

**Green is Delicious!**

(New Orleans-May 28, 2008) Carmelo and Katrina Turillo's commitment to sustainability and being green is evidenced in every aspect of their business. The Turillos opened La Divina Gelateria & Cafe in February 2007 at 3005 Magazine Street with the goal of making the best tasting gelato with the least amount of impact on the environment. When you step into their modern Milan-styled café, you'll be served your gelato in biodegradable cups made from corn and eat your Italian ice cream with biodegradable spoons made from potatoes. But that's only the beginning of their green consciousness. Whatever is not biodegradable is recyclable or reusable like their real demitasse tasting spoons instead of the usual plastic tasting spoons, which takes hundreds of years to degrade in a landfill. They even compost all their kitchen scraps.



Katrina & Carmelo Turillo, owners, LaDivina Gelateria

The Turillos made sure to observe green principles in the renovation of their building. They used biodegradable, low-fume paints, installed skylights, ceiling fans, and tankless water heaters for energy efficiency, and chose sustainable materials like slate and concrete floors and biodegradable floor tiles.

But what makes being green so delicious is the Turillo's commitment to buying fresh, organic ingredients locally and making everything from scratch right in their store. Nothing comes from mixes. The milk comes from a Washington Parish dairy where the cows graze on sweet Louisiana grass. Other ingredients also come from local farms. Even the gelato is pasteurized on-site at their store. The final product- a gelato so fresh and delicious, it tastes like a burst of sunshine and natural flavors.

"We wanted to stay as close to nature as possible without using ingredients that had preservatives. That philosophy goes hand-in-hand with being green. Our business is an extension of our values, and a reflection of the green movement which is very strong in Europe, where we lived for several years," said Katrina Turillo, co-owner of La Divina Gelateria.

"As individual business owners, we have to take responsibility for our actions and not pass on the cost of our decisions to future generations," said Carmelo Turillo, co-owner of La Divina Gelateria. Turillo holds a Ph.D. in Business and teaches business ethics courses at Tulane and Emory Universities.

But as Kermit the Frog pointed out, "It's hard to be green." The Turillos had a difficult time finding local suppliers for biodegradable products. They ran afoul of dairy board regulations, which do not cover on-site pasteurization on a small scale. Also, the timing couldn't have been worse. The Turillos returned from Europe just a few months prior to Katrina and were evacuated along with hundred of thousands of other residents. They returned to post-Katrina New Orleans and faced endless challenges to open their business: high construction costs, shortage of contractors, and a smaller customer base. Sales in their first year fell short of

their financial projections. That’s when they turned to **the Louisiana Small Business Development Center (LSBDC)-Greater New Orleans Region.**

LSBDC Consultants revamped their marketing strategy. Lead consultant, Christian Galvin, brought in a team of Loyola marketing students to evaluate La Divina’s strengths and weaknesses and put together a comprehensive marketing plan which focused on raising La Divina’s visibility in the community.

“I always tell my clients to think outside the boundaries of New Orleans. Instead of thinking of themselves as a business in a fish bowl, imagine selling their product to vast national and international markets,” said Galvin. With that philosophy in mind, Galvin helped develop a new website for La Divina with the idea of reaching a broader customer base. Check out La Divina’s new website at [www.ladivinagelateria.com](http://www.ladivinagelateria.com). LSBDC also assisted the Turillos with applying for the Small and Emerging Business program through Louisiana Economic Development in order to pay part of the cost of developing a website.

The Turillos have purchased more equipment to produce their gelato on a large scale, and several New Orleans restaurants including Cuvee, Bacco, Rio Mar, and Peristyle offer La Divina’s gelato. The LSBDC also connected the Turillos with Whole Foods, a high-end grocery store chain and helped them find a resource to repackage their gelato for the mass market. The Turillos are currently in negotiations with Whole Foods to carry their line of all-natural gelato.

“We are very grateful for the LSBDC for their assistance and expertise. As a start-up, we would not have been able to pay for the type of expertise we received from LSBDC,” praised Katrina. “We’re confident with the assistance of the LSBDC we’ll be able to turn the corner and succeed in these challenging economic times.”



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