

by Joseph Aiello

If you've ever helped your father or grandfather knead pork, fennel seed, pepper, and spices in a bowl, or fill sausage casings, then you'll have some appreciation for the skill and hard work that goes into making sausage. Want to know who makes the best sausage in Colorado? We did...and, depending on whom you ask, you'll get a variety of answers. While there were clear favorites, we did get a consensus in our little unscientific litmus test—Polidori.

Until now, our exposure to Polidori sausage happened to be either seeing it merchandised in the meat department of the grocery store, or at the dinner table on a pasta night. Now, we were compelled to contact the folks behind the reputation and find out firsthand about the business of making sausage.

### A FAMILY RECIPE FROM THE OLD COUNTRY

The Polidori story begins with Rocco and Ana Polidori. Rocco Polidori came from Frasone in southern Rome and arrived in the United States in 1907. Ana came from Abruzzi and arrived seven years later in 1914. As fate would have it, the two would meet in Magna, Utah and marry a few years later. Ana and Rocco moved to Denver in 1925. At the time, little did they know that Ana's family recipe for sausage, a recipe that had already been handed

down for generations, would blossom into a business that has survived in America for nearly 80 years.

### THE BEGINNINGS

Ana and Rocco Polidori began their business by purchasing a grocery store from Ana's brother, James Cerrone. Located at 3401 Shoshone Street in Denver, it was in the "meat department" of Polidori Groceries and Meats that Ana began making and selling her Italian sausage. They operated their store until 1946 when sons Louis and Elvin (Augie)

Polidori took over the ownership of the business. The meat market business flourished between 1946 and 1982 and the Polidori name was well known for its Italian sausage which was sold to distributors and restaurants throughout the Denver area. When Ana Polidori passed away in 1982, the Polidori brothers sold the store and Louis moved the meat processing business to its current location at 3327 Tejon Street.

### KEEPING THE FAMILY TRADITION ALIVE

The meat processing business was maintained for another ten years during a time when a host of other challengers began competing for the market Polidori seemed to control. Then, in 1992, Louis' grandson,

Steve Polidori, joined the business and introduced automation to the company. Finally the company was poised to better compete in what had become a very competitive business. Steven assumed complete ownership of the business in 2002, but soon realized he needed help in order to take the business to the next level. His sister, Melodie, joined in 2003 and with her came more than a helping hand. Melodie earned a degree in business and marketing and was able to promote the business and its "new face."

### POLIDORI TODAY

Today, thanks to Steve and Melodie Polidori, the family business is thriving. Polidori is the oldest, family-owned Italian sausage maker in Denver—continuously run by a Polidori. In addition to Italian sausage, Polidori offers a fantastic Chorizo, multiple pork sausages, Bratwursts and meatballs. They also make proprietary sausage recipes for many restaurants in the Denver area. Polidori sausage happens to be made with no added colors or preservatives, or MSG. As Melodie points out, "consumers need to look closely at the label when comparison shopping. They'll be surprised when they do. Another thing shoppers may not know is that our pork also happens to be the leanest sold on the retail market."

I asked Melodie's brother, Steve Polidori, what their family's secret for success was. "Making a consistent product day after day, and providing excellent customer service to our customers. That's what has kept us in business for 79 years."

Now in its fourth generation, the Polidori family continues to provide a line of products that began with a family recipe for sausage from the old country. Ana and Rocco would be proud.

Polidori meats are available in King Soopers, Simple Foods Markets, and Spinelli's Market.

Polidori Meat Processing, Inc is located at 3327 Tejon Street in north Denver. For more information, call (303)455-5701. To fax an order, (303)455-6352. Or visit their website at [www.polidorimeats.com](http://www.polidorimeats.com)

**Sausage making is a family affair**

*Recipes born in Italy long ago now delight Louis Polidori's customers*

By BOB JAIN

THREE generations work on the sausage recipe that Louis Polidori makes in his north Denver grocery store.

Louis was Polidori's third son. At 3401 Shoshone St. With his mother, Mrs. Anna Polidori, and his son, Garri, 30, he produces and sells more than a ton of sausage each week, using the recipe his mother learned in her native Italy. He was the third son. Around the corner of the meat market business where his mother grew up.

