

Success runs in the family for Ottawa brothers

Armando and Pietro Milito recognized for community involvement

By Carla Bonora

Brothers Armando and Pietro Milito – a story of family success. That's the theme of the ninth edition of the 2011 Community Achievement Award of the Associazione Culturale Calabrese Savuto Cleto, which, once again, celebrates the Calabrians who have distinguished themselves in Ottawa's Italian-Canadian community.

An annual appointment, a result of the ongoing months-long work by president Gino Marrello who for years has promoted Italianità, the love of his Calabria, the traditions, and his roots. A life philosophy, that of Marrello's, that accompanies his ongoing work association Calabrians – one of the most numerous communities.

He introduced his just-published book at the gala on his life experiences – *Opinioni e pensieri, Credenze e suggerimenti*. This year's award winners are Pietro and Armando Milito – two important figures responsible for the renewal of Ottawa. It's an award that testifies to the professionalism, passion, and entrepreneurial spirit that made La Strada famous – it is one of Ottawa's best-known restaurants, located in the historic Glebe neighbourhood.

Once again, the months-long word by president Milito has brought great success to the initiative. Very excited, Milito, along with wife Carmela at his side, said:

"I'm very honoured to be here, it's a special occasion. If I think about my story, I know that I've covered a lot of ground. I didn't know English, I wrote an Italianized English, and used to put pieces of notes in my pocket for use at the right moment. I reached my goals, and today it's time for the youth, of my children Carlo, Leonardo, and Federico, who are continuing in the family tradition."

Echoing similar sentiments is brother Armando, who sums it up so: "I spent some of my best years in New York, where I lived for 16 years, and it's a pleasure to see people this evening that I haven't seen in years."

It was an elegantly decorated gala event, drawing almost 500 people to St. Antony Soccer Club. At the entrance, the award-winners' photo is prominent, along with the line/motto/slogan "The Elegance of Armando, the Cuisine of Pietre," which sums up the Milito family's winning philosophy. Welcoming the special guests were the Italian and Canadian national anthems sung by Nadia Villani, along with a warm standing ovation by those attending. Introducing them onstage were Marrello, Corrado Nicastro, the association's vice president, and Lidia Curcio. There were many authorities present, including Ludovico Vaglio representing the Italian Embassy, Bob Chiarelli, infrastructure minister from Ottawa West Nepean, Senator Basilio Giordano, and Josephine Palumbo, president of the Congress of Italian Canadians, Ottawa section. As president, once again this year I'm proud to participate in this important ceremony organized by the Associazione Savuto Cleto, which acknowledges our Italian-Canadians who have distinguished themselves in the Ottawa community. Two intelligent, Calabrian entrepreneurs, who brought success to our community with their entrepreneurial work – an achievement attained thanks to dedication, perseverance, and constant work. Once again we're witness to another great success in the story of an Italian family. The restaurant La Strada is one of the best in Ottawa, and brothers Armando and Pietro Milito have demonstrated how to successfully build a business beginning with the work by their own family, offering the best, excellent food, and quality service."

From Toronto, Franco Pagliaro, with his incredible guitar and melodious voice.

Among Calabrian guests were Doctor Rinaldo Canonico, just arrived from Florida with wife Patricia, for the occasion.

"It was a stupendous evening," says Rinaldo – he too is Calabrian, an internationally-renowned hair stylist who had received the same award last year. "I was excited to see Pietro and Armando, who I've known for years, receive such a prestigious award. It's an honour, and kudos to President Gino Marrello who worked very hard to ensure success for this event, and who works for our association every day. I can say that this gala is an occasion of pride not just for us Calabrians, but for all us Italians in Ottawa."

Bob Chiarelli doesn't hide his emotions – proud of his Calabrian origins:

"I'm so happy to be here this evening. The Associazione Savuto Cleto is very familiar to me, I've been to Savuto Cleto in Italy four times already. What the association does provides a great educational function for the entire Italian Canadian community."

Corrado Nicastro, association vice president, introduces his two brothers: "homage to intelligence this evening, we celebrate their success and want to share with them. All proceeds will be distributed to Cheo and to Villa Marconi."



Pietro and Armando Milito.
(Photo by Eugenio Bubba).