



Legacy Business Registry Staff Report

Hearing Date: August 28, 2023

MARIO'S BOHEMIAN CIGAR STORE CAFE

Application No.: LBR-2015-16-052
Business Name: Mario's Bohemian Cigar Store Cafe
Business Address: 566 Columbus Ave.
District: District 3
Applicant: Daniella Crismani, Manager/Owner
Nomination Date: May 18, 2016
Nominated By: Supervisor Aaron Peskin
Staff Contact: Richard Kurylo and Michelle Reynolds
legacybusiness@sfgov.org

BUSINESS DESCRIPTION

Mario's Bohemian Cigar Store Cafe is a café that serves oven-baked sandwiches, paninis, pizza, salads, and hot dishes that are all made in house with family recipes. Mario's serves many local customers from the neighborhood of North Beach and is also a common tourist destination. It serves customers of all ages and has had customers coming in every day for the past 30+ years.

Mario's Bohemian Cigar Store Cafe was established in 1971 at 566 Columbus Avenue by Mario and Liliana Crismani. Mario and Liliana immigrated from Italy to San Francisco with their two children in 1957. In 1971, they bought "Bohemian Cigar Store," a small smoke shop that was founded in 1948. Mario and Liliana called their business "Mario's Bohemian Cigar Store Cafe," an establishment where locals could buy tobacco, smoke, socialize, play cards, and drink espresso.

In the beginning, Mario's was a place where Italians in the neighborhood would spend hours playing card games and filling the entire establishment up with their cigar smoke. Liliana would make sandwiches at home and bring them down to the customers at Mario's. That evolved into the business buying a small toaster oven, which allowed Liliana to make 1-2 focaccia sandwiches per hour.

In 1983, the business added a "Bakers of Paris" oven to produce more focaccia sandwiches, which is still a staple item today. More wine and beer were added to the beverage selection. They also added a foosball table and pinball machine, which were popular with college kids who would patronize the business, socialize, and compete in tournaments.

A common question from customers is, "Where are the cigars?" Mario's stopped selling cigars in 1992 when San Francisco passed the law that bans cigarettes and tobacco products from being sold with food. Mario's choose to keep the name "Mario's Bohemian Cigar Store Cafe" because it symbolizes history and how Mario's has evolved to what you see today.

Today, Mario and Liliana's grandchildren Daniella and Dario are third generation café operators who cook all the food for the restaurant with the same family recipes their grandparents created and passed down through the family. Although the menu has expanded over the years, all items on the menu are family recipes and made in house. They use focaccia bread from Liguria Bakery across Washington Square Park, another North Beach staple. And their espresso beans are from Graffeo Coffee right down the street on Columbus Avenue.

Daniella and Dario continue to keep the magic of Mario's Bohemian Cigar Store Cafe alive.

Legacy Business Program
Office of Small Business
City Hall Room 140
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San Francisco, CA 94102
(415) 554-6680
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www.legacybusiness.org





CRITERION 1

Has the applicant operated in San Francisco for 30 or more years, with no break in San Francisco operations exceeding two years?

Yes, Mario's Bohemian Cigar Store Cafe has operated in San Francisco for 30 or more years, with no break in San Francisco operations exceeding two years:

566 Columbus Ave. from 1971 to Present (52 years)

CRITERION 2

Has the applicant contributed to the neighborhood's history and/or the identity of a particular neighborhood or community?

Yes, Mario's Bohemian Cigar Store Cafe has contributed to the history and identity of the North Beach neighborhood and San Francisco.

The Historic Preservation Commission recommended the applicant as qualifying, noting the following ways the applicant contributed to the neighborhood's history and/or the identity of a particular neighborhood or community:

- Mario's Bohemian Cigar Store Cafe is associated with Italian cuisine.
- Mario's Bohemian Cigar Store Cafe has been the location where many television shows, movies, music videos, and documentaries have been filmed. Some examples include "Heartbreak Kid," a Tide Commercial in 1994, "Chance," a Disney documentary for Pixar, and a Torani commercial in 2018.
- Many customers throughout the years have included famous poets, movie stars, and local government officials. The business has hosted private events for columnist Herb Caen and product designer Jony Ive, as well as photoshoots for Annie Leibovitz.
- The property at 566 Columbus Avenue is identified as a contributor to the California Register-eligible Washington Square Historic District. The district consists of a nearly level park, "Washington Square," occupying a full rectangular city block, and of all the buildings which face or corner on it.
- Mario's Bohemian Cigar Store Cafe has been featured on/in the Food Network, KQED's Check Please!, a Tide commercial, a Torani syrup commercial, Food & Wine magazine, Cross Roads, The San Francisco Chronicle, SFGATE, Backroads, other publications, and multiple television shows and movies.
- Mario's Bohemian Cigar Store Cafe is committed to giving back to the community any way that seems fit, as well as holding the integrity of the business for the community in maintaining a consistent business model since 1971. The business donates to Sacred Heart Cathedral Preparatory, Saints Peter and Paul Catholic Church, and North Beach Neighbors. It has donated to multiple other organizations throughout the years as well. During the COVID pandemic, Mario's donated food platters to first responders and hospitals around San Francisco as well as non-profits for food donations.

