



Legacy Business Registry Staff Report

Hearing Date: September 23, 2024

DA FLORA

Application No.: LBR-2024-25-003
Business Name: Da Flora
Business Address: 701 Columbus Ave.
District: District 3
Applicant: Darren Lacy, Co-Owner / Manager
Nomination Date: July 16, 2024
Nominated By: Supervisor Aaron Peskin
Staff Contact: Richard Kurylo and Michelle Reynolds
legacybusiness@sfgov.org

BUSINESS DESCRIPTION

Da Flora is an Italian-inspired restaurant located in the heart of North Beach. Some of their best-known dishes include house made sweet potato gnocchi, fresh Monterey squid roasted with tomatoes and lemon, and spice rubbed pork chops. Da Flora is an intimate gathering place for special occasions such as weddings, birthdays, and holiday parties.

Da Flora was established by Flora Gaspar in 1994 in its current location at 701 Columbus Avenue. Prior to opening the business, she was an art dealer at the Vorpil Gallery in San Francisco and spent time in Venice in her teen years. In 1996, Flora met Mary Beth Marks and this led to Mary Beth joining Da Flora as a baker. Jen McMahon also joined as the Head Chef around the same time. Jen McMahon and her husband Darren Lacy purchased the business from Flora in 2016.

Jen and Darren have extensive experience in the restaurant industry. Jen grew up in upstate New York and had over a decade of experience in fine dining prior to joining Da Flora. Darren grew up in Oakland and learned how to cook while working in restaurants in his teen years.

Da Flora serves an established and growing community of devoted customers, residents from the neighborhood and greater community, tourists and visitors – people of all ages and backgrounds.

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, Da Flora has operated in San Francisco for 30 or more years, with no break in San Francisco operations exceeding two years:

701 Columbus Ave. from 1994 to Present (30 years)

CRITERION 2

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

Yes, Da Flora has contributed to the history and identity of the North Beach neighborhood and San Francisco.

Legacy Business Program
Office of Small Business
City Hall Room 140
1 Dr. Carlton B. Goodlett Place
San Francisco, CA 94102
(415) 554-6680
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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:

- The business is associated with Italian cuisine.
- The property is associated with Perseo Righetti, a Swiss/Italian-American architect of merit. It is listed in the Citywide Historic Context Statement: *Architecture, Planning, and Preservation Professionals: A Collection of Biographies for its association with Architect of Merit, Perseo Righetti*. The property is not yet designated historic; however, it has been deemed eligible for listing in the National Register and California Register.
- Da Flora has been featured in publications by RESY, San Francisco Chronicle, USA Today, and KQED. The business received a Certificate of Honor for excellence and outstanding service from the San Francisco Board of Supervisors on its tenth anniversary in 2004. The business has also received recognition from San Francisco Magazine and the San Francisco Chronicle.
- With regard to racial and social equity, Da Flora is a minority and woman-owned business. Co-owners Jen McMahon and Darren Lacy regularly deliver food to elderly and infirmed neighbors. They also provide free or discounted meals to neighbors in need.

CRITERION 3

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

Yes, Da Flora is committed to maintaining the physical features and traditions that define the business.

HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION

The Historic Preservation Commission recommends that Da Flora 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:

- Murano glass chandelier.
- Da Flora logo.
- Large painting above kitchen entrance by Michael Garlington.
- Outdoor planters.
- House made sweet potato gnocchi.
- Providing locally sourced, Italian-inspired, homemade specialties.

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-inspired cuisine.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends that the San Francisco Small Business Commission include Da Flora currently located at 701 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. _____

September 23, 2024

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Adopting findings approving the Legacy Business Registry application for Da Flora, currently located at 701 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 September 23, 2024, 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 Da Flora in the Legacy Business Registry as a Legacy Business under Administrative Code Section 2A.242.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Small Business Commission recommends safeguarding the below listed physical features and traditions at Da Flora.

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Physical Features or Traditions that Define the Business:

- Murano glass chandelier.
- Da Flora logo.
- Large painting above kitchen entrance by Michael Garlington.
- Outdoor planters.
- House made sweet potato gnocchi.
- Providing locally sourced, Italian-inspired, homemade specialties.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Small Business Commission requires maintenance of the below listed core physical feature or tradition to maintain Da Flora on the Legacy Business Registry:

- Restaurant featuring Italian-inspired cuisine.

