

ZAGAT

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Scott Kearnan

7 Boston Restaurant Families You Need to Know

THESE FAMILY-OWNED BUSINESSES HAVE GONE BIG

Boston is a special city: Big enough to be cosmopolitan, small enough to still feel like a really big family. And some of its top restaurants are, in fact, powered by broods of brothers, sisters, parents and children who have been in the hospitality business for generations — or just made a big splash in a short period of time. Here are some restaurant families you need to know.



Credit: Courtesy of the Turner's Seafood

The Turner family from Turner's Seafood

"New England" and "seafood" go together like — well, New England and seafood. And four industrious generations of Turners have turned their name into one of the most recognizable for fresh fin fare. In 1920, at age 20, Newfoundland immigrant James F. Turner started working on the Boston Fish Pier. By 1954 he had established his own national wholesale company, Turner Fisheries, which led to a same-named restaurant in Copley Place. (It ran from 1978 to 2013.) His son reestablished the (still-successful) wholesale biz as J. Turner Seafoods in 1989, and *his* four sons have since opened two restaurants — **Turner's Seafood Grill & Market** in their hometown of Melrose and **Turner's Seafood** in Salem — where fourth generation family members continue to work.

Family secret: According to co-owner Jim Turner, the most popular plate is the Newfoundland Finnan Haddie — appropriate since Turner's founder hailed from that Canadian island. The classic northeast fish has "virtually disappeared off local menus," said Turner, so customers come from "unbelievable distances" to try the smoked haddock in a delicious Gruyère and pearl onion sauce.



The O'Connor family from the Briar Group

Boston is a city full of Irish pubs, and the Briar family tree connects to many. It started in 1971, when Austin O'Connor, who immigrated from Ireland to Boston in the 1950s, saved enough money to purchase the (since-closed) Brighton bar the Kinvara. O'Connor worked construction by day and tended bar by night. He bought a second bar, the (still-going strong) **Green Briar**, and baited his son, Austin Jr., back from west coast travels to help him run it. He also lured cousin Dessie from Ireland, who continues to manage all Briar Group locations today. And my, how that family business has grown, now encompassing pubs and more upscale restaurants too. On the tavern front, there's two **M.J. O'Connor's**, **Ned Devine's** at Faneuil Hall, **The Harp** in the West End and **Solas** in Back Bay. More elevated are the buzzing restaurants **City Table** (and two separate **City Bar** spots), **Gather** and **Brew Cafe**, **Anthem Kitchen + Bar** and the just-opened **Glass House** and **K2 Cafe**.

Family secret: The Green Briar has been hosting the longest running Irish seisiun in Boston — every Monday night for nearly 28 years. Irish musicians from all over Massachusetts unite here for Gaelic jam sessions. Another bit of family lore: The original M.J. O'Connor's location was actually built in Ireland and shipped to Boston to be installed in the Park Plaza Hotel.



Credit: Courtesy of J.J. Foley's Cafe

The Foley family from **J.J. Foley's Cafe**

Speaking of Irish pubs — J.J. Foley's is considered the oldest family-run Irish pub in Boston. The South End location, that is, where Jeremiah Foley opened up in 1909 after coming to Boston from County Kerry, Ireland. Today his grandsons still run the business: Maurice manages the newer **Downtown spin-off**, while Jerry Foley helms the South End original — where three of his sons also work. Foley's has colorful characters for days — and if these walls could talk, they would spill the secrets on all the Irish-American politicians, newspaper journalists (the former HQ of the *Boston Herald* was across the street) and public servants (the famous Boston Police Strike of 1919 was organized at the former upstairs social hall) who have raised pints here over the years.

Family secret: "No one is supposed to know this," says Jerry Foley, "But when Prohibition came in — for 13 years, the door never closed."



Credit: Courtesy of Nebo

The Pallotta family from Nebo

Successful family businesses don't have to be a multi-generational affair.

