

## **Ciro Casella: "The Golden Lion to The South, Like a Hug From The North"**

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New York restaurant San Matteo receives the Golden Lion in Venice as a "special recognition for professional merits."

The symbol of Venice, the Serenissima Republic, is a suggestive winged lion, which has inspired countless artists, writers, historians, events, and awards.

Amongst them, the Golden Lion, an award dating back to 1932 - though it's only in 1954 that it adopted its current name - intended to promote the harmonious expression of all artforms, in the context of Venice's Gran Premio Internazionale.



In 2007, the Venice Gran Premio Internazionale Committee was instituted and the Golden Lion became a career recognition in the editorial, entrepreneurial, musical, dance, sports, communication, production, and artistic fields.

The award also recognizes the Italian companies that have distinguished themselves abroad. It's in this context that the work of [San Matteo](#) [2]'s [Ciro Casella](#) and his New York team is being celebrated.

Ciro Casella is the owner of San Matteo pizzeria in Manhattan's Upper East Side. His story is emblematic of the New York restaurant scene: "It all started nine years ago, when the food company for which I was working in Salerno closed and I, along with the other employees, was laid off. That's when I decided to leave for New York. Now I work and have employees."

"Here you have to work hard, but the American dream is still working," [Ciro Casella](#) claims. Today San Matteo is a fundamental reference point for Neapolitan pizza, with particular emphasis on the culinary traditions of Salerno, his hometown. His 'panuozzo' is not to be missed.

"This is very gratifying for all of us at San Matteo NYC - [Ciro Casella](#) states with proverbial simplicity - thank you truly, it touches and motivates us to continue in our work. This award honors the sacrifices made by myself, my brother, my team at San Matteo, and my daughters."

This "special recognition for professional merits" was particularly important and symbolic, we would like to add, an example for all those facing difficult times.

The restaurants that bear his name are today a symbol of Italian gastronomy, particularly of the Southern Italian cuisine. Visited by various American figures, such as the Mayor of New York [Bill de Blasio](#) and director [Spike Lee](#), they are living proof of the potential of the most simple and genuine form of Italian cuisine, still in need of further promotion throughout the world.

And [Ciro](#) knows this well. Awarded for his work as an entrepreneur from the South, he comments: "I see the Golden Lion being given to the South like a hug from the North."

And going to San Matteo really feels like entering the best of the South. There is poetry in his hospitality, which comes from a people that [Ciro](#) represents with extreme kindness and warmth.

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