

John Curtas' Eating Las Vegas



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Piero Selvaggio Inducted Into Italian Wine Hall Of Fame

By: John Curtas

Italian Trade Commission Announces Piero Selvaggio Among Recipients of First Distinguished Service Awards

As part of the VINO 2009 conference on Italian Wines, The Italian Trade Commission has announced the recipients of its inaugural Distinguished Service Awards honoring professionals in the wine industry who have demonstrated a commitment to advancing the understanding, appreciation and sales of Italian wines in the United States. A total of 232 honorees from 21 states will receive Distinguished Service Awards certificates, including leading wine importers, distributors, retailers, restaurateurs, educators and journalists. For a complete list of Distinguished Service Awards recipients and information on VINO 2009 visit www.italianmade.com/vino2009.

Eight Distinguished Service Awards honorees were inducted into the Italian Trade Commission's *Hall of Fame* for their outstanding leadership, contribution and lifelong dedication to the appreciation, education and marketing of Italian wines in the U.S. at an awards dinner January 27th at the Rainbow Room in New York City.

The VINO 2009 Distinguished Service Hall of Fame inductees included: Piero Selvaggio, proprietor, Valentino Ristorante (Santa Monica, CA/Las Vegas, NV); Burton Anderson, author/journalist, *The Wines Atlas of Italy*; Darrell Corti, co-owner, Corti Brothers (Sacramento, CA); Victor Hazan, author, *Italian Wine*; Leonardo LoCascio, President, CEO and Founder, Winebow; Dr. John Mariani, Jr., Chairman Emeritus, Banfi Vintners and Castello Banfi; Hubert Opici, Chairman of the Board, Opici Wine Group; and Anthony Terlato, Chairman, Terlato Wine Group.

Some interesting facts about **Piero Selvaggio**:

- > His first job on the West Coast (as a teenager in the mid-'60's) was as a busboy at Chasen's;
- > In the late '60's he worked as a waiter at the Villa d'Este (now Piero's, that, btw, isn't named after him) in Las Vegas;
- > In 1969, he was employed as a waiter at Kirk Kerkorian's International Hotel (now the Las Vegas Hilton);

- > His college degree is in Spanish because that was the closest language to Italian he could take courses in;
- > He almost singlehandedly ignited the renaissance in Italian wines in this country over thirty years ago;
- > He is a soccer fanatic;
- > He is one of the great storytellers of all time.

We at ELV couldn't be happier for him, and continue to be in awe of:

- > His accomplishments;
- > His great restaurants (**Valentino** in The Venetian and **Cafe Giorgio** in Mandalay Place — not to mention the original **Valentino** in Santa Monica, that continues to be one of America's best);
- > His wine lists in both places;
- > His wine bars in both places;
- > His great chefs (James Beard Award winner *Luciano Pelligrini* and *Nico Chessa*) in both places;
- > The grace, knowledge and enthusiasm he brings to educating Americans about all things Italian.
- > How he always looks like he just stepped out of an Italian men's fashion magazine.

And just because we hate to waste our tasty snaps, here's a few pics of the nibbles we partook of last night whilst we shared a nice Miramar Torres Sonoma pinot noir with Signor Selvaggio:

