

JOSEPH CATANIA SUSTAINING ITALIAN CUISINE

Often, work and play compete for attention, but for some lucky business folk, passion and profit complement each other almost like the facts of an airtight court case, or the ingredients in a delicious Italian meal. For Joseph Catania, an attorney, gourmet cook and family man, passions for work and play ideally add up to relaxing repasts overlooking the Hudson River in Balmville, often after a long bicycle ride.

“That’s my theory, as long as I can continue to play hard, I’ll continue to work hard,” said Catania, 58, who has been married to his wife Pamela since 1971 and has two children and is now a grandfather. A trial attorney, he is a partner in the Newburgh law firm of Tarshis, Catania, Liberth, Mahon & Milligram P.L.L.C.

“I’m really torn because I’ve got two passions,” said Catania, although it turns out his math is faulty. He seems a man with many passions in almost every aspect of his life. “My no. 1 passion is my wife and my family,” he said. He cites another passion as cycling. And then he is passionate about his favorite type of cooking: “Without a doubt, classic Italian dishes”, Catania said.

Catania does not mention his work in courts but a short talk reveals his passion there as well. He speaks casually of a day spent arguing a case in court and then some more hours after dinner or on weekends spent in the office preparing his cases. Here again, passions are complementary, especially on weekends. “At this time of year, I might go into the office a few hours on Saturday and then stop to shop for some ingredients on the way home,” he said, reeling off Italian delicacies he will use over coming hours in preparing a meal. “Then I get to eat it with good friends and good wine. How can you get any better than that?”

“I am a trial lawyer; I try cases of just about any nature,” Catania said. He practices the law of commercial litigation, medical malpractice and construction litigation. “That’s probably half my time, the other half is personal injury law.”

Catania started his career in March 1978. Early on, “I did almost exclusively defense work,” he said. He said the most important thing he has learned through his career is that crucial work is done out of sight. “The preparation must be done before you get in the courtroom,” Catania said. “It’s all in the preparation.”

The same can be said for his other passions. For example, there was careful preparation for the 500-mile bicycle ride this summer from Niagara Falls to Saratoga Springs or one last summer from Niagara Falls to Manhattan.

And there is the careful preparation seeking out and cooking ingredients for a special dinner.

“The thing I really love about Italian food is the emphasis on the quality of ingredients and the simplicity of the meal,” said Catania. “You take any of the classic Italian dishes, they’re really pretty straight forward. It doesn’t take a whole lot more than really paying attention to cook them well.”

And when the preparation is done, the passions can all be enjoyed together. “There is nothing better to be out in the morning cycling and then come back in the afternoon and have some pasta el fresco out on the porch overlooking the river,” Catania said.

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