CRITERION 3

Is the applicant committed to maintaining the physical features or traditions that define the business, including craft, culinary, or art forms?

Yes, Mario's Bohemian Cigar Store Cafe is committed to maintaining the physical features and traditions that define the business.

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HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION

The Historic Preservation Commission recommends that Mario's Bohemian Cigar Store Cafe qualifies for the Legacy Business Registry under Administrative Code Section 2A.242(b)(2) and recommends safeguarding of the below listed physical features and traditions.

Physical Features or Traditions that Define the Business:

- Family-owned restaurant featuring Italian dishes.
- Neon sign reading, "Mario's."
- Large unaltered store front windows offering sweeping views of Washington Park.
- Original interiors with a large bar seating area.

CORE PHYSICAL FEATURE OR TRADITION THAT DEFINES THE BUSINESS

Following is the core physical feature or tradition that defines the business that would be required for maintenance of the business on the Legacy Business Registry.

- Restaurant featuring Italian cuisine.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends that the San Francisco Small Business Commission include Mario's Bohemian Cigar Store Cafe currently located at 566 Columbus Ave. in the Legacy Business Registry as a Legacy Business under Administrative Code Section 2A.242.

Richard Kurylo and Michelle Reynolds
Legacy Business Program

Legacy Business Program

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Small Business Commission

Resolution No. _____

August 28, 2023

MARIO'S BOHEMIAN CIGAR STORE CAFE

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legacybusiness@sfgov.org

Adopting findings approving the Legacy Business Registry application for Mario's Bohemian Cigar Store Cafe, currently located at 566 Columbus Ave.

WHEREAS, in accordance with Administrative Code Section 2A.242, the Office of Small Business maintains a registry of Legacy Businesses in San Francisco (the "Registry") to recognize that longstanding, community-serving businesses can be valuable cultural assets of the City and to be a tool for providing educational and promotional assistance to Legacy Businesses to encourage their continued viability and success; and

WHEREAS, the subject business has operated in San Francisco for 30 or more years, with no break in San Francisco operations exceeding two years; or

WHEREAS, the subject business has operated in San Francisco for more than 20 years but less than 30 years, has had no break in San Francisco operations exceeding two years, has significantly contributed to the history or identity of a particular neighborhood or community and, if not included on the Registry, faces a significant risk of displacement; and

WHEREAS, the subject business has contributed to the neighborhood's history and identity; and

WHEREAS, the subject business is committed to maintaining the physical features and traditions that define the business; and

WHEREAS, at a duly noticed public hearing held on August 28, 2023, the San Francisco Small Business Commission reviewed documents and correspondence, and heard oral testimony on the Legacy Business Registry application; therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, that the Small Business Commission hereby includes Mario's Bohemian Cigar Store Cafe in the Legacy Business Registry as a Legacy Business under Administrative Code Section 2A.242.

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BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Small Business Commission recommends safeguarding the below listed physical features and traditions at Mario's Bohemian Cigar Store Cafe.

Physical Features or Traditions that Define the Business:

- Family-owned restaurant featuring Italian dishes.
- Neon sign reading, "Mario's."
- Large unaltered store front windows offering sweeping views of Washington Park.
- Original interiors with a large bar seating area.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Small Business Commission requires maintenance of the below listed core physical feature or tradition to maintain Mario's Bohemian Cigar Store Cafe on the Legacy Business Registry:

- Restaurant featuring Italian cuisine.

I hereby certify that the foregoing Resolution was ADOPTED by the Small Business Commission on August 28, 2023.

Katy Tang
Director

RESOLUTION NO. _____

Ayes –
Nays –
Abstained –
Absent –

Legacy Business Program

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Legacy Business Registry

Application Review Sheet

Application No.: LBR-2015-16-052
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Nomination Date: May 18, 2016
Nominated By: Supervisor Aaron Peskin

CRITERION 1: Has the applicant has operated in San Francisco for 30 or more years, with no break in San Francisco operations exceeding two years?
 Yes No

566 Columbus Ave. from 1971 to Present (52 years)

CRITERION 2: Has the applicant contributed to the neighborhood's history and/or the identity of a particular neighborhood or community?
 Yes No

CRITERION 3: Is the applicant committed to maintaining the physical features or traditions that define the business, including craft, culinary, or art forms?
 Yes No

NOTES: NA

DELIVERY DATE TO HPC: July 19, 2023

Richard Kurylo and Michelle Reynolds
Legacy Business Program

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Member, Board of Supervisors
District 3



City and County of San Francisco

AARON PESKIN
佩斯金 市參事

May 18, 2016

Director Regina Dick-Endrizzi
San Francisco Office of Small Business
City Hall, Room 110
1 Dr. Carlton B. Goodlett Place
San Francisco, CA 94102
regina.dick-endrizzi@sfgov.org
(415) 554-6134

Dear Director Dick-Endrizzi:

I am writing to nominate to nominate Mario's Bohemian Cigar Store Café for inclusion on the Legacy Business Registry.

Long a hangout for North Beach's bohemian types, and a recommended spot for other locals and tourists alike, Mario's is one of the last true store landmarks of North Beach. Located on the corner of Union Street and Columbus Avenue in North Beach, Mario's is a great place to get a bite to eat and people-watch. Dating from the 1920s, the last time it actually sold cigars, it was taken over by Mario Crismani and his wife Liliana in 1972. Known for its meatball, eggplant and focaccia sandwiches, and many other treats, and with both bar seating and small, round tables available and plenty of large windows enabling a sweeping view of Washington Square Park, it has all the wonderful ambiance of North Beach packed into one little Café.