Exhibit A: This slick sister act. Co-owner sibling-chefs Christine and Carla Pallotta opened Nebo in 2006 in the North End where they grew up. It was a career change for the women, who were in their mid 40s and already had a thriving hair salon business. They were untrained cooks but learned from the best: mom. The entire Nebo menu is based on their mother's famous recipes. Mom measured nothing, so before opening they invited her in, watched her cook and wrote it all down — and their firecracker of a mother still comes to the kitchen nearly every day to check in on things. So far, so good: The Pallotta's signature lasagna triumphed over Bobby Fly on *Throwdown*, and their restaurant — early to adopt an extensive gluten-free program, by the way — is still packed nightly in its new harbor-side location on Atlantic Avenue. You'll spot a glittery crowd: Brother Jim Pallotta is co-owner of the Boston Celtics and chairman of the Italian football club A.S. Roma.

Family secret: Mom may have determined the menu, but dad was a major influence too. "One of the walls of our dining room contains a collection of pictures of our beloved late father," says Carla Pallotta. "He was central to the build-out of our first Nebo location but passed before the opening of our Atlantic Ave. location. We placed his pictures in the wall during its build-out so he could keep an eye on the process."



The de Magistris family from **Restaurant dante and the **Il Casale** restaurants**

Let's hear it for the boys too — specifically the de Magistris brothers, Dante, Damian and Filippo. Together the co-owners steward three (*so far...*) top-notch Italian restaurants: **Restaurant dante** in Cambridge, **il Casale Cucina Italiana + Bar** in Belmont and **il Casale Cucina Campana + Bar** in Lexington. That last location has an added family connection: It focuses on cuisine from southern Italy, the region from which de Magistris' ancestors hail, and delves deep into his library of family recipes. Dante is the executive chef, Damian (a vet of Daniel Boulud's Restaurant Daniel) oversees front-of-house operations, and Filippo (an amateur winemaker) is the wine director. It's one talented trio.

Family secret: It's not quite a secret anymore. We're told that the brothers are opening an as-yet-unnamed new restaurant, an American tavern, in Belmont in October.



Credit: Courtesy of Big Night Entertainment Group

The Kane family from Big Night Entertainment Group

Boston nightlife (as elsewhere) has changed a lot over the last 10 years or so. Old-school megaclubs have given way to a breed of multifaceted venues that combine restaurant, cocktail lounge and club-inspired scenes to create a more hybridized experience. The Kane brothers, Ed and Joe, have been major players in that arena. Founded in 2006 (with partner Randy Greenstein), their Big Night Entertainment Group has worked to strike a balance between great dining and DJ-friendly nightlife vibes at Boston restaurants **Red Lantern**, **Empire** and **Gem**. They've also been a natural fit to branch out into the New England casino world, opening a second Red Lantern, tequila-fueled **Scorpion Bar**, luxury booze-bites-and-bowling alley High Rollers and traditional nightclub Shrine at Foxwoods Resort & Casino. On the way for Boston: the French kitchen Explorateur, one of our most anticipated **new restaurants of the year**, and a massive three-floor, 22,000-sq.-ft. Seaport development, slated to open in 2018, that will feature another Scorpion Bar and as-yet-unnamed nightclub.

Family secret: It may not be their name on the signage, but the Kane brothers are the ones who lured a certain TV star to New England, and opened Guy Fieri's Foxwoods Kitchen + Bar at Foxwoods last year.



Credit: Courtesy of Filippo and Phil Frattaroli

The Frattaroli family from Lucia, Ducali, Filippo (and beyond)

The North End, Boston's oldest residential neighborhood, is also the heart of the city's Italian-American community — so its historic streets are filled with dozens (and dozens) of red sauce-slathered restaurants. But one extended family has a large swath of the 'hood on lock: the Frattarolis. Father-son duo Filippo and Phil Frattaroli (pictured) are co-owners of three long-running restaurants in the North End, **Lucia Ristorante** (the oldest, opened in the '70s), **Filippo** and **Ducali**. But the family matters don't stop there: Filippo's brother, Donato Sr., owns the sleek, contemporary new seafood spot **Il Molo** with his son, Donato Jr. (The elder Donato is also a founder of the decade-spanning Taste of the North End event, coming up again on Friday, April 28.) Filippo and Donato Sr.'s nephew, Nick Frattaroli, opened the North End gastropub **Ward 8**. And Donato Sr.'s son Gianni is also in the business, working at his mother's restaurant **Artu**. Family tree? More like a forest.

Family secret: In case you missed it, Filippo and Phil are expanding to Eastie soon with Cunard Tavern, one of our **most anticipated openings of the year.**

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