcing the finest ingredients, with many of the most important elements in a dish made in house—including fresh pasta, mozzarella cheese, and sausage. To ensure the freshest possible seafood, Marco shops at the Hunts Point fish market daily.

You can taste the ocean in the **lobster gnocchi**, scrumptious potato pasta sauced with a richly flavored yet light lobster bisque, tossed with mounds of tender lobster meat and fresh herbs, elegantly presented in the shell; as well as in the moist, delicious **pan-roasted whole branzino with crispy artichoke hearts, roasted new potatoes, and cherry tomatoes**, a complete meal in one copper skillet, de-boned and served tableside.

Other special items on the new menu include toothsome **pappardelle with Tuscan veal ragu and fava beans**, thick ribbons of fresh house-made pasta with a meaty sauce packed with flavor; and the hearty **braised lamb shank** that is perfectly paired with creamy soft polenta that soaks up the aromatic gravy.

An array of new desserts from Marco Polo's team of pastry chefs, headed by Marco, include **terrine of chocolate fondue with bitter orange marmalade**, a flourless chocolate cake (made with almond flour and finished with a splash of Amaretto) that even non-chocoholics will love, as well as a coffee-flavored **semifreddo** mousse with

rum-soaked lady fingers, and tarts topped with fresh fruit that are as beautiful as they are delicious.

The international wine list, featuring more than 240 predominately Italian wines carefully selected by Joseph Chirico—already recognized by the *Wine Spectator*—will continue to complement the cuisine. The private cellar features some incredible reserve wines including **Far Niente**, **Bertani Amarone** and **Don Mechor Concha y Toro Private Reserve**.

Marco Polo Ristorante is located at 345 Court Street at the corner of Union Street, 718-852-5015, www.marcopoloristorante.com, and will be open for lunch and dinner, Mon-Thurs, noon–11pm for lunch and dinner, Friday-Sat, noon–midnight, and Sunday 1pm–10 pm. For more information, please contact Michael Gartenlaub at mgartenlaub@benvenutipr.com.