

I grew up in the coal mining hills of Shenandoah, a dreamy name for a rather dreary place. We were raised in a Polish/Italian family and food was very potato-centric. Aunt Fluffy, Florence Altiero Madaffari, lived next to us with my Italian American grandmother Constance. They were the more colorful, hedonistic part of the family. When you walked into their house, there was pasta drying everywhere. I'm emotional when I think of the pasta-making and my brother. My mother was less than a stellar cook and so my brother and I would come up with these quick things to satisfy our hungry look. We would go over to Aunt Flo's looking hungry. Aunt Fluffy's house was a classic Italian house with a plastic cover on the couch, glass top table and wrought iron legs and Italian tile floors. The leopard theme was the best part of Aunt Fluffy, spit curls, beehive boots, white vinyl pants, a smokin' Italian girl. My ideal woman would always smell good, of perfume, thanks to Aunt Fluffy. She was a hot pepper and a snappy dresser and I can remember walking with her and hearing men whistle at her. Her life and home were anti-Kajowski (my mom's side) and it was a glimpse into a foreign land. The barren ripped-up coal hills of Pennsylvania and the place of garlic at Grandma's and Aunt Fluffy's. They acknowledged the sensuality of food and its beauty. It was so simple and we felt very cared for. My brother, Keith Augustino Altiero, was 2 years older—he was a food lover until the day he died as well as a good cook. Wherever we would go or live we would talk food, restaurants and the influence of Aunt Flo and grandma. When I opened Café Miranda I did not forget Aunt Fluffy and the soul glimpse into her glamorous world. Spaghetti and meatballs are the basis of the menu—the only thing that does not change. We used to slip into Aunt Fluffy's for meatballs cold with salt. So to get the recipe right for the restaurant, we had to cook them, chill them and taste with salt for that same taste. The same with her pasta with cauliflower—it had to be the same. I started making these childhood dishes—they are the basis of memory.



Café Miranda

Kerry A. Altiero

is a native of the coal-mining region in Northeastern Pennsylvania. He is the owner/chef of Café Miranda in Rockland, Maine. Culinary training began early at the table with his Italian-American grandmother, Constance Altiero. Kerry experienced hand-made, soulful cooking and a robust approach to food, flavor and life. A part-time job at Bob & Dick Belinski's Crossroads Hotel & Restaurant along with a short culinary course at Luzerne County Community College launched Kerry's culinary career. Kerry, his then wife Evelyn and their husky dog, Miranda, moved to Cape May, New Jersey to work in various kitchens in a "happening" restaurant town. Anthony Miguel Cassasanto and C. Barry Marron of The Swallows Restaurant took him under their wings to nurture and ruthlessly exploit Kerry's talent. Moving to Maine in 1987 to take the job as chef at The East Wind Inn in the Mid-coast was a step in finding an area where the dream of Café Miranda could be realized. A small green building on Oak Street in Rockland, Maine was the place. In June of 1993 Café Miranda opened to a full house and by doing so changed the expectations of diners in midcoast Maine. Café Miranda's mission was, and is, to bring handmade, locally sourced and passionately crafted food in a wide range of culinary styles to its customers with a huge and ever-changing menu and a knowledgeable staff. Known as the "Pioneer" of multi ethnic food, the ever changing massive menu of Café Miranda has set the bar for diversity. The menu features steaks & chops, Asian, South American & world cuisine including, burgers, kids food, house-made pasta, wood-fired brick oven foccacia, house smoked meats & seafood items. In his 26th year as a chef, Kerry Altiero is as impassioned as ever and, as always, in "The Relentless Pursuit Of Excellence."



Auntie Fluffie's Pasta
dedicated to Florence Altiero Madaffari, Flo or Fluff
(Serves 2 hungry boys or 4 adults!)

1 head cauliflower
2 medium onions
4 raw minced garlic cloves
¼ cup coarsely ground parmesan or romano cheese
bunch Italian parsley, minced
fresh lemon
½ stick butter
4 Tablespoons olive oil
½# cooked farfalle or penne pasta
salt and pepper

First cook and drain the pasta. Cut the cauliflower into reasonable chunk. Put butter and olive oil into heavy duty pan at high heat and when it looks like it is about to catch fire, throw in the cauliflower and onions and brown everything. When onions are just starting to relax, add gently the pre-cooked pasta, raw minced garlic. Continue stirring and tossing until onions caramelize. Then throw in the coarsely ground cheese, parsley and lemon juice. If you can get some pasta to brown and crisp, even better. Serve with lemon on the side to squeeze as you will. And serve those 2 young coal crackers with the hungry look.