I hereby certify that the foregoing Resolution was ADOPTED by the Small Business Commission on September 23, 2024.

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-2024-25-003
Business Name: Da Flora
Business Address: 701 Columbus Ave.
District: District 3
Applicant: Darren Lacy, Co-Owner / Manager
Nomination Date: July 16, 2024
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

701 Columbus Ave. from 1994 to Present (30 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 24, 2024

Richard Kurylo and Michelle Reynolds
Legacy Business Program

Legacy Business Program

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City and County of
San Francisco



President, Board of
Supervisors

AARON PESKIN

July 16, 2024

Director Katy Tang via email <Katy.Tang@sfgov.org>
San Francisco Office of Small Business
City Hall, Room 110
1 Dr. Carlton B. Goodlet Place
San Francisco, CA 94102

Dear Director Tang,

I am writing to nominate Da Flora, located at 701 Columbus Avenue, for inclusion on the San Francisco Legacy Business Registry.

Established in 1994, Da Flora is an Italian inspired osteria located in the heart of North Beach on the corner of Columbus Avenue and Filbert Street. Chef Jen McMahon has been the Chef at Da Flora for over fifteen years, where she worked with her husband, Darren Lacy. In 2016, Chef Jen and Darren purchased the restaurant from their long-time friend and owner Flora Gaspare, pledging to keep many of the same family recipes that had long made Da Flora a destination restaurant.

Da Flora is known for its romantic ambiance and Italian cuisine with Mediterranean influences. Intimate tables are huddled under the glow of the restaurant's charming Murano chandelier, with the candlelit aura bouncing off red-hued walls heavy with classic art. Chef Jen McMahon has traveled extensively through Italy to perfect such delicious trademark dishes as house made sweet potato gnocchi, Fresh Monterey Squid Roasted with tomatoes & lemon, and Spice Rubbed Pork Chop. An extensive and well-considered wine list features Italian Wines from small producers, and Darren is always ready to make an excellent pairing recommendation.

Featured in the San Francisco Chronicle's "*Ultimate Guide: The best Italian restaurants in San Francisco*," Da Flora continues to be a beloved date night location – I have often taken my own wife for her birthday or Valentine's Day. In addition to Da Flora's notable role in helping elevate North Beach's business corridors with their resilient presence and steady draw, Chef Jen and Darren truly care about the neighborhood and engage with every diner as a treasured guest.

Da Flora would greatly benefit from being added to 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: Da Flora

Business owner name(s): Jennifer McMahon and Darren Owen Lacy

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

Current business address: 701 Columbus Ave., San Francisco, CA 94133

Telephone: (415) 981 - 4664 **Email:**

Mailing address (if different than above):

Website: https://daflora.com

Facebook: **Twitter:**

7-digit San Francisco Business Account Number (BAN): 1 0 3 4 7 3 7

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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> Minority-Owned Business* | <input checked="" 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: Darren Lacy

Contact person title: Co-Owner / Manager

Contact telephone: () - **Contact email:**

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:

Darven Owen Lacy / co/owner
manager

Signature:



Date:

3/1/24

DA FLORA

Written Historical Narrative

INTRODUCTION

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

Da Flora is an intimate and beloved restaurant in the heart of North Beach serving exceptional Italian-inspired cuisine, homemade and locally sourced. Devoted locals cherish Da Flora for its lovingly prepared food and romantic ambiance. At dinner, the Murano glass chandelier is dimmed to a seductive golden hue, and candlelight flickers against the crimson red walls. Chef Jen McMahon has traveled extensively through Italy to perfect such luminous dishes as house made sweet potato gnocchi, fresh Monterey squid roasted with tomatoes and lemon, and spice rubbed pork chop. A well-considered wine list features Italian wines from small producers.

b. Describe whom the business serves.

Da Flora serves an established and growing community of devoted customers, residents from the neighborhood and greater community, tourists and visitors – people of all ages and backgrounds.

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

House made sweet potato gnocchi.

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.

