



FACCI

GINO PALMA'S AMERICAN DREAM

WRITTEN BY TEDDY DURGIN

Gino Palma is the embodiment of the American dream. The Pozzuoli-born restaurateur emigrated without any family to the United States at the age of 19. He had almost no money and spoke very little English, but he knew he could find employment in foodservice. He worked 15- to 17-hour days at Italian restaurants throughout Pennsylvania, Virginia, and Maryland, doing everything from washing dishes to bussing tables. Slowly, he began to work his way into the kitchen with an eye on entrepreneurship.

Now 48, Palma opened his third Facci in Baltimore's Inner Harbor in March 2024 after successful launches in Laurel and Ellicott City. Palma, in a recent sit-down interview with the Beverage Journal, said, "I love looking for a location, finding the location, negotiating the lease, and seeing the completion of the vision in my mind. After that, after this baby has come to life, I love it when people walk in, and their mouths open, and they look around for the first time and say, 'Wow! Look at this! Look at that!'"

At the Baltimore location, this could mean everything from the huge picture of Italian movie legend Sophia Loren (who's from Pozzuoli also) on the wall to the centerpiece oven made by an artisan from Naples to the fancy indoor-outdoor bar. Palma has never hired a designer, instead fashioning the look and layout and all of the exterior and interior elements himself.

(continued on page 6)

Gino Palma
owner / operator
Facci

(continued from page 4)

Facci has gained a foothold in a niche known as “elevated dining,” not fine dining. A visit to any of the three locations will find locals and regulars wining and dining alongside families with young children, couples on romantic dates, singles grabbing a quick bite, even tourists at the Baltimore site.

Palma remarks, “This is the funny thing about my restaurants. We cater to everybody. You can bring your first date here. You can be celebrating years of marriage with an anniversary dinner. Or you can have your big birthday party here. Families are very welcome. But there’s a little bit for everybody.”



Most people come for the food, with pastas and pizzas being the menu’s primary focus. Executive chef Nicola Morosini heads all three Facci kitchens, and some of his signature dishes include Seafood Marbella, Pollo Limone, and the stuffed eggplant appetizer.

But Facci’s beverage selection is also quite impressive. “We have 375 labels of wine on our list,” noted Palma. “That’s super-extensive. And all three of our restaurants have a wine room, [in] which you can enjoy a beautiful display of our bottles.” Those wines lean very heavily to

UPDATES = MORE SALES

Call today for your Assessment!



- ✓ New Doors
- ✓ New Lighting
- ✓ New Shelving = More Facings
- ✓ Serving the entire Mid-Atlantic region



Like us at
[facebook.com/CAREYSALESANDSERVICES](https://www.facebook.com/CAREYSALESANDSERVICES)



CAREY SALES & SERVICES

Serving the Local Beverage Industry since 1933

3141 Frederick Ave., Baltimore, MD

410-945-7878 or 800-848-7748 • careysales.com



Italian varietals. The cocktail list, meanwhile, includes several classics with twists – everything from the Facci Cosmo to the Facci Martini to the Facci Margarita. One particular favorite is the Bada Bing, a mix of chocolate vodka, double espresso vodka, Frangelico, and Bailey’s.

Facci is part of our ongoing series of bars, restaurants, taverns and other food and beverage establishments in and around Maryland and Washington, D.C., with interesting, quirky, or funny names. No Palma’s eateries are NOT named after the former Chief Medical Advisor to the President during the muddled COVID-19 era. The pronunciation is the same, but that Anthony had a “u” in his last name.

The name actually comes from Palma’s wife, Pilar, who is originally from Peru. She wanted to be able to communicate with her husband’s family and decided to take “an intense Italian language course.” The Facci menu explains: “One day while practicing Italian with [Gino], she said la tua facci but meant to say la tua faccia . . . Italian for ‘your

face.” When Palma heard facci instead of faccia, he started laughing and thought it was cute. “Ever since that day, I called her Facci,” he said.

By the numbers, the Palmas have been married 24 years, have two children and (of course) the three restaurants. And while Gino and his family have certainly faced their fair share of hardships, challenges still remain in the ultra-competitive landscape of Maryland restaurants. The number one challenge? Staffing. “We have wonderful staff, but it’s hard to find people who have the same work ethic as I have had,” he stated. “People used to take pride in what they do, and you don’t see that as much anymore.”

He concluded, “Someone once [advised] me, ‘Gino, you give and don’t expect anything back. If you do, the universe will give back to you.’ I’ve been told I am too nice, because I do give a lot of myself and don’t expect something back. It’s hard to talk about it, because it’s normal to me. It’s not something I remind myself to do. I don’t remind myself to breathe. And I don’t remind myself to be nice and give. And I have been rewarded for it. I didn’t go home broke. March 25th marked 29 years for me here in America, and I am living The Dream!” ■



**SHOW MORE
TO SELL MORE**

- ➔ Solid Shelves
- ➔ Maximum display
Edgeless Doors
- ➔ Maximum efficiency

3141 Frederick Ave. Baltimore MD | 410-945-7878 or 800-848-7748 | careysales.com