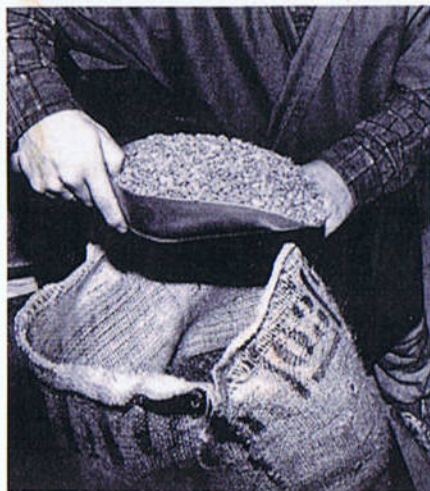


A little bit of Italy right here in Seattle

A Roasters Signature



When Mauro Cipolla decided to set up his own coffee roasting plant in Seattle five years ago at the age of 25, his experience in the craft was already tempered on three continents and in four countries.

Mauro had come to Seattle ten years earlier with his mother and father. After attending high school in the city's north end and obtaining a degree in international business from the University of Washington, he felt a yearning to return to his native Italy.

During Mauro's time there, he was introduced to the respected Italian traditions of roasting coffee. "I was thinking of going into business. I got hooked on the product," he says, clinging gracefully to his Italian accent.

Working with family and longtime friends, Mauro learned the unwritten secrets of the craft. He developed his own 'recipes' — the careful blending of different beans to achieve a consistent, pleasurable result.

"You have to keep on your toes to do it right," Mauro says. "Because you're dealing with nature, the beans vary from crop to crop, different climatic conditions, and from bag to bag."

Mauro had known that he wanted to begin a business. He had worked in restaurants, and cooking for friends was a hobby. "I knew I wanted to do something that had to do with food — and with Italy," Mauro says.

Coffee blending and roasting according to Italian tradition provided the ideal combination.

When he returned to Seattle from Italy, Mauro worked with a roaster in Vancouver, B.C. who prepared his coffee blends, which he sold to Seattle customers. Mauro's association with the Canadian roaster, who had some experience in the coffee-growing regions of Central America, further broadened Mauro's exposure.

His label, Caffè Mauro, incorporates the breadth of his experience, drawing together what he believes to be the best of each. His carefully balanced recipes have gradually taken a foothold in the Seattle restaurant industry.

A trip to Mauro's roasting facility in south Seattle speaks much about the man, his roots, and his family tradition. Upon entering the plant, a visitor is apt to be greeted by members of Mauro's family.

"A business is an extension of what you're all about," Mauro says.

It's obvious, then, that family and tradition are important to the Cipolla family. They're all there, his mother and father and his new wife, working side-by-side with him to build a successful business.

"Family is a very, very important part of being Italian," he says.

During a subsequent tour of the plant, Mauro explains how he incorporates the best Italian traditions into each of his

Story by Roger I. Sandon
Editor

Photos by Gregory Clark
Photography Editor



blends. As he explains the intricacies of creating consistent roasts from inconsistent products of nature, he displays the passion of an artist.

Coffee is so much more to Mauro than a morning jump-start. He describes numerous characteristics of coffee — aroma, strength, richness, depth, acidity — and how he evaluates each to build a combination that is uniquely his own.

The balance of these elements creates a character that, in effect, is his own "signature." *The Atlantic* magazine, in its November 1990 edition, called Mauro's signature "miraculous to achieve," a national tribute to a local roaster.

When he began selling his blends of coffee five years ago, he was dependent on the willingness of managers in Seattle's restaurant trade to give his blends a chance. By 1987, he had enough sales volume to buy his own roaster.

"My coffee could be the best coffee in the world, and my marketing could be the best marketing in the world, but if people didn't give me a chance, I wouldn't be anywhere," says Mauro with a deep sense of gratitude for his customers. "I don't take them for granted."

"The customer makes it happen," he adds. "The customer is taking care of you. There is no place for arrogance."

They seem to be taking care of Mauro Cipolla quite well, thank you. The customers of his customers have made so many requests to purchase his beans for home and office use, that he is in the beginning stages of selling his beans at retail displays.

He is also exploring the possibility of opening a retail outlet so more people can enjoy Caffè Mauro. Ω