Mario's Bohemian Cigar Store Café would benefit greatly from inclusion on the Legacy Business Registry, and it is my honor to nominate it for inclusion.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Aaron Peskin".

Aaron Peskin



Legacy Business Registry Application



Business Information

Business name: Mario's Bohemian Cigar Store Cafe

Business owner name(s): Paolo and Debbie Crismani

Identify the person(s) with the highest ownership stake in the business

Current business address: 566 Columbus Avenue San Francisco, CA 94133

Telephone: (415) 362 – 0536 **Email:** mariosbohemian@gmail.com

Mailing address (if different than above):

Website: https://mariosbohemian.com/

Facebook: https://www.facebook.com/mariosbohemian/ **Twitter:**

7-digit San Francisco Business Account Number (BAN): 0 1 8 2 9 2 6

Do any of these describe your business? (select all that apply)
Requires at least 51% of the business be owned, operated, and controlled by the business designation below.

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Immigrant-Owned Business | <input type="checkbox"/> Owned by Person with a Disability |
| <input type="checkbox"/> LGBTQ+-Owned Business | <input type="checkbox"/> Veteran-Owned Business |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Minority-Owned Business* | <input type="checkbox"/> Woman-Owned Business |

**Minority is defined as one or more of the following racial or ethnic groups: American Indian or Alaska Native; Asian; Black or African American; Hispanic or Latino; Middle Eastern or North African; Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander*

Contact Person Information

Contact person name: Daniella Crismani

Contact person title: Manager/owner

Contact telephone: () – **Contact email:** mariosbohemian@gmail.com

Business Location(s)

List the business address of the original San Francisco location, the start date of business, and the dates of operation at the original location. Check the box indicating whether the original location of the business in San Francisco is the founding location of the business.

If the business moved from its original location and has had additional addresses in San Francisco, identify all other addresses and the dates of operation at each address.

Original San Francisco address: **Zip Code:**

Is this location the founding location of the business? (Y/N):

Dates at this location: **From:** **To:**

Other address (if applicable): **Zip Code:**

Dates at this location: **From:** **To:**

Other address (if applicable): **Zip Code:**

Dates at this location: **From:** **To:**

Other address (if applicable): **Zip Code:**

Dates at this location: **From:** **To:**

Other Address (if applicable): **Zip Code:**

Dates at this location: **From:** **To:**

Other address (if applicable): **Zip Code:**

Dates at this location: **From:** **To:**

Applicant Disclosures

San Francisco Taxes, Business Registration, Licenses, Labor Laws and Public Information Release.

This section is verification that all San Francisco taxes, business registration, and licenses are current and complete, and there are no current violations of San Francisco labor laws. This information will be verified. A business deemed not current with all San Francisco taxes, business registration, and licenses, or has current violations of San Francisco labor laws, will not be eligible to apply for grants through the Legacy Business Program.

In addition, we are required to inform you that all information provided in the application will become subject to disclosure under the California Public Records Act.

Please read the following statements and check each to indicate that you agree with the statement. Then sign below in the space provided.

- I am authorized to submit this application on behalf of the business.
- I attest that the business is current on all of its San Francisco tax obligations.
- I attest that the business's business registration and any applicable regulatory license(s) are current.
- I attest that the Office of Labor Standards and Enforcement (OLSE) has not determined that the business is currently in violation of any of the City's labor laws, and that the business does not owe any outstanding penalties or payments ordered by the OLSE.
- I understand that documents submitted with this application may be made available to the public for inspection and copying pursuant to the California Public Records Act and San Francisco Sunshine Ordinance.
- I hereby acknowledge and authorize that all photographs and images submitted as part of the application may be used by the City without compensation.
- I understand that the Small Business Commission may revoke the placement of the business on the Registry if it finds that the business no longer qualifies, and that placement on the Registry does not entitle the business to a grant of City funds.

Name: Daniella Crismani

Signature: *Daniella Crismani*

Date: 06/12/2023

MARIO'S BOHEMIAN CIGAR STORE CAFE

Written Historical Narrative

INTRODUCTION

a. Describe the business. What does it sell or provide?

Mario's Bohemian Cigar Store Cafe is a café that serves oven-baked sandwiches, paninis, pizza, salads, and hot dishes that are all made in house with family recipes. They also serve local beers, wines, and espresso.

b. Describe whom the business serves.

Mario's serves many local customers from the neighborhood of North Beach and is also a common tourist destination. It serves customers of all ages and has had customers coming in every day for the past 30+ years. Mario's Bohemian Cigar Store Cafe is a community within itself.

c. In about 2-5 words (15-30 characters), describe what the business is known for.

Best oven-baked sandwiches.

CRITERION 1: The business has operated in San Francisco for 30 or more years, with no break in San Francisco operations exceeding two years

a. Provide a short history of the business, including locations and owners.

Mario's Bohemian Cigar Store Cafe was established in 1971 at 566 Columbus Avenue by spouses Mario and Liliana Crismani.