Da Flora was established by Flora Gaspar in August 1994. It originated at 701 Columbus Avenue in North Beach and has existed there ever since.

Flora was born in Montevideo, Uruguay, to Hungarian parents – a diplomat father and artist mother. Her father’s career took their family through the United States and Europe, but it was Venice that called to Flora in her teens, and Venice where she chose to attend art school. That formative time shaped both her love of art and her love of food. She fulfilled her dream of opening a Venetian Osteria in 1994 after a career as an art dealer at the Vorpall Gallery in San Francisco.

Early 1996, Flora met baker Mary Beth Marks at an event that Mary Beth’s then-employer, Pane e Dolce, was catering. Flora and Mary Beth immediately began a relationship, and Mary Beth joined Da Flora a few months later. This was also around the time Jen McMahon and Flora were bonding over their passion for authentic Italian cuisine. Thus, a new and expanded

chapter of Da Flora began, Jen as Head Chef (Capo Cuoco), Mary Beth baking desserts and bread, and Flora hosting and managing operations.

In 2016, Flora sold the restaurant to Jen McMahon, and Jen's husband and business partner, Darren Lacy.

Jen grew up in Upstate New York in a large extended Italian Irish family. She had over a decade of experience in fine dining before joining Da Flora. Jen takes pride that she cooks every single dinner that is served at Da Flora. She values keeping food authentic, fresh, simple, seasonal, and uses only the best ingredients. Darren grew up in Oakland, California, where he learned to cook in his teens working in restaurants. His fondest memories of food are from large family gatherings. He learned early on that good food brought people together. Darren oversees all aspects of the restaurant operations.

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

1994 to 2016: Flora Gaspar
2016 to Present: Jen McMahon and Darren Lacy

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

Da Flora has been continuously operating since 1994. During the COVID pandemic, Da Flora served to-go meals to its loyal customers, maintaining support staff, and never closed its doors.

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.

The history and culture of North Beach is defined by its commitment to the arts and its love of delicious food. Da Flora embodies all these things. It serves countless artists, authors, poets, musicians, publishers, restaurant owners and staff, wine merchants, gallerists, and numerous local representatives, businesspeople, neighbors, and friends.

It is a cherished gathering place for engagements, weddings, birthdays, anniversaries, book launches, poetry readings, gallery openings, holiday parties, and all special occasions.

It supports locals and tourists alike, who have come to depend on its consistent high-quality cuisine and warm welcoming service.

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

Da Flora considers all patrons to be significant to its longevity and success.

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

Da Flora enjoys longstanding personal relationships with neighborhood businesses and residents alike. Jen and Darren regularly deliver food to elderly and infirmed neighbors. They also provide free or discounted meals to neighbors in need, either unemployed or underprivileged.

Da Flora welcomes all and has a rich history of diversity and inclusion, representative of the ever-growing cross-cultural fabric of North Beach itself.

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

Following are key media references for Da Flora:

- ***Da Flora's Darren Lacy on Outdoor Dining, North Beach Legacies, and Racism in the Restaurant Industry***
RESY, San Francisco
July 10, 2020
<https://blog.resy.com/2020/07/da-floras-darren-lacy-on-outdoor-dining-north-beach-legacies-and-racism-in-the-restaurant-industry/>
- ***Ultimate Guide: The Best Italian Restaurants in San Francisco***
San Francisco Chronicle
November 8, 2018
<https://www.sfchronicle.com/restaurants/article/ultimate-guide-the-best-italian-restaurants-in-13358351.php>
- ***Celebrate 150 Years of North Beach in San Francisco***
USA Today
October 4, 2018
<https://www.usatoday.com/story/travel/2018/10/04/san-franciscos-north-beach-celebrates-150-years-italian-heritage/1483179002/>
- ***Da Flora: Reviews***
KQED
October 5, 2006
<https://www.kqed.org/checkplease/143/da-flora-reviews>
- ***Check, Please! Bay Area reviews Miller's East Coast West Deli, Picante, Da Flora***
KQED
2005 (Posted on YouTube on September 15, 2008)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k67ErJFdZ3Q>

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

On the tenth anniversary of its opening in 2004, Da Flora was presented with a Certificate of Honor from the San Francisco Board of Supervisors for excellence and outstanding service to the City and County of San Francisco.

