

2013

Damian Mandola

Self-taught chef Damian Mandola has achieved celebrity status as one of the foremost authorities on Italian cuisine in the Southwest.

A 1977 graduate with a major in radio and television, Mandola was a catcher on the Bearkat baseball team and worked as a DJ for the campus radio station while attending Sam Houston State.

Acting on his passion for cooking, he opened Damian's Fine Italian Food in Huntsville his senior year.

After graduating from SHSU, he enhanced his culinary talents and went on to many successful ventures such as Nash D'Amico's Italian Restaurant, Damian's Cucina Italiana, the nationally acclaimed Carrabba's Italian Grill, and his current undertakings of Trattoria Lisina and Mandola's Italian Market.

Mandola has served as the co-host of PBS-TV's popular cooking shows Cucina Amore! and Cucina Sicilia! with nephew Johnny Carrabba. He is also the author of three cookbooks—Ciao Tuscany, Ciao Sicily and Ciao Y'all.

Over the years, Mandola and his wife, Trina, have raised more than \$400,000 for the Burke Center Home for Boys in Driftwood. They have also hosted numerous fundraisers for the Ronald McDonald House and provided support to the 100 Club and Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo.

His love for "all things Italian" has led him to share his time and talent with functions such as the Sicilian tradition of the Saint Joseph Altar, the annual Italian Festival in Houston, and many others.

Mandola has supported his alma mater by serving as a speaker at the Elliott T. Bowers Honors College event "Let's Talk! A Night of Conversation," appearing twice by popular demand. He is also a Life Member of the SHSU Alumni Association.

He and Trina live in the Austin area. They have five children and one grandchild.



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