Mario and Liliana immigrated from Italy to San Francisco with their two children in 1957. In 1971, they bought "Bohemian Cigar Store," a small smoke shop that was founded in 1948. Mario and Liliana called their business "Mario's Bohemian Cigar Store Cafe," an establishment where locals could buy tobacco, smoke, socialize, play cards, and drink espresso.

In the beginning, Mario's was a place where Italians in the neighborhood would spend hours playing card games and filling the entire establishment up with their cigar smoke. Liliana would make sandwiches at home and bring them down to the customers at Mario's. That evolved into the business buying a small toaster oven, which allowed Liliana to make 1-2 focaccia sandwiches per hour.

In 1975, Mario and Liliana's son Paolo Crismani and his wife Debbie Crismani bought the business from Paolo's parents.

In 1983, the business added a “Bakers of Paris” oven to produce more focaccia sandwiches, which is still a staple item today. More wine and beer were added to the beverage selection. They also added a foosball table and pinball machine, which were popular with college kids who would patronize the business, socialize, and compete in tournaments.

A common question from customers is, “Where are the cigars?” Mario’s stopped selling cigars in 1992 when San Francisco passed the law that bans cigarettes and tobacco products from being sold with food. Mario’s choose to keep the name “Mario's Bohemian Cigar Store Cafe” because it symbolizes history and how Mario’s has evolved to what you see today.

In 2012, Daniella and Dario Crismani, Paolo and Debbie’s children, began working part time and learning the ropes of the business. In 2016, Daniella and Dario began managing and taking over ownership roles.

Today, Mario and Liliana’s grandchildren Daniella and Dario are third generation café operators who cook all the food for the restaurant with the same family recipes their grandparents created and passed down through the family. Although the menu has expanded over the years, all items on the menu are family recipes and made in house. They use focaccia bread from Liguria Bakery across Washington Square Park, another North Beach staple. And their espresso beans are from Graffeo Coffee right down the street on Columbus Avenue. Daniella and Dario continue to keep the magic of Mario's Bohemian Cigar Store Cafe alive.

b. Provide the ownership history of the business in a consolidated year-to-year format.

1971 to 1975:	Mario Crismani and Liliana Crismani.
1975 to 1988:	Paolo Crismani
1988 to Present:	Paolo Crismani and Debbie Crismani

c. Describe any circumstances that required the business to cease operations in San Francisco for any significant length of time.

Mario’s has never closed for any significant length of time. It remained open after the 1989 Loma Prieta Earthquake as well as during the COVID pandemic.

CRITERION 2: The business has contributed to the neighborhood's history and/or the identity of a particular neighborhood or community

a. Describe the business' contribution to the history and/or identity of the neighborhood, community, business sector, or San Francisco as a whole.

Mario's Bohemian Cigar Store Cafe began as a cigar store and has evolved into the café it is today. In the early 1990s, Mario’s stopped selling cigars, but the restaurant retained its historical name.

Mario's is a San Francisco staple and an iconic business in the North Beach community. They provide amazing food, great service, and a cozy atmosphere where everyone feels at home. It is the first cafe to create sandwiches on focaccia bread from Liguria Bakery, which is located across Washington Square Park. Mario's has maintained the family's recipes over the years, all made in house.

Mario's has a huge community of patrons and strong customer support. The business serves customers of all ages, and some longtime customers have come in every day for the past 30+ years. Many tourists also visit the café.

b. Is the business associated with significant people or events, either now or in the past?

Mario's Bohemian Cigar Store Cafe has been the location where many television shows, movies, music videos, and documentaries have been filmed. Some examples include "Heartbreak Kid," a Tide Commercial in 1994, "Chance," a Disney documentary for Pixar, and a Torani commercial in 2018.

Many customers throughout the years have included famous poets, movie stars, and local government officials. The business has hosted private events for columnist Herb Caen and product designer Jony Ive, as well as photoshoots for Annie Leibovitz.

c. How does the business demonstrate its commitment to the community?

The business has been open seven days a week since it was founded in 1971. Mario's donates to Sacred Heart Cathedral Preparatory, Saints Peter and Paul Catholic Church, and North Beach Neighbors. It has donated to multiple other organizations throughout the years as well. During the COVID pandemic, Mario's donated food platters to first responders and hospitals around San Francisco as well as non-profits for food donations. It is committed to giving back to the community any way that seems fit, as well as holding the integrity of the business for the community in maintaining a consistent business model since 1971.

d. Has the business ever been referenced in the media, business trade publication, and/or historical documents?