Da Flora has also received the following recognition as a favored restaurant:

- ***The 6 Best Italian Restaurants in San Francisco***
San Francisco Magazine
February 2021
- ***7 Black-Owned Restaurants to Savor***
San Francisco Magazine
September 2020
<https://laurenmadisongruber.wixsite.com/website/post/7-black-owned-restaurants-to-savor>
- ***Michael Bauer's Favorite Restaurants in North Beach***
San Francisco Chronicle
September 4, 2018
<https://www.sfchronicle.com/restaurants/article/Michael-Bauer-s-favorite-restaurants-in-North-13196964.php>

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

It would be a tremendous loss for both the North Beach and greater community should Da Flora no longer exist. For all the established community relationships and the number of patrons who hold dear their Da Flora experience, a closure would be deeply felt.

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?

When Da Flora opened in 1994, the interior reflected the region that inspired its cuisine: Venice, specifically the Grand Canal. There were gondolier oars, oarlocks, fishing nets, model boats, rustic and reminiscent of Flora's life there. A Murano glass chandelier graces the center of the vaulted ceiling. The Da Flora logo in red and gold is the Lion of Venice, symbolic of peace and wisdom.

Over time, the environment has come to signify the longstanding relationships that make Da Flora so special. Every work on display has been created or gifted by local artists. A large painting above the entrance to the kitchen is by Petaluma artist (and regular customer) Michael Garlington. The outdoor planters are designed and maintained by neighboring business, Cloud Hidden Plants.

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

Da Flora is committed to providing locally sourced, Italian-inspired, homemade specialties to its devoted community of regular customers and to all who enter its doors.

c. What is the plan to keep the business open in the long term beyond the current ownership?

Jen and Darren have no immediate plans for retiring, but eventually hope Da Flora will continue to thrive in the hands of new proprietors who will carry on its tradition of quality, care, and community in North Beach.

d. What challenges is the business facing today?

For any small business, surviving the COVID pandemic was an enormous feat. Rising food and energy costs are continual considerations. Keeping support staff at a minimum has been a necessity. Every item that is created and presented at Da Flora is done so through the hands of Jen and Darren exclusively.

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-inspired 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 Planning Department Historic Resource Status of the building at 701-709 Columbus Avenue is "A - Historic Resource Present." This property is associated with Perseo Righetti as the architect of merit. This architect has associations with the Italian/Italian American community. The property has been determined to be eligible for listing on the National Register or the California Register.



DA FLORA

701









Chef Jen McMahon along with her husband & business partner, Darren Lacy, are the owners of Da Flora Restaurant in San Francisco's North Beach. Jen has been the Chef at Da Flora for over fifteen years.

Together Jen & Darren share over 30 years of restaurant experience in the Bay Area. Chef McMahon grew up in Upstate New York in a large extended Italian Irish family. Jen takes pride that she cooks every single dinner that is served at Da Flora. She values keeping food authentic, fresh, simple and seasonal, and using only the best ingredients.

Darren grew up in Oakland, California, where he learned to cook in his teens working in restaurants. His fondest memories of food are from being at family gatherings. "I learned early on that good food brought people together." Darren oversees all aspects of the restaurant operations.

Chef McMahon utilizes the fresh ingredients delivered to her kitchen daily to create a delectable menu. The menu at Da Flora draws inspiration from Italian Cuisine and other Mediterranean influences. Chef McMahon is renowned for her Fresh Monterey Squid Roasted with tomatoes & lemon, Spice Rubbed Pork Chops, Caesar Salad, and Sweet Potato Gnocchi with Sage & Smoked Bacon.

The logo for Resy, featuring the word "RESY" in white, uppercase, sans-serif font centered within a solid red rectangular background.

Da Flora's Darren Lacy on Outdoor Dining, North Beach Legacies, and Racism in the Restaurant Industry

By [Paolo Lucchesi](#)
July 10, 2020

Four years ago, the husband-and-wife team of Darren Lacy and chef Jen McMahon took over North Beach's decades-old [Da Flora](#) from founder Flora Gaspar. Since then, the couple has staked a claim to the corner of Columbus and Filbert, serving up their regulars the kind of Italian fare that bridges old and new: sweet potato gnocchi, meatballs, spaghetti with clams.

