



## NIAF's 2018 Spring Gala Celebrates the Italian Way

Nicole Campisano (April 13, 2018)



NIAF's annual spring gala was held at Cipriani 42nd Street this year celebrating the success of Italians and Italian Americans alike. Honorees include: Giovanni Colavita, Vincent Tizzio, Joseph Fichera, and Ron Lo Russo.

NIAF always celebrates Italian American culture in style, and this year was no exception. Hosted at the legendary [Cipriani 42nd Street](#) [2], the New York City Spring Gala on April 10 was filled with food, culture, and entertainment.

[NIAF, the National Italian American Foundation](#) [3], serves as a resource for the Italian American community preserving traditions and culture, as well as promoting and inspiring a positive image and legacy of Italian Americans. Every year, they hold two galas to honor important Italians and Italian Americans across various sectors.



## **Celebrating Success and Dedication**

The night started off with an elegant reception. While enjoying cocktails, guests also participated in the silent auction. This year, Co-Anchor of NBC 4 Today, [Michael Gargiulo](#) [4], was the emcee for the night, while Gerard LaRocca, the New York Gala Chairman, welcomed the crowd. Alfio, who also performed at the Washington D.C Gala, sang both the American, and Italian National Anthems.

Gargiulo introduced the honorees: [Giovanni Colavita, CEO of Colavita USA](#) [5], awarded the Special Achievement Award in International Business; [Vincent C. Tizzio](#) [6] President & CEO Navigators Management Company, Inc., awarded the Special Achievement Award in Business; [Joseph Sebastian Fichera](#) [7] CEO of Saber Partners, LLC, awarded the Special Achievement Award in Finance; and [Ron Lo Russo](#) [8] President of Cushman & Wakefield's Agency Consulting Group, awarded the Special Achievement Award in Real Estate.

### **The Honorees**

Giovanni Colavita, like the other honorees, has worked hard for his success. Colavita, born in the Molise region, was the only Italian who was awarded. [Colavita USA](#) [9], under Giovanni's management, became the largest distributor of Italian products representing brands like Baci Perugina, San Benedetto, and Cirio, along with Colavita products.

Honored and humbled by his award, Giovanni emphatically expressed his gratitude by thanking his family for giving him the constant, love, advice and support that he embodies in his personal life, and in the business world. Colavita emphasizes the passion for his work that keeps his family business growing strong. He says: "I still enjoy this business as much as I enjoyed it when I was a kid; there's more responsibility, but more satisfaction too."

Vincent Tizzio, who brings more than 30 years of property and casualty insurance experience to Navigators Management Company, is a very accomplished business man. He has proven his success countless times in the business world, and since joining Navigators in 2012, he has enhanced the profitability of the company's U.S. business and has led its growth: launching new products, leveraging technology to deliver more value and support to brokers and policyholders, and broadening Navigators' local presence in major cities across the U.S. With the support of his close-knit family, Mr. Tizzio remains inspired to continuously work hard.

Joseph Fichera's talents and accomplishments cover multiple fields, although he was awarded for his success in finance as the CEO of Saber Partners, LLC. His government experience includes a presidential appointee staff position in the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development; and a Board Director on one of the U.S. State Department's Enterprise Funds for Eastern Europe. He has also taught at Princeton University as a visiting lecturer in public and international affairs. Mr. Fichera's dedication and expertise is demonstrated through all of his hardwork and numerous achievements.

Ron Lo Russo's impressive commitment to his work as President of Cushman & Wakefield's Agency Consulting Group showcases his exemplary leadership experience and background in agency leasing that helps drive new business opportunities by creating and executing strategies for leasing campaigns. Together with 12 professionals, the Agency Consulting Group actively promote and deliver best-in-class practices of the department to landlords in New York City. Mr. Lo Russo is devoted to both his work and his family that support his successful endeavors.

## **Entertainment**

[Sal Valentinetti](#) [10], who was on Season 11 of America's Got Talent, entertained the crowd with both Italian and American classics, such as Frank Sinatra's "New York, New York." Valentinetti, a New York native himself, is a proud Italian American who celebrates his culture through song.

## **Promoting Italian American Culture**

The NIAF Galas benefit their educational and youth programs by providing scholarships and grants.



These programs help young Italian Americans learn more about their heritage. NIAF is extremely dedicated to celebrating Italian culture within the United States, and is proud to support, and instill Italian American pride.

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### NIAF

The National Italian American Foundation (NIAF) is a nonprofit, nonpartisan educational foundation that promotes Italian American culture and heritage. NIAF serves as a resource on the Italian American community and has educational and youth programs including scholarships, grants, heritage travel and mentoring. NIAF is also the voice for Italian Americans in Washington, D.C. and works closely with the Italian American Congressional Delegation and the White House. NIAF's mission includes advancing U.S.-Italy business, political and cultural relations and has a business council that promotes networking with corporate leaders.

For more info visit the NIAF website here [>>](#) [11]

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- [1] <http://test.iitaly.org/files/niaf2018gala112jpg-0>
- [2] <http://cipriani.com/events/?loc=ny-42nd-street>
- [3] <http://www.niaf.org/>
- [4] [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Michael\\_Gargiulo\\_\(journalist\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Michael_Gargiulo_(journalist))
- [5] <https://www.colavita.com/brand-mission/a-letter-from-our-ceo/>
- [6] <https://www.navg.com/Pages/mngmnt-team-detail.aspx?Empld=357>
- [7] <https://saberpartners.com/managements/joseph-s-fichera/>
- [8] <http://www.cushmanwakefield.us/en/people/ronald-lo-russo>
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