Mario's Bohemian Cigar Store Café has been featured on/in the Food Network, KQED's Check Please!, a Tide commercial, a Torani syrup commercial, Food & Wine magazine, Cross Roads, The San Francisco Chronicle, SFGATE, Backroads, other publications, and multiple television shows and movies. Some notable media mentions are as follows:

- "17 Excellent North Beach Restaurants and Bars"
Eater San Francisco
March 31, 2023
<https://sf.eater.com/maps/best-restaurants-bars-north-beach-san-francisco>

- “The Real & Imagined History of Mario’s Bohemian Cigar Store Cafe”
Broke-Ass Stuart
March 15, 2023
<https://brokeassstuart.com/2022/09/19/the-real-imagined-history-of-marios-bohemian-cigar-store-cafe/>
- “The best day ever in North Beach”
San Francisco Chronicle
March 9, 2023
<https://www.sfchronicle.com/projects/best-day-ever/north-beach-restaurants/>
- “The Most Iconic San Francisco Food Experiences”
Thrillist
January 9, 2023
<https://www.thrillist.com/eat/san-francisco/sf-food-bucket-list>
- “These 6 Classic North Beach Cafes Will Transport You to Italy”
7x7
January 7, 2016
<https://www.7x7.com/these-6-classic-north-beach-cafes-will-transport-you-to-italy-1787265048.html>
- “The 30 Best Sandwiches In San Francisco”
SFist
December 4, 2014
https://sfist.com/2014/12/04/the_30_best_sandwiches_in_san_franc/

e. Has the business ever received any awards, recognition, or political commendations?

Mario's Bohemian Cigar Store Cafe has received the following awards and recognition:

- San Francisco Board of Supervisors – Certificate of Honor: Best of San Francisco, 2002
- Best of North Beach, 1994 and 1995
- Food and Wine Magazine – Best Italian Food, 1994
- Travel and Leisure – Go to Italian Restaurants / Best Italian, 1994
- Sauce Boss – Best Marinara, 1990

f. How would the community be diminished if the business were to be sold, relocated, shut down, etc.?

If the business were to close, the community of North Beach would be devastated. It holds a lot of historical value and creates a safe haven for many customers. The neighborhood would also be losing out on a great neighborhood hangout with delicious homemade recipes that the family has kept since 1971.

CRITERION 3: The business is committed to maintaining the physical features or traditions that define the business

a. Is the business associated with a culturally significant building, structure, object, signage, mural, architectural detail, neon sign, or any other special physical feature that defines the business?

The exterior of the building is a triangle on the corner of Columbus Avenue and Union Street with a neon sign reading “Mario’s.” Nothing has changed since 1971 except a fresh coat of paint. The interior décor has not changed since the business was founded. Both the exterior and the interior will remain the same.

b. In a few words, describe the main business activity you commit to maintaining.

Café serving the best focaccia sandwiches and cappuccinos in the city.

c. What challenges is the business facing today?

All business took a hit from the COVID pandemic. As a small mom and pop business, it has been challenging for Mario’s to get back to the revenue they had prior to the pandemic. Tourism being down, cost of goods being high, rent increases, and fees from new regulations from the City have all been challenging during this time.

During the COVID pandemic, Mario’s added a parklet to accommodate people who prefer outdoor spaces, which has been a great extension of the café. Yet with this there is a constant stream of homeless people who have had bonfires in the parklet, sleep there overnight, and trash it. They tried to break in to the store, harass customers and owners during the day, and take food off customers tables. This unacceptable behavior is driving away customers.

Legacy Business Program staff will add the following details:

a. Features or traditions that define the business and should be maintained for the business to remain on the Legacy Business Registry.

Restaurant featuring Italian cuisine.

b. Other special features of the business location, such as if the property associated with the business is listed on a local, state, or federal historic resources registry.

The building at 552-566 Columbus Avenue has a Planning Department Historic Resource Status of “A - Historic Resource Present.” The building was constructed in 1909 after the great earthquake and fire and appears to be eligible for the National Register or California Register through survey evaluation in 1984, although it needs to be re-evaluated according to the Planning Department.



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GREEN
LUCAS
MOUNTAIN
HOSPITAL

BEER WINE HOT FOCACCIA SANDWICHES

MEMORIAL
STORE

Kim's Precision Haircuts

Life
Coffee
Espresso
Cappuccino
Latte
Milkshake
Smoothie





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Mario's

**BOHEMIAN
CIGAR STORE**

Cafe

CAFFE ESPRESSO CAPPUCINO





Mato

ANCHOR STEAM - SF - LAGER - 4.11	BEER - 10.00
FERRARI - ITALY - LAGER - 4.11	BEER - 10.00
CALIF CRAB - WALNUT CREEK - 5.11	BEER - 10.00
FORT POINT - SF - KSA - 4.67	BEER - 10.00
FIELDWORK - BERKELEY - IPA - 6.17	BEER - 10.00
OLD RASPUTIN - FORT BRAG - NITRO - 4.17	BEER - 10.00
HAT - 30.00	









Ristoranti

MARIO'S

SANDWICES

EGGPLANT

LIGHTLY BATTERED
AND BREADED
EGGPLANT SWISS
CHEESE MARINATED
SWEET RED BELL PEPPERS
LIGHT MARINARA SAUCE



MEATBALL

TWO THINLY
SLICED MEATBALLS,
SWISS CHEESE,
SLICED ONIONS,
LIGHT MARINARA
SAUCE



SAUSAGE

ITALIAN SAUSAGE
SWISS CHEESE
SAUCE

MARINARA
"MARIO"

Welcome
you



PKimack

<https://www.sfgate.com/essays/article/My-great-grandfather-loved-this-cafe-in-San-16455922.php>

SFGATE

My great-grandfather loved this North Beach café. Now my daughter does, too.

David Curran, SFGATE
Sep. 15, 2021



One of the sandwiches available at Mario's Bohemian Cigar Store Cafe in North Beach.
Yelp/John K.