Da Flora is currently open for takeout and al fresco dining. We recently spoke with Lacy about a number of topics, from how they've maintained during the COVID era to his experiences as a Black restaurateur in the Bay Area.



Sidewalk dining is open. Photo Courtesy Da Flora.

Resy: You recently reopened for sidewalk dining. What has that been like?

Darren Lacy: Yes, we are able to serve outside now. It was a bit challenging to get through the permit process with insurance documents, et cetera, but at least it was free and the city's Shared Spaces Program was very helpful, responding to my emails within a day. It's nice to have folks at tables again, although San Francisco weather is sometimes not cooperative. It's hard to encourage folks to dine earlier, and we do our best to explain that 7:30 is maybe not the best time to be dining al fresco. But San Franciscans are pretty smart — some bring blankets.

What has it been like, owning a legacy restaurant like Da Flora?

We became owners of Da Flora four years ago June 1st. My wife, Jen, had been the chef here for more than 20 years. We have been together for over 20 years, too. She has worked here for our entire relationship, and I have been working here for about 13 of those years in every capacity, both in the back and front of house.

We are very grateful to Flora for giving us the opportunity to buy the business. She knew that we would preserve the integrity of what she started and give it our own touch as well. This is the restaurant business — it has ups and downs. Anyone who comes to Da Flora can see it is very unique and special. It's rewarding to be a huge part of it.



Da Flora owners Jen McMahon and Darren Lacy. Photo Courtesy Da Flora

Restaurant people are such creatures of habit. What have you missed most during the shutdown?

We certainly miss many things about pre-COVID-19. Mostly going out ourselves, seeing our friends and family, going out to a bar, having a post-service drink commiserating with peers and our staff. Ah, the good old days. Now it's making sure we are up to date with whatever new rule or restriction that pops up. Honestly, just working harder now than ever just to keep up. My wife and I always say we have to stay positive and focused.

Given the ongoing Black Lives Matter movement in America, what are your thoughts on racism as it pertains to the restaurant industry, especially in the Bay Area?

As a Black man in this industry for 30-plus years, I have experienced racism my whole life and in restaurant work throughout my whole career, from my beginning as a prep cook to ownership. From overbearing sous chefs, chefs, and GMs, to guests in my dining room who marginalize me and ask to see the manager, not knowing I am the owner. Through all of this up to now with #BlackLivesMatter.

I hope that this country can learn and grow. I think of my father, who lived through the Civil Rights era in the '60s with the hope that things would be better for his sons, only to see the same patterns of hatred that never really ended. But it seems that this generation is saying, "Enough."

There have been a lot of dark days in the last three months. What has given you hope and strength?

I must admit with everything that is going on in our industry, it's hard to persevere. We had to make some tough decisions: cutting hours for staff, boarding up the windows for fear of vandalism. What gives us hope is our longtime guests that never turned their backs on us. They continued to support with takeout, gift cards, kind words, and genuine caring. They were the ones asking when we were going to be open, so they could be among the first to sit and dine with us outside. We believe if you love a place you should go there and support it. Especially when times are hard. Our guests give us that.

As we enter this new era of dining, what do you want to tell diners?

We are in a different era for our industry. There was pre-COVID, and there is post-COVID. With where we are as far as the virus goes, there will be spikes in cases and could set us back as far as how we can serve for quite some time. Diners should be patient. Hopefully the vaccine will come sooner than later.

Paolo Lucchesi is the editorial director of Resy. Email: paolo@resy.com. Follow [@resy](https://www.instagram.com/resy) on Instagram for more.

<https://sanfran.com/7-black-owned-restaurants>

SanFrancisco
magazine

NEWSLETTER

7 Black-Owned Restaurants to Savor

Lauren Gruber | September 8, 2020 | Food & Drink, National,

The Bay Area's vibrant culinary scene is brimming with Black-owned restaurants in every cuisine imaginable.



