

Home Grown: From South Orange to QVC With Mama Mancini's Meatballs

By [vill](#) Amy Harris 5-16-2016



Dan Mancini

Imagine coming home from school every day greeted by the aroma of fresh garlic, olive oil and onions cooking slowly on the stove. It's your old world Italian grandmother who lives with you and she makes the same recipes she brought with her when she arrived in Brooklyn from Italy in 1921.

Grandma is a household fixture and she contributes to the family by making dinner every night. For Dan Mancini, "Mama" was a gift. He, his three siblings and parents ate a freshly prepared, traditional Italian dinner daily. He always loved helping around the kitchen, and through osmosis, picked up a lot of "Mama Mancini's" recipes.

After college, Danny pursued a career in fashion and worked his way up to hold executive level positions with retailers and manufacturers before owning his own wholesale business. He was always in a sales related capacity because Dan is an extremely gregarious, funny and rather cute guy.

But after several decades of long hours, lots of travel and a daily commute to New York City, Dan had a recurring dream he had a hard time keeping under wraps. He had always garnered praise for his cooking from friends and family and lots of ribbing about making it into a real business. But as he says, "it wasn't until it was the last thing on my mind before going to bed each night and the first thought each day, that I had the impetus to go for it."

So how does a successful fashion exec become the Mancini Meatball King? Simple; cook up a pot of your your grandmother's meatball recipe with the same wholesome ingredients she used more than 40 years ago, and take it to high-end supermarkets that carry gourmet food. It was love at first bite and Ashley's (formerly Eden Gourmet) took the plunge in 2009 adding Mancini's Meatballs in their hot food section.

While the meatballs are amazing, it is a mix of ingredients accounting for the success of the [Mama Mancini](#) brand. The food is simply delicious, but the personality and history behind the brand are a truly winning combination. Dan continues to be the face of the brand including appearances on television shows and store visits.

Last year the company took it to a whole new level and launched a product line for QVC. Getting on QVC is no easy feat – but harder still is getting invited back. You only get another shot if the sales reach a specific metric.

Dan hit it out of the park and has been on the show 35 times in the past year.

Dan has been a “home grown” South Orange resident for many years, where he and his wife raised their kids. His business partners who believed in him from the beginning are Carl Wolf and Matt Brown – are both “home grown” South Orange residents as well.

Dan's message to other potential entrepreneurs with a dream is to just go for it and don't let anyone talk you out of making your dreams come true.

Mama Mancini's prepared foods are now available nationally at deli counters and in the frozen food sections of most major supermarkets. Locally, you can find them at Kings, Shoprite and Costco.

What is “Home Grown”?



Amy Harris

I don't know about you, but I am always bowled over by the incredibly interesting people I meet who reside in South Orange and Maplewood. When I speak with friends in neighboring towns and other areas of New Jersey, Westchester, Long Island and Connecticut they are equally as bowled over by the notable people who choose to make their lives here and the incredible contributions they make to the community.

That's why I am writing the blog series titled "Home Grown." In it, I profile South Orange and Maplewood residents who are having a measurable impact in their professional and personal lives including the arts, education, social justice, public service, parenting, innovative entrepreneurs, etc.

An important component of what makes these people notable is how different their backgrounds are, where they come from, and how they landed in SOMA. There will not be a financial component to being profiled in "Home Grown."

If you or someone you know may be right for participation I welcome your recommendations. Please email me at amy@amyharrisrealestate.com.