On a recent morning, I was chatting with my 85-year-old dad when I mentioned I was having lunch with his granddaughter at Mario's Bohemian Cigar Store. He perked right up. "Oh," he says, "did you know your great-grandfather Luigi used to go there all the time when he'd be shopping in North Beach?"

In fact, I did. Because, while I didn't accuse my dad of repeating himself, he was repeating himself. He had mentioned this in previous conversations that also began with me planning to eat at Mario's, a small café in a 1909 building right across from Washington Square Park.



Mario's has always been a North Beach favorite of mine, and this family connection just adds to the pleasure, even though Luigi did not sound so great. According to his eldest daughter, Angela, he didn't speak to his wife Maria for eight solid years. So that was one tip-off. And then there was his family nickname of "Fang."

Back in Luigi's time — he died in the late 1950s — you could actually buy a cigar at this establishment on the corner of Union and Columbus. Then in 1971, the business was purchased by the Mario Crismani family, who renamed it Mario's Bohemian Cigar Store. In 1979, Mario's son Paul took over the business, and sometime in the mid-1990s, they stopped selling cigars altogether, according to a 2016 interview with Paul.

Nevertheless, there I was many decades later at the spot Luigi once frequented, sharing a table with my now-adult daughter, herself a San Francisco resident. Instead of cigars, we were there for Mario's amazing sandwiches, which I've been enjoying since the 1990s when I was introduced to this place by my mother who had lived nearby.

While my mother grew up across town in the Excelsior District, she spent her final 40 years hanging out in North Beach, spending much of that time inside one establishment or another, mostly drinking coffee but, in the case of Mario's, eating the occasional sandwich as well.

Her preferred North Beach spots shifted every few years for one reason or another. She loved the Caffè Italia but it closed down so she switched to Caffé Roma. Then she got mad at someone at Caffé Roma and she started going to Caffè Puccini. Then Puccini started cooking "smelly food" and she went to Trieste. Then the lines at Trieste got too long and she headed over to Caffè Greco.

There were other places as well. Every few years, she'd tell me to show up at some new place for a cup of coffee and I didn't ask questions.



The exterior of Mario's Bohemian Cigar Store Cafe in North Beach.
Yelp/Best B

But Mario's never went out of favor with her. We could always step inside its cozy space with the wood floor, the awkward flatiron shape and the big windows with a view of Washington Square Park. Nothing fancy, just a well-worn, warm spot with — I'll say it again — amazing sandwiches.

I used to routinely order a meatball or tuna focaccia sandwich. They were hot out of the oven, rich and almost too big to finish, but so tasty it was impossible not to. On Labor Day with my daughter, we got the eggplant and fresh mozzarella panini sandwiches, and we inhaled them within a couple of minutes.

As a bonus, we got to sit at the corner table by the door — I guess you could call it the tip of the flatiron — and look across Union Street at Washington Square Park. With a little effort, I could even see who was sitting on my mom's bench, which is close to the stop for the 41 Union.

It's not actually my mom's bench, but I had a plaque put on it when she died just before the pandemic in early 2020. It makes us feel like it's her bench, which is funny because the odds of us actually getting to sit on it are never good.

The problem is "her" bench has a really nice view. Usually there are people sitting on it and looking straight across the park at Saints Peter and Paul Church and then with a little tilt to the right, they can gaze up and see Coit Tower. It's a tough spot to beat. If the tourists aren't sitting there looking at a map, someone is bound to be sleeping on it or eating lunch there.

But on Labor Day, the stars aligned and my daughter and I got to have a good sit on my mom's bench before we went over to Mario's, where, after a reasonably short wait, we secured our table by the door.



My great-grandparents Maria and Luigi Gizzi near their Lombard Street home in the early 1950s.

David Curran

We didn't mind the wait. Mario's draws its share of tourists and on a holiday, it was booming. It was a rare glorious day in the city, one where the choice to wear shorts, usually a sign of out-of-towners who think San Francisco is a suburb of LA, was actually the smart move.

I, on the other hand, was in jeans and a wool shirt, often the right call in S.F., but not today. But even as I sweated and itched and watched the server go nonstop in every direction besides our table, it was perfect. That just gave us more time to linger and I could revel in this new generation experiencing a longtime part of San Francisco that never gets old.



Written By
David Curran

David Curran is a homepage editor at SFGate.com.



LEGACY BUSINESS REGISTRY EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

HEARING DATE: AUGUST 16, 2023

Filing Date: July 19, 2023
Case No.: 2023-006719LBR
Business Name: MARIO'S BOHEMIAN CIGAR STORE CAFE
Business Address: 566 COLUMBUS AVE
Zoning: NCD (NORTH BEACH NEIGHBORHOOD COMMERCIAL) Zoning District
40-X Height and Bulk District
Cultural District: None
Block/Lot: 0117/020
Applicant: Daniella Crismani
566 Columbus Avenue
Nominated By: Supervisor Aaron Peskin
Located In: District 3
Staff Contact: edgar oropeza - 628-652-7368
edgar.oropeza@sfgov.org

Recommendation: Adopt a Resolution to Recommend Approval

Business Description

Mario's Bohemian Cigar Store Cafe is a café that serves oven-baked sandwiches, paninis, pizza, salads, and hot dishes that are all made in house with family recipes. Mario's serves many local customers from the neighborhood of North Beach and is also a common tourist destination. It serves customers of all ages and has had customers coming in every day for the past 30+ years.

