



ALBANY MUSEUM OF ART

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CHEF JOHN GARGANO BRINGS THREE GENERATIONS OF ITALIAN CUISINE TO AMA SUPPER SERIES

The Albany Museum of Art's *Starry Starry Night* Will Feature a Fabulous Outdoor Dinner in an Elegant Poolside Setting

[For Release April 19, 2018 – Albany, GA] – Imagine dining by a shimmering pool under a starry sky as you enjoy a fine Italian dinner accompanied by wines selected to complement the cuisine.

That is the memorable evening awaiting those who attend *Starry Starry Night*, which brings this season of the Albany Museum of Art's Fine Art of Dining Culinary Series to a close.

The cuisine will be inspired by three generations of Italian cooking as Chef John Gargano, owner of Villa Gargano, brings his expertise—and his family's recipes—to an elegant outdoor dining setting at the Albany residence of Amy Jones.

The event set for 6 pm Saturday, May 5 also features specially selected wine pairings for the menu, as well as an open bar.

Gargano, whose restaurant will mark its golden anniversary in December, will be assisted by Jerry Perez at the event. There are a few tickets still available for what is certain to be a memorable evening featuring authentic Italian cuisine for which the Gargano family has been known for more than six decades.

“Really, what this is all about is helping the museum,” Gargano said in a recent interview. “It’s a tribute to my grandparents and my father.”

Gargano's grandparents, Mike and Susie Gargano, came to the United States from Italy in 1940. They opened Gargano's East on East Oglethorpe Boulevard in 1957.

John Daniel Gargano's father, John Pasquale Gargano, opened Villa Gargano in North Slapppy Boulevard 11 years later. When he died in 1984, John Daniel Gargano, who was studying at the Culinary Institute of America at Hyde Park, N.Y., returned home to take over his father's restaurant.

He's kept the Gargano tradition going ever since with the help of his wife, Renee. Gargano also is assisted long-time employees David Rush and Jerry Perez.

"We're all about quality and tradition," he said. "I cook dinner specials every night."

Last year, the baked spaghetti dish at Villa Gargano was included in "100 Plates Locals Love," an annual list of favorite cuisine from throughout Georgia. The list of winning signature dishes nominated by Georgians is included each year in *Georgia Eats* magazine, which is published by the Tourism Division of the Georgia Department of Economic Development. In 2016, Gargano's East was selected to be the subject for Easterseals' Albany Christmas ornament.

The Gargano family restaurants also gained international fame during Desert Storm in early 1991 when Associated Press writer Elliott Minor, who was serving in public affairs with the 48th National Guard Brigade training at Fort Irwin, Calif., for deployment in Desert Storm, mentioned the restaurant during a televised news interview. Asked to rate the C-rations service personnel were eating, Minor said they were OK, but he would "rather be eating at Gargano's in Albany." That prompted Susie Gargano to throw an on-the-house pizza party at Gargano's East for military families in the Albany area.

Gargano says he hears frequent comments about wonderful memories local residents have of his grandmother, known affectionately as "Mama Susie" by many of the restaurant's patrons.

"Hardly a week goes by when someone doesn't mention the smiles and happiness my grandmother gave away," he said.

"I'm third generation," Gargano said. "I was born into it. I'm continuing the tradition."

The location for the dinner is an elegant complement to what promises to be a marvelous meal. The setting will be the pool area of the Albany home of Amy Jones and her late husband, Chuck Jones.

The home, designed by architect Rayburn Webb, was built in 1948. The residence was extensively remodeled in 1999, reconfiguring the downstairs and adding two upstairs bedrooms. Its pool house—formerly the garage—was moved to its present location and remodeled in 2004. Two back porches and an outdoor fireplace were added two years ago.

Tickets for *Starry Starry Night* are \$200 for Albany Museum of Art patron members and \$250 for future patron members. Seating is limited and tickets must be purchased in advance. Tickets may be purchased online at albanymuseum.com/supper-series or by mailing a check to the Albany Museum of Art, 311 Meadowlark Drive, Albany, GA 31701. Ticket sales are final and nonrefundable.

CURRENT EXHIBITIONS AT THE AMA

- *Glenn Dasher: In Retrospection; Monuments to Human Imperfection*, works by sculptor Glenn Dasher, Haley Gallery, through June 16;

- *Time Time and a Half*, installation by interdisciplinary artist Justin Hodges, East Gallery, through July 14;
- *Inspired Albany*, photography, West Gallery, through June 2.

The Albany Museum of Art, located in Albany, Georgia, adjacent to Albany State University West Campus just off Gillionville Road, has an impressive collection that includes 19th and 20th century American and European art, as well as a substantial collection of sub-Saharan African art including masks, sculpture, pottery, textiles, and musical instruments. The Albany Museum of Art is accredited by the American Association of Museums. The Albany Museum of Art is open 10 am through 5 pm Tuesday through Friday and noon until 5 pm on Saturday. Admission is free.

For more information about the AMA please visit our website, www.albanymuseum.com or call 229.439.8400.

CAPTION INFORMATION:

Chef John Gargano, owner of Villa Gargano in Albany, will be the featured chef at Starry Starry Night. The 6 pm outdoor poolside dining event, part of the Albany Museum of Art's Fine Art of Dining Culinary Series, will be at the Albany home of Amy Jones. (Photo: Albany Museum of Art)

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