Paul Magu, chef of French restaurant Reve Bistro

1. Reve Bistro

In the heart of Lafayette lies this refreshingly unpretentious French bistro run by chef [Paul Magu](#). His previous experiences at a Michelin-starred Parisian restaurant and San Francisco's own Ritz-Carlton and St. Regis hotels speak for themselves with his seasonal menu of classic French delicacies—onion soup oozing with Gruyere, duck breast coated with cherry gastrique and a variety of light-as-air macaron cookies.

2. Axum Cafe

Carnivores and vegetarians alike will relish in [Axum Cafe](#)'s vast menu of Ethiopian favorites, starring lamb stewed with garlic, turmeric and herb butter; mushrooms sauteed with jalapeno peppers; and *tumutumo*, a lentil puree simmered with traditional Ethiopian spices. Savor your meal the traditional way with plenty of *injera*, a flatbread used as a utensil for scooping up meat and veggie dishes.

3. Brown Sugar Kitchen

Come for the indulgent soul food and stay for the batch cocktails at Oakland's Brown [Sugar Kitchen](#). Classically French-trained chef Tanya Holland's mouthwatering menu includes plates of buttermilk fried chicken, North African-spiced oxtail and bacon, cheddar and scallion biscuits. Accompany the meal with the B-Side cocktail with bourbon, mezcal, bitters and vanilla.

4. Da Flora

Chef Jen McMahon and her husband, Darren Lacy, prioritize fresh, simple ingredients at their Mediterranean-influenced Italian joint, [Da Flora](#). Standouts from the menu include sweet potato gnocchi with sherry cream smoked bacon, risotto with sweet corn and heirloom tomatoes, and espresso and rum-laden tiramisu cake.

5. International Smoke

Entrepreneur and *New York Times* bestselling recipe book author Ayesha Curry and renowned chef [Michael Mina](#) joined forces with International Smoke, a global dining experience centered around wood-fired dishes. Awaiting their San Francisco reopening, the culinary powerhouses offer Mina Family Kitchen, a takeout menu featuring International Smoke's celebrated barbecue; Curry's curated tasting feast includes Sichuan-marinated cucumber and watermelon, St. Louis-style ribs and cornbread with Thai red curry butter.

6. Oeste

A three-woman team of owners curates a sustainably focused menu of Southern and Latin cuisine at [Oeste](#). Dig into fried Brussels sprouts with a Korean-style dip, wild-caught Georgia shrimp and grits, and pan-seared salmon alongside garnet yams. For dessert, treat yourself to the pecan bread pudding drizzled with lemon whiskey sauce.

7. Teni East Kitchen

Founded by Ethiopian-born chef [Tiyobestia Shibabaw](#), this Burmese and Asian fusion hot spot in Oakland boasts a variety of South Asian dishes such as chicken cardamom curry, crispy catfish with tamarind chile oil and the signature pea shoot salad. Finish the meal with orange saffron almond cake or *ube*, a purple yam dessert from the Philippines.

Tags: [RESTAURANTS](#)

PHOTOGRAPHY BY: NAT AND CODY GANTZ



LEGACY BUSINESS REGISTRY EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

HEARING DATE: AUGUST 21, 2024

Filing Date: July 24, 2024
Case No.: 2024-006772LBR
Business Name: Da Flora
Business Address: 701 Columbus Avenue
Zoning: NCD (NORTH BEACH NEIGHBORHOOD COMMERCIAL) Zoning District
North Beach Special Use District (SUD)
North Beach Financial Service, Limited Financial Service, and Business or Professional Service
Subdistrict
Priority Equity Geographies SUD
40-X Height and Bulk District
Cultural District: Not Applicable
Block/Lot: 0090/038
Applicant: Darren Lacy
701 Columbus Ave
Nominated By: Supervisor Aaron Peskin
Located In: District 3
Staff Contact: Maggie Dong - 628.652.7426
Maggie.Dong@sfgov.org

Recommendation: Adopt a Resolution to Recommend Approval

Business Description

Da Flora is an Italian-inspired restaurant located in the heart of North Beach. Some of their best-known dishes include house made sweet potato gnocchi, fresh Monterey squid roasted with tomatoes and lemon, and spice rubbed pork chops. Da Flora is an intimate gathering place for special occasions such as weddings, birthdays, and holiday parties.

