



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Patricia Fahy

Senator Fahy Presents New York State Senate Empire Award to Café Capriccio

PATRICIA FAHY April 21, 2025



ALBANY, N.Y. – Today, New York State Senator Patricia Fahy announced the presentation of the New York State Empire Award to Café Capriccio alongside owner Jim Rua, Assemblymember Gabriella Romero, Albany County Executive Dan McCoy, Albany Mayor Kathy Sheehan, and more. Café Capriccio has been an integral part of Albany’s dining scene since it first opened its doors in 1982. Founded by Chef Jim Rua, the restaurant is known for its dedication to authentic Italian cuisine and has long been a favorite for its warm atmosphere and focus on regional flavors. Housed in a historic brownstone on Grand Street,

Café Capriccio quickly gained a reputation for its hand-crafted Italian dishes and old-world charm.

Over the years, Rua's passion for Italian food and culture has shaped the restaurant, from its seasonal menus to its thoughtful wine selections. His son, Franco Rua, has since taken on a leading role in the kitchen, continuing the family's tradition while adding his own creative touch. Beyond the restaurant, the Rua family also offers immersive culinary tours in Italy, further reflecting their deep connection to Italian heritage. Now more than 40 years in, Café Capriccio remains a landmark in Albany—a place where food, history, and community come together.

The NYS Senate Empire Award recognizes excellence in businesses across New York State. Award recipients must:

- Be leaders in their industry, and/or are successful in developing an outstanding and thriving company,
- Use innovative methods or product(s),
- Increase jobs, help to spur economic growth, and make significant community contributions,
- Create successful economic partnerships within the community, and
- Be businesses that have created a culture of philanthropy.

Jim Rua and Franco have also written six books about the Café that highlight its unique and broad-ranging dedication to Italian cuisine, culture, and the always exciting experiences associated with the life and vicissitudes of the restaurant world. During a perilous era when restaurants typically experience short lifespans, Café Capriccio endured, innovating and

improving each year.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, they evolved with each NYS requirement, which led to the construction of its new outdoor oasis behind the restaurant, The Tuscan Garden, tucked away from the sounds of the city. Under Franco's and Carli's direction, the Café is prepared to continue its exciting and creative culinary and cultural endeavors for another generation, with the help of the third generation: Franco's three children, Maia, James, and John Rua.

"I'm proud to present this Empire Award to Café Capriccio, a cornerstone of the Capital Region and downtown Albany community for more than 40 years," **said Senator Patricia Fahy (D—Albany)**. "Café Capriccio isn't just a restaurant; it's a reflection of everything that makes the Capital Region special. Jim and Franco Rua have poured their hearts into this place, creating not only unforgettable meals, but a warm, welcoming space where people in our community come together. Their dedication to Italian tradition, hospitality, and excellence has left a lasting mark on our city, and this recognition is well deserved. Congratulations!"

"Café Capriccio has been a vital and vibrant part of the downtown Albany community for four decades," **said Gabriella A. Romero (D,WF-Albany, Guilderland, New Scotland)**. "I'm so proud to join in recognizing Café Capriccio and the Rua family's immense contributions to the Capital Region. The Rua family has truly made Café Capriccio a cultural hub – not only are you certain to get a fabulous meal, you're also sure to have an experience that folds in tradition, history, and hospitality."

"Local businesses are the backbone of our economy," **said Albany County Executive Dan McCoy**. "However, Cafe Capriccio is more than a restaurant; it's a part of the community. Congratulations to the Rua family for making such a tremendous impact."

"It is an honor to be able to congratulate Jim and Franco who have left an indelible and delicious mark on our community" **said Albany Mayor Kathy Sheehan.** "I am proud to help celebrate this recognition of one of the City of Albany's treasured assets. Café Capriccio has been a staple of our Downtown neighborhood for over 40 years, and this recognition by Senator Fahy is more than well deserved. Congratulations Jim and Franco."

"Café Capriccio has been a lasting fixture in Albany for more than 40 years," **said Albany County Legislator Samuel Fein.** "Living just down the street, I've seen firsthand the pride they bring to our community. Even as the neighborhood has faced challenges, Jim and Franco Rua have stayed rooted here, showing that passion, perseverance, and great food can help a neighborhood thrive. I'm proud to celebrate their well-deserved recognition with a New York State Empire Award, and I thank Senator Fahy for honoring such an important piece of our community."

"Chef Jim Rua is an outstanding member of our community," **said Georgette Steffens, Executive Director of the Downtown Albany BID.** "At his core, he is a storyteller, ranging from the delicious food served at Cafe Capriccio to the immersive culinary tours he conducts in Italy, greatly impacting many residents of the Capital Region along the way. He has also trained, supported, and inspired many talented local chefs who have gone on to have successful careers of their own. We are thrilled Jim is receiving the recognition he deserves and would like to congratulate him on this award. Cheers to forty more years of delicious Italian cuisine in the heart of our region!"

"Cafe Capriccio remains a beacon in the Downtown Albany district, honing loyal regulars locally and throughout the state, as it has been a staple for those who come to town for the legislative session for the last four decades," **said owner Jim Rua, staff, and family.** "Grand Street is not only where our business is, but it's also the home of Jim Rua and his family, who live in the surrounding buildings. La famiglia è tutto & la comunità è importante - Family is

everything & community is important!"

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