

# The Providence Journal

*"Legendary..."*

*"The sausages are so good that it's hard to select only two or three types!"*



## MAKING 'SOUPY'

PAUL AND PATTI Stannard of Fortuna's began making sausages commercially in 1982. Their "Soupy" is nationally known.

### Dry-cured sausage from R.I. is Leno's favorite, America's best

By DONNA LEE

Journal Bulletin Food Editor

ROUND WESTERLY, "Soupy" needs no explanation.

**A** This dense, fiery, dry-cured sausage — known in Italy as sopressata — is legendary in the southwest corner of Rhode Island and nearby Connecticut, where generations of Italian families have made their own each winter, hung it to dry in cool cellars, then rationed it out to family and friends as a special treat. Many in Westerly trace their roots to the Calabria region of southern Italy, where sopressata originated.

Sliced thin, Soupy is a popular bar snack, a natural on antipasto platters and a spicy addition to fritattas or scrambled eggs.

Perhaps the biggest boost for Rhode Island-made Soupy came when Fortuna's cured Italian sausages — from abruzzo to their best-selling Soupy — were praised two years ago by the Los Angeles Times in a feature called "America's Best."

Paul and Patti Stannard of Fortuna's began making sausages commercially in 1982 in Westerly, where they still operate Fortuna's Italian Deli and catering. That space became cramped, so seven months ago they moved the sausage production to a federally inspected plant in Greenville.

"We don't know of any other part of the country that has Soupy," says Paul Stannard. "In Philadelphia, some people whose families came from

Calabria sell Soupy, but I've heard it's nothing like ours. A customer from Pennsylvania said that Soupy in Philadelphia is fattier and sweeter."

Business boomed after the California article; even comedian Jay Leno's wife called to buy some. Outlets as well-known as the Vermont Country Store and Macy's now carry it.

On a recent morning at Fortuna's Greenville shop, where the air is wonderfully pungent with the aromas of sausages and Italian cheese, the Stannards recalled Leno's order.

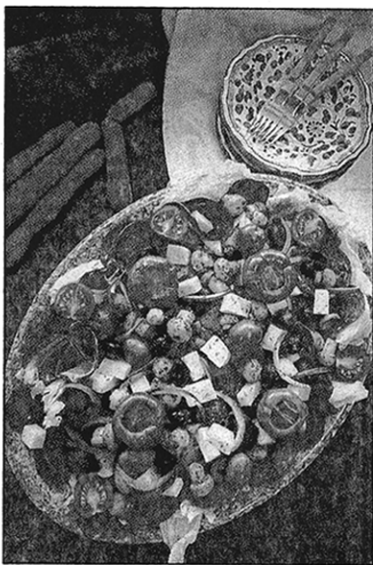
A few days after they filled it, the phone rang at their deli in Westerly, where they were swamped with lunch business. When the caller identified himself as Jay Leno, Patti sassed back sarcastically, "Yeah... right!"

To her shock, it was Leno. She passed the phone to Paul; he and Leno chatted for half an hour and Leno invited them to a Tonight Show. They met Leno in New York this spring, and, of course, brought along Fortuna's sausages.

Paul explains that various regions of Italy developed different types of sausages. In the hot southern regions, dry-cured types that didn't require refrigeration were popular. The cooler northern regions developed semi-moist types such as Genoa salami. Sopressata (nicknamed Soupy by Americans) evolved in southern Italy.

Patti's maiden name was Fortuna, meaning "good fortune." She learned about Soupy from her

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FORTUNA'S ANTIPASTO has Soppy, dry-cured meats, with tomato, marinated mushrooms and hot cherry peppers.