

# lifestyle

**Gary Rulli credits his journey to Italy at age 19 as the fateful trip that sealed his future in baking.** In Turin, he learned baking was an art and a tradition. And while there, he worked for room and board in a *pasticceria*, picked up the local language and came home two years later with an important souvenir—a recipe for the mother dough used in Italian specialties like *colomba pasquale* and a sample of the starter, which he’s still using to bake the Easter brunch staple. Rulli, who has been asked to join the prestigious Academy of Italian Pastry Chefs, says, “It goes to show how one trip can change your life at an early age and put you on an incredible journey all changed by the incredibly talented people you meet on the way.” —S.F.



**What is your view of Marin style?** It's part laid-back, part culturally hip and full of natural wonders. Once I'm out of the kitchen, I feel like I'm on vacation.

**Where do you love to eat in Marin?** At home with my wife Jeannie and my children. Jeannie is an incredibly talented cook. Locally, Pasquale and Alfredo at Angelino's in Sausalito are two of the most talented chefs I know.

**What is the best thing about living in Marin?** I grew up in Terra Linda; I always loved the relaxed atmosphere of Marin and its beauty and the fact that it's still only minutes from San Francisco.

**How do you spend your weekends?** Lately, in the garden, but we like to drive to Tiburon and walk along the path with my sons, Giancarlo and Alessandro.

**What inspired you to open Emporio Rulli in Larkspur?** Larkspur reminded me of a small town like in Italy and I thought it would be a great place for my children to grow up in while realizing my dream of recreating a genuine Italian pasticceria.

**How did you get your start?** Frank's Mini Mart in Ignacio 30-something years ago. Then I apprenticed at Lafayette (Bakery) in San Francisco and Victoria Pastry in North Beach before going to Italy to apprentice.

**If you weren't a pastry chef what would you be doing?** I love architecture and design, but lately I spend as much time in our garden as possible. This year I planted over 40 varieties of heirloom tomatoes, plus lettuce, raspberries and more.

**What advice do you have for future pastry chefs?** Never stop learning—remember your mentors. We don't learn on our own.

**Any memorable moments at Emporio Rulli in Larkspur?** Probably bringing over five incredible master pastry chefs for a Columbus Day anniversary celebration. Being able to thank my mentors and show them what Jeannie and I had accomplished was incredible.

**What is your favorite product to bake?** Anything with yeast, especially panettone; it is the most challenging.

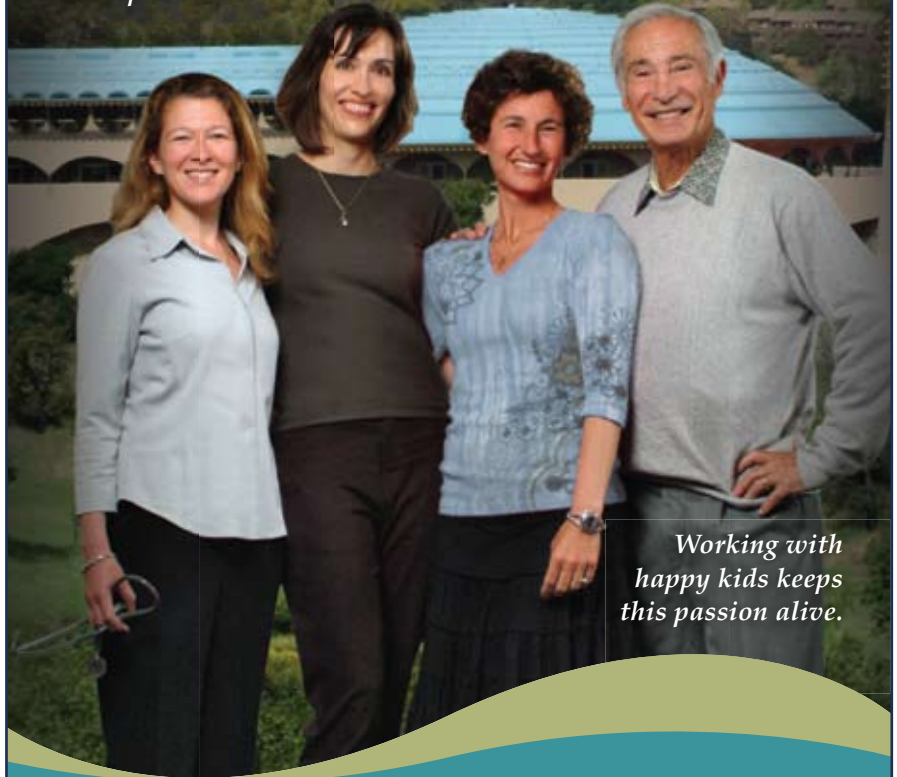
**What chefs have influenced you?** Silvano Lulini, Achille Brena, Romano Buoncrisiani on the sweet side. Angelo Auriana, the most talented Italian chef I know, always inspires me to take pastry to the next level.

**What does the future hold for Emporio Rulli?** My wife, Jeannie, and I are remodeling our Chestnut Street location and renaming it Risto-Bar with more of a restaurant emphasis as well as developing a pizzeria wine bar in downtown Larkspur with Angelo Auriana.

**What was the last book you read?** *Viaggio Italiano* by Marc Vetri. It's a book about going to Italy as a young American and learning to cook in Bergamo. The parallels of it to my own experience in Milan are very similar.

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