

A Guru of Italian Cuisine

Tommaso Cartia (December 14, 2017)



World-acclaimed chef Barbara Lynch has been taking Boston's Italian dining scene by storm. Recently, she has also partnered with Eataly in running Il Pesce restaurant

Born and raised in Boston in a big New England family, Barbara is a self-taught prodigy. Though she never graduated from a cooking school, her love for food and cooking brought her to a luminous career. In 1996 she won her first award, [Food & Wine's best chef in the Northeast](#) [2], but then many others came.

In Love With Italy

The first trip Barbara ever took was to Italy. She was in her early twenties, and it was during that trip



that Italian food and culture struck her. “I had never been out of Boston in general,” she told i-Italy in a recent interview. “And boy, was I surprised! It was amazing. What happened was, I fell in love with that book *The Food of Italy* by Waverly Root, and I ended up loving Italy because of what Italians are and who they are. The culture, first of all, the regions, and that there’s usually a nonna in the kitchen.”

Her first experience in Italy changed her life and her perspective. “It was just this really wonderful, cultural lifestyle that I absorbed. I was like a sponge. It was just an eye-opener for me, and I ended up coming back and mastering Italian for the last ten years. At 32 I opened my first restaurant—[No. 9 Park](#) [3], which was French-Italian.” That was just the start of the legacy of restaurants that Lynch would create around her name and that eventually would become part of the [Barbara Lynch Gruppo](#) [4].

The Barbara Lynch Gruppo

She opened [The Butcher Shop](#) [5], inspired by her visit to Cortona, in Tuscany, where she would go to the local bottega to have wild boar. After that, she founded [B&G Oysters](#) [6], a kind of New England fish shack with a fancy twist, serving great wines and classics like fried calamari and chowder. Close to The Butcher Shop, Barbara then opened Stir, which has a demonstration kitchen where they have cooking classes seven days a week. After that, her drive proved unstoppable. “I then opened [Sportello](#) [7],” she tells us, “which has diner-style counter seating but all homemade pasta, salads, and entrees. Underneath that is Drink, which has the most incredible bartenders and mixologists and has won Best Bar in the World. Next to Sportello is Menton, which is Relais & Châteaux.”

So the Barbara Lynch Gruppo is a little dining empire employing over 200 people and has an affectionate clientele that enjoys both the food and the culinary culture that the group delivers. It is a lively resource for all Bostonians in so many different ways. The group also has a magazine [Food for Thought: Stories You Can Taste](#) [8], an interactive platform that allows the audience to share their own food-related stories. Barbara Lynch’s memoir [Out of Line: A Life of Playing with Fire](#) [9] is also available. The book outlines Barbara’s life journey from a hard-knock childhood to her glorious success.

Working with Eataly Boston

One of Barbara Lynch’s latest efforts is her collaboration with Eataly Boston, where she has become the mind and soul behind their [Il Pesce restaurant](#) [10]. This happened almost by chance. During one of her trips to Italy she happened to be in Turin when Eataly first opened, and she immediately felt a connection with their educational philosophy and amazing artisanal slow-food products. “I fell in love with the store’s concept. So when [Mario Batali](#) [11] came to me and said, ‘Hey, I’m going to open an Eataly in Boston, would you be interested in coming on board and running my seafood restaurant?’ I said, ‘Absolutely!’ I felt that Eataly was going to be the best thing that ever happened to Boston, period. And it is, actually. It’s doing phenomenal numbers.”

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- [1] <http://www.iitaly.org/files/barbaralynch.jpg>
- [2] <http://www.foodandwine.com/best-new-chefs>
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[9] <https://www.amazon.com/Out-Line-Life-Playing-Fire/dp/1476795444>

[10] https://www.eataly.com/us_en/stores/boston/boston-il-pesce/

[11] <http://www.mariobatali.com>