

Michael Angelo's: Our Family

Michael Renna

Michael Angelo Renna is the founder and CEO of Michael Angelo's Gourmet Foods, based in Austin, Texas. As such, he oversees the company's operations in addition to serving as its Chairman.

A native New Yorker, Michael was born in the Bronx in 1960. Throughout his life he lived in Connecticut, Florida and Southern California. It was in California, in 1981, that his mother, Sara, and his four brothers opened a pizzeria. A year later, the family persuaded Michael to join the business. Michael brought with him the idea to sell prepared entrees, based on his mother's recipes, through a stand-up freezer in the family restaurant.

The early days of the company were filled with round-the-clock activity. The family served pizza by day and Mike prepared and delivered the frozen entrees by night. Their production lines consisted of tables pushed together in the pizzeria's small dining area. Even though the recipes originated from family roots in Southern Italy, recording them was not an easy task. Sara, being a good Italian cook, added a pinch of this and a dash of that, never concerned with precise measurements. To ensure every delicious flavor was captured, Michael had to ask Mom to start measuring every ingredient.

Today, the company operates a state-of-the-art production facility and distributes a complete line of entrees, pastas and dinners to thousands of supermarkets and warehouse locations throughout the United States and internationally.

Sara says Michael never forgot the early days and continues to think of his employees as family. When the company moved to Austin, Texas in 1993 Michael offered to move any employee that wanted to come with the company. One hundred and fifty employees took him up on the offer and many still remain with the company. Michael Angelo's is truly an American success story, and Michael is indeed a self-made success.

Michael is one of five brothers and has two sons and a daughter. In addition to his role as CEO of Michael Angelo's Gourmet Italian Foods, Michael serves on the Board of Directors for the Capital Area Food Bank and is involved with several charity organizations including Big Brothers, Big Sisters.

Sara Agnello

Michael Angelo's mother, Sara Agnello, comes from a long history of passionate Italian cooks. The Agnello family recipes have inspired all of Michael Angelo's delicious meals.

Born in the Bronx, Sara Theresa Agnello is the third of five children and the only girl. Sara discovered her love of cooking fine Italian food at a very young age, while other kids played. As a child, she would spend afternoons in the kitchen with her Grandmother Foti, who told her stories and shared recipes that helped bridge the gap between her ancestors in Italy and her life in Brooklyn.

Later, the talent Sara had for cooking Italian food became more than a hobby. As a single mother of five boys, cooking large tasty meals at home became a necessity. Sara always had a crowd of her boys and their hungry friends over for her delicious meals. Even though Sara's troop was often the poorest family in the group, she was happy to share her love through her food.

In 1981, Sara and her sons began to share their recipes with the public when they opened a pizzeria in Solana Beach, California. While running the tiny pizzeria, called Dino's, Sara's son Michael began to freeze her homemade entrees and sell them over the counter. As demand for Sara's meals grew, so did the family business.

After quickly outgrowing two restaurants and two plants in California, Michael Angelo's Gourmet Foods moved to a newly constructed 132,000 square foot facility in Austin, Texas. Here, Sara continues to create new recipes and conduct daily quality checks on all of the original recipes that began with her family in Southern Italy. Visitors can find her outfitted in hairnet and apron, working in her spacious test kitchen or roaming the production area. Greeting each worker by name, Sara answers questions and solicits comments from the employees who use her recipes each day to make Michael Angelo's gourmet meals.

In her spare time, Sara enjoys traveling with her grandchildren. She still loves to prepare special holiday meals "from scratch" and host family Sunday gatherings for her large extended family.