

City of Garden Grove



Jay and Eleanor
Mastroianni

One of Garden Grove's most noted families, the Mastroiannis, have had a great impact on the city since their arrival in 1976 – 33 years ago, when they moved their business, Jay's Catering, from Huntington Beach to a small location on Brookhurst Street.

Outgrowing their first Garden Grove location in only 10 years, the Mastroianni's moved Jay's in 1987 to a 35,000 square foot facility on Garden Grove Boulevard. Here their business continued to not only thrive, but expand. Their success is the result of offering fresh, wholesome food. "Always from scratch, always fresh," says Jay. And, it always has been – from the beginning, when Eleanor prepared the food in her own kitchen, until now, with food prepared by five chefs and 40 cooks in an 11,000 square foot kitchen.

It was 1972, when Jay and Eleanor catered their first-ever event. "It was for 350 people in the Huntington Beach Library," he said. "It took a lot of guts, but Eleanor had a knack for making things taste good." Their first major account was Mercury Savings and Loan, where their cold buffet of palm sandwiches, salads and carrot cake became a huge hit to the organizations meeting in Mercury's community rooms. When Jay got the account, their first building wasn't ready, so they made the lunches in their home. Years later, when Mercury closed, Jay lost a \$30,000 account. He was down, but not out.

While Jay's business interests spread outward, he and Eleanor continued to reside in and support Garden Grove. Jay has been a 35-year member of the Garden Grove Evening Kiwanis, donating his services at Kiwanis Land, becoming involved in fund-raisers, as well as being a major contributor. Jay is also a member of the Sons of Italy

A 32-year member of the Garden Grove Chamber of Commerce, Jay continues to help in any way he can. He is a sponsor and helps with fundraising for both the Garden Grove and Carson Boys and Girls Clubs. Jay's Catering also gives to other organizations by extending to them an invitation to use its new Benevolenza community service room.

It was when Jay was involved as the vice president of the PTA at Westmont Elementary School in Huntington Beach that their business actually began. Jay was in charge of fundraising, and decided that Eleanor's culinary skills should be put to use. "Her spaghetti and meatball dinners were so successful that they raised more money for the PTA that year than had ever been collected before," says Jay. "The school appreciated the extra money, and the parents raved about Eleanor's cooking. We began getting phone calls asking us to cater parties and weddings."

Earlier Jay had been working at Excelsior Dairy, delivering milk to a local hospital when he saw their "assembly" line production. "I thought to myself, I can do better than that, and we began making stuff at home," Jay says. He left his job at Excelsior Dairy and as business increased, Eleanor also left her job so she could help with the cooking. From 1958 to 1972, she worked as a registered nurse at Palm Harbor Hospital, both in the emergency room and as the supervisor in obstetrics. Later she became the assistant director of nursing.

Eleanor's first job was at 14, when as one of 11 children, she went to work after school at a coffee shop to help out the family. She persevered, and after graduating from Monaca High School and then Providence Hospital School of Nursing, both in Pennsylvania, she returned home and one day stopped by to visit her boss. While she was there, Jay walked in to the coffee shop and saw Eleanor. "That was it," he says. He asked her to a dance and soon after they were married, moving to California in 1958 at Eleanor's urging.

The Mastroianni's eldest daughter, Linda Loeza, is now CEO of the company. Sons John and Michael run the Hole-n-One golf tournament business, an offshoot of Jay's Catering. With their three children, 11 grandchildren and a few other relatives, Jay's Catering is a true family business.