



## Fortuna's sausage success linked to soupy

By A.J. ALGER  
Sun Food Editor

WESTERLY — I had never (and I really mean it) heard of soupy or sopressata sausage until I moved to Westerly some 10 years ago, and my grandmother is Italian. What I missed in those years? It's not like pepperoni and its not like the usual Italian sausage. It's an unforgettable blend of pork and spices, stuffed into casing and hung to cure.

I'm not saying you have to be from the area to make really spectacular soupy. It just does seem to have some of the best of the best.

Among the best are Paul and Patti Stannard, operators of Fortuna's Italian Deli & Caterers at Franklin Plaza on Franklin Street.

In fact, their soupy has become so popular, they recently opened a sausage company in Greenville, R.I., called Fortuna's Sausage Company, to meet the increased demand.

Patti recently shared a little soupy history.

She said the Stannards began making soupy in 1983 with small hand-powered equipment — grinders, stuffers and the like.

"At that time," says Patti, "we only made about 10 pounds (at most) per week and only in winter months."

"As the supply was gone by spring, we saw a demand for the product year round, so we called in special refrigeration companies and had custom made curing rooms made. After a lot of trial and many 'errors', we finally mastered it to cure year round," said Patti.

"The people in Westerly were thrilled to have 'soupy' year round," she said.

Word apparently spread quick. Through word of mouth and several press stories with quotes like "Italian Gold!" — demand increased.

Patti explains, "In August of 1992, after being in business for 10 years, our phone started to ring with customers wanting us to ship soupy to California by noon the same day (our time). We had about a dozen orders to be shipped to the Los Angeles area."

Patti said she and Paul wondered what was going on ... until the next phone call. The call was from the Los Angeles mayor's office. The couple asked how the mayor heard about Fortuna's and they were told an article about them had appeared in the morning edition of the Los Angeles Times.

Really curious by this point, the Stannards asked "what article?" They explained, "We don't advertise like that — and never in the Los Angeles Times."

The caller offered to fax Patti a copy of the story.

"When we saw that we were listed in the Los Angeles Times as 'America's Best' dry cured sausages, we instantly were

floating on cloud nine," said Patti.

After a very busy few weeks, Fortuna's received a phone call from Naxia Lena (wife of Jay Lena). She placed an order.

"Of course we took great care in putting it together along with some samples of items they did not order and a personal note attached thanking them for their order," said Patti.

After a week, the couple received an envelope in the mail with an autographed photo of Jay Lena saying "Fortuna's Deli — The Best!"

The phone call, recalls Patti, came in the middle of a lunch hour rush on a summer Friday. "I answered the phone and the gentleman asked for Paul, said Patti. Patti said it is the middle of lunch hour and asked if he could return the call."

Much to Patti's amazement, the caller said, "Well ... this is Jay Lena." Patti replied, "Yeh right," not believing him. Patti said Lena started to talk and she realized, "Oh, no, it really is him."

"I got Paul really quick," said Patti. Paul and Jay talked for about a half hour. "He gave us his personal phone number and front row seats to the tonight show," said Patti.

Patti said the story got told and told and customers were coming to buy the same "soupy." Jay Lena buys and coming in to see his photo.

Demand for soupy has grown. The company now makes 1,000 to 1,500 pounds a week, year round, and ship products throughout the world.

Demand forced the couple to open a larger facility just for making "soupy" and our other dry cured items.

"We decided to put a color catalog together and promote our imported from Italy items and we went all the way. In order to ship around the world, we had to become federally inspected — USDA approved," said Patti, adding it is a rather lengthy process.

"After months of government and state red tape, we were ready to open and produce our first soupy," she said.

"We cure the same old fashioned, natural way as the local Westerly people do, only year round and in a beautiful location. No preservatives — all natural," Patti said.

Patti and Paul shared some of their popular recipes with us:

### ITALIAN CHILI CON CARNE

By Chef Steve Poole  
2 pounds Fortuna's Hot "Soupy" julienned  
3 pounds ground beef  
2 large diced green peppers  
1 large diced Spanish onion  
1 can whole plum tomatoes  
6 ounces tomato juice  
2 cans rinsed kidney beans  
1 can tomato paste  
2 teaspoons cayenne pepper  
2 tablespoons chili powder  
1 tablespoon ground cumin

2 teaspoons salt  
2 teaspoons black pepper

(Water if needed to suit your consistency)  
In large sauce pan, brown beef and "Soupy" with peppers and onions. Add crushed plum tomatoes, juice and paste, mix well. Simmer for 5 minutes, add all seasonings and spices and let simmer for 25 to 30 minutes. Add beans and water (if needed), mix well and simmer for about 15 minutes more. (Can be made a day ahead and refrigerate.) For a Five Alarm Chili, use Fortuna's Extra Hot "Soupy!"

Serve chili topped with shredded mozzarella or cheddar cheese, chopped scallions and diced peppers.

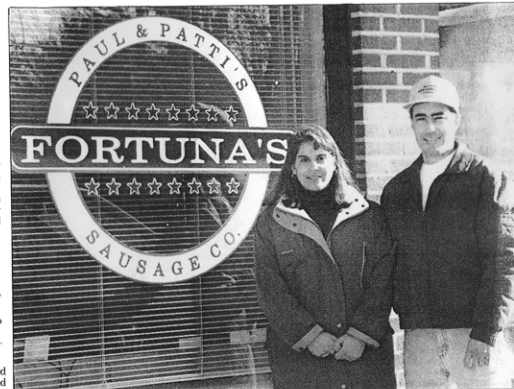
### CLASSIC ITALIAN FRIITTATA

By Chef Steve Poole

2 dozen large eggs  
1½ pounds ricotta cheese  
½ pound Fortuna's Hot "Soupy" sliced  
¼ cup grated Romano Pecorino cheese  
Dash each — salt and black pepper

In large mixing bowl, add cracked eggs and ricotta and Romano cheese, salt, pepper whip mixture well and let stand 10 minutes. While waiting, take sliced Fortuna's "Soupy" and layer the bottom of a 2-inch baking pan with "Soupy." Pour the whipped mixture over the "Soupy."

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Sun photos by Daniel H. Ward

**SUPER SOUPY** — Patti and Paul Stannard of Charlestown, owners of Fortuna's Italian Deli & Caterers at the Franklin Shopping Plaza on Franklin Street in Westerly, recently opened a facility to make the popular Italian sausage soupy, or sopressata, in Greenville, R.I. In the

photos below, the soupy is stuffed and hand-fired during preparation at the factory and finally it is hung for curing. All of Fortuna's popular goods are available on Franklin Street as well as by mail order.