When pork sausage is most popular, the Polidori make new batches every day, sometimes taking a day. It amounts to about 2000 pounds a week, with German and regular Italian sausage accounting for another 100 to 200 pounds. The recipe is simple, and preparing

...requires a very fine hand. First the pork hocks are boiled. Then the meat is ground into small chunks. It is ground four in a miller, white onion seed, hot pepper, salt, black pepper and other spices are added. The mixture is then it is fed by machine into the casing.

Sometimes a customer will ask Louis to make a batch of sausage or better. Louis has an answer to that. "If a person wants his sausage, let a whole bunch of people buy it enough. But if he doesn't like it, let even one person buy it."

Like any sausage, Louis says, his sausage will taste better if the customer lets it sit for a few days before eating it. That doesn't happen very often, he says, people like it as well as it is.

Photographs by ALBERT MULFAY

Louis Polidori, his mother and son with the finished product.



Steve Polidori and sister Melodie Polidori Harris.



## WHERE THE CREDIT BELONGS

The festival steering committee—the people responsible for Festival Italiano and most deserving of our praise and gratitude included—John Hickenlooper, Mayor of Denver; Steve Burkholder, Mayor of Lakewood; Anna & John Sie of the Sie Foundation; Maria Scordo Allen, Honorary Vice Consul of Italy; Roberta Waldbaum, University of Denver Professor of Italian; Peter Kudla, CEO of Metropolitan Homes; and Mark Falcone, founder and managing partner of Continuum Partners – developers of the Belmar area.

Restaurants participating in the Banchetto event included 240 Union, Amore, Campo di Fiori, Il Fornaio, Luca D'Italia, Maggiano's Little Italy, Mel's Bar & Grill, Moda, Panzano, Piatti, Restaurant Kody, Rioja, Solera, Strings, Table 6, Tuscany, Loews Denver, Venice, and Wolfgang Puck Café. All the wine donated for this event was through the generosity of the National Distributing Company.

## FUTURE POSSIBILITIES

While attendance figures certainly don't quite compare to New York's San Gennaro, or Milwaukee's Festa Italiana, the quality and character are the same. Having attended both I can tell you that San Gennaro is largely a celebration of food, while Festa Italiana is a much broader presentation of "all things Italian." The main attraction in Milwaukee is their Main Stage which brings in top named entertainers from around the country. If a sponsor could be found, having a Main Stage event to anchor Festival Italiano would certainly broaden its appeal. Other attractions being suggested include the Old Jazz Circus Band from Rome, and the Zoppe' family circus from Venice.

## ONE MORE REASON

"This regional festival has been designed to celebrate Colorado's Italian connections," says Denver's Mayor, John Hickenlooper.

Festival Italiano gives us all a reason to celebrate—the fact that this event will





**ITALIANO**

SAVOR THE NIGHTS, BUYERS & FLAVORS OF ITALY

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**SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 25, 7:30 PM**  
**CINEMA ITALIANO**  
 Enjoy a free outdoor screening of the Italian film classic *Cinema Paradiso* -1989 by Director Giuseppe Tornatore in the atrium of the Denver Center for Performing Arts Complex.  
 14th & Curtis Street - Free and open to the public

**SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 26, 10AM-5PM**  
**ITALIAN FOOD & WINE FESTIVAL**  
 Experience the finest Italian food, wine and artisan vendors in an outdoor market setting. Wine tastings, Italian lessons, children's classic Italian story readings, strolling Italian performers, a bocce ball tournament and much more to entertain the entire family.  
 Alaska Street at Belmar - Free and open to the public  
 303.742.1520 BelmarColorado.com



now be a permanent fixture on Colorado's cultural scene. While we will continue to have a number of charitable festas that have become annual traditions within the Italian American community, (fundraising events like Our Lady of Mt. Carmel Bazaar, Potenza's San Rocco Festival, Louisville's Festa Italiana, Pueblo's Taste of Italy, and Salida's Wine Festival), Festival Italiano is in a class by itself. This festival brings us closer to a more modern day celebration of our Italian heritage—a wonderful blend of the Italian and Italian American cultures.

For more information about Festival Italiano, contact Belmar Colorado @ (303)742-1520 or visit [www.belmarcolorado.com](http://www.belmarcolorado.com)

