

Rocco's Gets A TV Spotlight

By Katie McFadden

The spotlight was on Rocco's of Roc Beach last week as they celebrated ahead of the premiere of their television debut on "Brindiamo!" showcasing their executive five-star, award-winning chef Bruno Milone.

For those wondering where the spotlights were coming from last Thursday night, it was all for a star-studded red-carpet event at new Italian restaurant Rocco's of Roc Beach. After all, they had a lot to celebrate. Back in December, Rocco's closed to customers one morning for the filming of "Brindiamo!" a TV show on NYC Live (Channel 25) hosted by Italian superstar Ornella Fado. It's not every day that a restaurant is featured on TV, so Rocco's went all out, rolling out the red carpet and bringing in the sky-high spotlights to celebrate the occasion ahead of the show's premiere on Sunday, February 6.

As Fado explained, she's been hosting, writing and producing "Brindiamo!" since 2004. "I wanted to create a tv show for Italians outside of Italy. It's the story of successful Italians through food," she said. The show primarily focuses on New York City, but she has taken it to other places like Philadelphia and Washington, to Bermuda, Canada, and of course, Italy itself. When it started, Fado says it was the only cooking show that was filmed in real kitchens with real chefs as opposed to other shows filmed in studio kitchens.

But it all began with Chef Bruno Milone. A chef for 32 years, Milone got his start in Italy before coming to the U.S., working everywhere from restaurants to pastry shops and hotels. When "Brindiamo!" launched, he was the first chef featured on the show, when he worked at Brooklyn-based restaurant Marco Polo. For the show's 10th anniversary, he appeared again, baking a special cake for the occasion.

Now at new Rockaway restaurant Rocco's, Fado followed



him to give Rocco's some exposure and show what they're cooking up in the kitchen.

The Rocco's episode features Rocco's and its staff, and the main star of the show, Chef Bruno as he cooks up some of his delicious recipes, including his fresh pasta. "He is the king of homemade pasta," Fado said. For each episode, Fado tries to invite a celebrity to help sample some of the cuisine and for this episode, they chose one of Rocco's biggest fans—Anthony Melchiorri of the show "Hotel Impossible." As a local resident, Melchiorri has become a frequent customer at Rocco's. "Anthony comes in here at least once or twice a week. He's eaten all over the world and he's said Bruno's food is probably some of the best he's eaten," Rocco's



co-owner Vinny said. Melchiorri was one of the guests in attendance at Thursday's event featuring wine, passed appetizers and previews of "Brindiamo!"

For Rocco's, a spotlight on "Brindiamo!" is a big deal. "Bruno, our chef, is one of 50 chefs in the New York City metro area that are five-star chefs, born and trained in Italy. "Brindiamo!" goes all around the city restaurants and features different chefs and we were blessed to be selected for the show. It's a big honor. We closed the restaurant for the night and brought in the red carpet and spotlights. This is a big thing for us," Vinny said.

Will the show give Rocco's

a big boost? Chef Bruno says that's hard to predict, but he knows one thing for sure—he loves cooking for Rockaway. "I don't have a crystal ball but I'm very happy that the people of Rockaway come in and eat and they love it. I love these people here," he said.

The Rocco's episode of "Brindiamo!" made its debut on NYC Live tv on Sunday, February 6. But there's still another chance to tune in. The episode will be repeated this Friday night, or rather Saturday morning, February 12, at 12 a.m. on Channel 25. "Brindiamo!" is also streamed on Amazon Prime and is soon coming to new streaming service, Tubi TV.

Getting a TV spot isn't the only exciting news for Rocco's of Roc Beach. The restaurant has quickly become a Rockaway go-to for a good meal, and the owners say it's only going to get better. "In the summertime, we have a big treat coming for Rockaway," Vinny said. "We're in the process of getting the building next door, it's almost done. We're going to combine both yards. Bruno is not only a five-star chef, but he's a five-star pastry chef and an expert at making gelato, so in the summer we're going to have a gelato stand outside, as well as adding a raw oyster bar and a beer garden."

Rocco's of Roc Beach is located at 115-10 Rockaway Beach Blvd. For menus and more info, check out www.roccos-coalovenpizza.com or call 718-799-5050 to order.