Da Flora was established by Flora Gaspar in 1994 in its current location at 701 Columbus Avenue. Prior to opening the business, she was an art dealer at the Vorpall Gallery in San Francisco and spent time in Venice in her teen years. In 1996, Flora met Mary Beth Marks and this led to Mary Beth joining Da Flora as a baker. Jen McMahon also

joined as the Head Chef around the same time. Jen McMahon and her husband Darren Lacy purchased the business from Flora in 2016.

Jen and Darren have extensive experience in the restaurant industry. Jen grew up in upstate New York and had over a decade of experience in fine dining prior to joining Da Flora. Darren grew up in Oakland and learned how to cook while working in restaurants in his teen years.

Da Flora serves an established and growing community of devoted customers, residents from the neighborhood and greater community, tourists and visitors – people of all ages and backgrounds.

Staff Analysis

Review Criteria

1. *When was business founded?*

The business was founded in 1994.

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

Yes. Da Flora qualifies for listing on the Legacy Business Registry because it meets all of the eligibility Criteria:

- a. Da Flora has operated continuously in San Francisco for 30 years.
- b. Da Flora has contributed to the history and identity of the North Beach neighborhood and San Francisco.
- c. Da Flora 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. The business is associated with Italian cuisine.

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

Yes. The property is associated with Swiss/Swiss American, Italian/Italian American Architect of Merit, Perseo Righetti.

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

No; however, the property has been deemed eligible for listing in the National and California Registers.

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

The property is listed in the Citywide Historic Context Statement: Architecture, Planning, and Preservation Professionals: A Collection of Biographies for its association with Architect of Merit, Perseo Righetti.

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

Yes. Da Flora has been featured in publications by *RESY*, *San Francisco Chronicle*, *USA Today*, and *KQED*. The business received a Certificate of Honor for excellence and outstanding service from the San Francisco Board of Supervisors on its tenth anniversary in 2004. The business has also received recognition from *San Francisco Magazine* and *San Francisco Chronicle*.

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.

Da Flora is a minority and woman-owned business. Co-owners Jen McMahon and Darren Lacy regularly deliver food to elderly and infirmed neighbors. They also provide free or discounted meals to neighbors in need.

Physical Features or Traditions that Define the Business

Location(s) associated with the business:

Current Locations:

- 701 Columbus Avenue (1994 – Present)

Recommended by Applicant

- Murano glass chandelier
- Da Flora logo
- Large painting above kitchen entrance by Michael Garlington
- Outdoor planters
- House made sweet potato gnocchi
- Providing locally sourced, Italian-inspired, homemade specialties

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 DRAFT RESOLUTION NO.

HEARING DATE: AUGUST 21, 2024

Case No.: 2024-006772LBR
Business Name: Da Flora
Business Address: 701 Columbus Avenue
Zoning: NCD (NORTH BEACH NEIGHBORHOOD COMMERCIAL) Zoning District
 North Beach Special Use District (SUD)
 North Beach Financial Service, Limited Financial Service, and Business or Professional Service Subdistrict
 Priority Equity Geographies SUD
 40-X Height and Bulk District

Block/Lot: 0090/038
Applicant: Darren Lacy
 701 Columbus Ave

Nominated By: Supervisor Aaron Peskin
Located In: District 3
Staff Contact: Maggie Dong - 628.652.7426
Maggie.Dong@sfgov.org

ADOPTING FINDINGS RECOMMENDING TO THE SMALL BUSINESS COMMISSION APPROVAL OF THE LEGACY BUSINESS REGISTRY NOMINATION FOR DA FLORA CURRENTLY LOCATED AT 701 COLUMBUS AVE, BLOCK/LOT 0090/038.

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 21, 2024, 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 Da Flora 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 Da Flora.

Locations

Current Locations:

- 701 Columbus Avenue (1994 – Present)

Physical Features or Traditions that Define the Business

- Murano glass chandelier
- Da Flora logo
- Large painting above kitchen entrance by Michael Garlington
- Outdoor planters
- House made sweet potato gnocchi
- Providing locally sourced, Italian-inspired, homemade specialties

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 21, 2024.

Jonas P. Ionin
Commission Secretary

AYES:

NOES:

ABSENT:

RECUSE:

ADOPTED: August 21, 2024