



Sunshine on Main Street

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Maria Boeri
 proud owner of Savona
 delivers quality service, always
 with a smile

When I was in the position of Main Street Manager for Downtown Bel Air, our organization (the Bel Air Downtown Alliance) conducted a survey of area residents to find out what type of businesses they would like to see in their neighborhood downtown. The survey results showed a very strong desire for an Italian deli in town. Well, little did we know at the time we conducted the survey that plans were already in the works! I was informed of the exciting news when I was asked to attend a liquor board hearing for a new business whose owners wished to acquire a license to serve and sell wine on their premises. It was in my research prior to the meeting that I found out the owners were in the midst of establishing exactly what area residents were hoping for! Everyone I spoke to had wonderful things to say about the owners - Maria and Blane Boeri - who were working hard to make their dreams come true on Main Street. When I finally got to meet them face to face at the liquor board meeting, I felt like I had known them for years! I was greeted by both with big hugs, warm smiles and overwhelming enthusiasm for their new venture! That was in early 2005. In June of that year, the Boeris opened Savona at 2 N. Main Street - such a prime location that it was referred to in the liquor board hearing as the "epicenter of Harford County." Seven years later, the business is still going strong.

"I pinch myself every day and thank God for this successful business," says Maria, the proud deli owner. She attributes the success of the business to her wonderful staff - Sandra Woolford and Denise Edwards - who she calls her "angels". She also attributes her success to doing her homework in advance of opening the business.

Her vision for the business, named after the town (Savona) where her husband's grandfather was born near Genoa, Italy, came about when she found herself traveling over an hour from her home in Bel Air to purchase a fresh ball of mozzarella for a dinner party she was hosting. She realized then that there was a huge untapped market and a real need in the Bel Air area for fresh cheese, straight up olive oil, choice roast beef, high quality cold cuts and salami. At





the time that she and her husband decided to pursue an Italian deli, Maria owned a company in which she and a friend assisted those in need with cooking, running errands, grocery shopping, pet sitting and other necessary tasks. Prior to that, Maria had a home craft business making and selling topiaries, swags, and wreaths while raising her two sons, Blane and Michael. Her husband, Blane, to whom she has been married for twenty-seven years, is the General Manager of the Oregon Grill in Hunt Valley. He pops into the deli every once in awhile to greet customers before he heads off to his job.

Residing in Bel Air, Maria and Blane were always fond of the historic character and charm of the downtown area. They looked at several locations in downtown Bel Air for their business before they came across what they decided was the ideal location for the business at 2 N. Main Street. Prior to the grand opening, Maria and Blane traveled up and down the northeast coast visiting other Italian delis to get ideas for their shop.

"We wanted the best we could find in quality goods," stated Maria. Along with scrumptious meats and cheeses, the full service Italian deli offers delicious sandwiches, paninis, wraps, anti-pastas, salads, and the biggest selection of Italian wines in Harford County. Savona also offers personal and corporate catering and hosts wine tastings on select days throughout the week. The shelves are always stocked with a wide variety of imported Italian specialty goods, frozen pastas, and desserts. Customers can eat in or carry out any of Savona's scrumptious delicacies.

Blane is always full of praises for his lovely wife: "The success of Savona is 90% due to Maria and her warm and wonderful personality," he proudly stated.

Many would agree. On most days, Maria is the face of the business - the official greeter - standing for sometimes nine hours a day - but always with a big smile, ready to strike up a conversation while working her magic to produce something delicious behind the counter for her customers. Her staff follow suit and are always pleasant and chatty with patrons.

"We chose to be on Main Street mostly because we wanted our customers to have a 'back home kind of feeling' when they walk into our store," Maria explains. They might not know everyone who enters their doors, but they always greet visitors with sincere warmth and friendliness so that they feel like they are at home.

"Not only is the food at Savona the absolute best, but the atmosphere is so inviting. Maria and her staff always treat us like family, like royalty almost, every time we pay a visit to the store," stated one of Savona's regular customers, Pat Bierbower.

Of course there are days when equipment breaks or employees call in sick, but overall, every day is a joy for Maria. She wants Savona to always be a happy place for people to come in.....and even for dogs to visit. In fact, she keeps a fresh bowl of water outside her front door and special beefy treats behind the counter for the regulars such as Jack, a golden retriever owned by Dr. Rob Reier (local chiropractor and Bel Air Town Commissioner) who stops by every single day on his walk down Main Street.

As a successful business owner, Maria offers the following words of wisdom to other entrepreneurs: "You've got to have passion, perseverance and treat everyone - from produce delivery guys to company big wigs with the same level of respect."

Respect she has as well as sincere gratitude to all of her customers for their loyal patronage over the years. Even after seven years in business, Maria says she sometimes stops what she is doing and looks around her store filled with customers sipping wine or munching on cheese and crackers and thinks to herself, "This is MY store; really, are you kidding me?! Wow!"

Savona's logo is a big, bright yellow sun; quite fitting as Savona owner Maria Boeri and her dedicated staff bring a burst of sunshine to Main Street each and every day.