Mario's Bohemian Cigar Store Cafe was established in 1971 at 566 Columbus Avenue by Mario and Liliana Crismani. Mario and Liliana immigrated from Italy to San Francisco with their two children in 1957. In 1971, they bought "Bohemian Cigar Store," a small smoke shop that was founded in 1948. Mario and Liliana called their business "Mario's Bohemian Cigar Store Cafe," an establishment where locals could buy tobacco, smoke, socialize, play cards, and drink espresso.

In the beginning, Mario's was a place where Italians in the neighborhood would spend hours playing card games and filling the entire establishment up with their cigar smoke. Liliaana would make sandwiches at home and bring them down to the customers at Mario's. That evolved into the business buying a small toaster oven, which allowed Liliaana to make 1-2 focaccia sandwiches per hour.

In 1983, the business added a "Bakers of Paris" oven to produce more focaccia sandwiches, which is still a staple item today. More wine and beer were added to the beverage selection. They also added a foosball table and pinball machine, which were popular with college kids who would patronize the business, socialize, and compete in tournaments.

A common question from customers is, "Where are the cigars?" Mario's stopped selling cigars in 1992 when San Francisco passed the law that bans cigarettes and tobacco products from being sold with food. Mario's choose to keep the name "Mario's Bohemian Cigar Store Cafe" because it symbolizes history and how Mario's has evolved to what you see today.

Today, Mario and Liliaana's grandchildren Daniella and Dario are third generation café operators who cook all the food for the restaurant with the same family recipes their grandparents created and passed down through the family. Although the menu has expanded over the years, all items on the menu are family recipes and made in house. They use focaccia bread from Liguria Bakery across Washington Square Park, another North Beach staple. And their espresso beans are from Graffeo Coffee right down the street on Columbus Avenue. Daniella and Dario continue to keep the magic of Mario's Bohemian Cigar Store Cafe alive.

The business's location at 566 Columbus Avenue is a Category A (Resource Present) structure on the southeast corner of Columbus Avenue and Union Street in the North Beach neighborhood. It is within the North Beach NCD (Neighborhood Commercial District) Zoning District and a 40-X Height and Bulk District. It is also located within the North Beach Special Use District, the Telegraph Hill North Beach Residential Special Use District, The North Beach Limited Financial Special Use District, and the Group Housing Special Use District. 566 Columbus Avenue is also located within the California Register-eligible Washington Square Historic District.

Staff Analysis

Review Criteria

1. *When was business founded?*

The business was founded in 1971.

2. *Does the business qualify for listing on the Legacy Business Registry? If so, how?*

Yes. Mario's Bohemian Cigar Store Café qualifies for listing on the Legacy Business Registry because it meets all of the eligibility Criteria:

- a. Mario's Bohemian Cigar Store Cafe has operated continuously in San Francisco for 52 years.
- b. Mario's Bohemian Cigar Store Cafe has contributed to the history and identity of the North Beach neighborhood and San Francisco.

- c. Mario's Bohemian Cigar Store Cafe is committed to maintaining the physical features and traditions that define the organization.

3. Is the business associated with a culturally significant art / craft / cuisine / tradition?

Yes. Mario's Bohemian Cigar Store is associated with Italian cuisine.

4. Is the business or its building associated with significant events, persons, and / or architecture?

Yes. Mario's Bohemian Cigar Store Cafe has been the location where many television shows, movies, music videos, and documentaries have been filmed. Some examples include "Heartbreak Kid," a Tide Commercial in 1994, "Chance," a Disney documentary for Pixar, and a Torani commercial in 2018.

Many customers throughout the years have included famous poets, movie stars, and local government officials. The business has hosted private events for columnist Herb Caen and product designer Jony Ive, as well as photoshoots for Annie Leibovitz.

566 Columbus Avenue is a contributor to the California Register-eligible Washington Square Historic District. The Washington Square Historic District consists of a nearly level park, "Washington Square," occupying a full rectangular city block, and of all the buildings which face or corner on it.

5. Is the property associated with the business listed on a local, state, or federal historic resource registry?

Yes, the property is identified as a contributor to the California Register-eligible Washington Square Historic District.

6. Is the business mentioned in a local historic context statement?

No, not as of the date of this Executive Summary.

7. Has the business been cited in published literature, newspapers, journals, etc.?

Yes. Mario's Bohemian Cigar Store Café has been featured on/in the Food Network, KQED's Check Please!, a Tide commercial, a Torani syrup commercial, Food & Wine magazine, Cross Roads, The San Francisco Chronicle, SFGATE, Backroads, other publications, and multiple television shows and movies.

Racial and Social Equity Analysis

On July 15th, 2020 the San Francisco Historic Preservation Commission adopted [Resolution No. 1127](#) centering Preservation Planning on racial and social equity. Understanding the benefits, burdens, and opportunities to advance racial and social equity that proposed Preservation Planning documents provide is part of the Department's Racial and Social Equity Initiative. This is also consistent with the Mayor's Citywide Strategic Initiatives for equity and accountability and with the Office of Racial Equity, which required all Departments to conduct this analysis.

The Legacy Business Program is deeply intertwined with these goals. One of the primary purposes of the Legacy Business Program is to maintain San Francisco's cultural fabric and to foster civic engagement and pride by assisting long-operating businesses remain in the city. The Legacy Business Registry was established to recognize longstanding, community-serving businesses that are valuable cultural assets of the city. These

businesses, ranging from restaurants to art galleries to tire shops to community shelters, are key to sustaining the racial and social diversity in San Francisco and adding to the identity and character of our city and the many communities within it.

Mario's Bohemian Cigar Store Café is committed to giving back to the community any way that seems fit, as well as holding the integrity of the business for the community in maintaining a consistent business model since 1971. The business **donates to Sacred Heart Cathedral Preparatory, Saints Peter and Paul Catholic Church, and North Beach Neighbors. It has donated to multiple other organizations throughout the years as well. During the COVID pandemic, Mario's donated food platters to first responders and hospitals around San Francisco as well as non-profits for food donations.**

Physical Features or Traditions that Define the Business

Location(s) associated with the business:

Current Location:

- 566 Columbus Avenue (1971 – Present)

Recommended by Applicant

- Family-owned restaurant featuring Italian dishes.
- Neon sign reading, "Mario's."
- Large unaltered store front windows offering sweeping views of Washington Park.
- Original interiors with a large bar seating area.

Additional Recommended by Staff

- None

Basis for Recommendation

The Department recommends the Historic Preservation Commission adopt a resolution recommending the business listed above be adopted by the Small Business Commission to the Legacy Business Registry.

ATTACHMENTS

Draft Resolution

Legacy Business Registry Application:

- Application Review Sheet
- Section 1 – Business / Applicant Information
- Section 2 – Business Location(s)
- Section 3 – Disclosure Statement
- Section 4 – Written Historical Narrative
 - Criterion 1 – History and Description of Business
 - Criterion 2 – Contribution to Local History
 - Criterion 3 – Business Characteristics
- Contextual Photographs and Background Documentation



HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION RESOLUTION NO. 1343

HEARING DATE: AUGUST 16, 2023

Case No.: 2023-006719LBR
Business Name: MARIO'S BOHEMIAN CIGAR STORE CAFE
Business Address: 566 COLUMBUS AVENUE
Zoning: NCD (NORTH BEACH NEIGHBORHOOD COMMERCIAL) Zoning District
40-X Height and Bulk District
Block/Lot: 0117/020
Applicant: Daniella Crismani
566 Columbus Avenue
Nominated By: Supervisor Aaron Peskin
Located In: District 3
Staff Contact: Edgar Oropeza - 628-652-7368
edgar.oropeza@sfgov.org

ADOPTING FINDINGS RECOMMENDING TO THE SMALL BUSINESS COMMISSION APPROVAL OF THE LEGACY BUSINESS REGISTRY NOMINATION FOR MARIO'S BOHEMIAN CIGAR STORE CAFE CURRENTLY LOCATED AT 566 COLUMBUS AVE (BLOCK/LOT 0117/ 020).

WHEREAS, in accordance with Administrative Code Section 2A.242, the Office of Small Business maintains a registry of Legacy Businesses in San Francisco (the "Registry") to recognize that longstanding, community-serving businesses can be valuable cultural assets of the City and to be a tool for providing educational and promotional assistance to Legacy Businesses to encourage their continued viability and success; and

WHEREAS, the subject business has operated in San Francisco for 30 or more years, with no break in San Francisco operations exceeding two years; and

WHEREAS, the subject business has contributed to the City's history and identity; and

WHEREAS, the subject business is committed to maintaining the traditions that define the business; and

WHEREAS, at a duly noticed public hearing held on August 16, 2023, the Historic Preservation Commission reviewed documents, correspondence and heard oral testimony on the Legacy Business Registry nomination.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Historic Preservation Commission hereby recommends that MARIO'S BOHEMIAN CIGAR STORE CAFE qualifies for the Legacy Business Registry under Administrative Code Section 2A.242(b)(2) as it has operated for 30 or more years and has continued to contribute to the community.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Historic Preservation Commission hereby recommends safeguarding of the below listed physical features and traditions for MARIO'S BOHEMIAN CIGAR STORE CAFÉ.

Location(s):

Current Location:

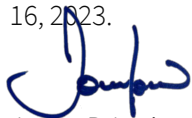
- 566 Columbus Avenue (1971 – Present)

Physical Features or Traditions that Define the Business:

- Family-owned restaurant featuring Italian dishes.
- Neon sign reading, "Mario's."
- Large unaltered store front windows offering sweeping views of Washington Park.
- Original interiors with a large bar seating area.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Historic Preservation Commission's findings and recommendations are made solely for the purpose of evaluating the subject business's eligibility for the Legacy Business Registry, and the Historic Preservation Commission makes no finding that the subject property or any of its features constitutes a historical resource pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15064.5(a).

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Historic Preservation Commission hereby directs its Commission Secretary to transmit this Resolution and other pertinent materials in the case file to the Office of Small Business on August 16, 2023.



Jonas P. Ionin
Commission Secretary

AYES: Vergara, Wright, Foley, Nageswaran, Matsuda

NOES: None

ABSENT: None

ADOPTED: August 16, 2023