

A LEGACY OF LOVE AND BBQ: Newport Rib Company Turns 40

BY SON VU



This month, Costa Mesa's favorite barbecue restaurant, Newport Rib Company, is celebrating its 40th anniversary. Family-owned and operated, Newport Rib Company was founded in 1984 by Frances "Fran" Ursini and Rich Penjoyan, who shared a passion for creating the best barbecue restaurant in Orange County. The restaurant's signature recipes, crafted by Fran's cousin, Chef Ronaldo, quickly established Newport Rib Company—and its sister restaurant, Naples Rib Company—as go-to dining destinations in Costa Mesa, Long Beach, and the surrounding areas.

Originally located on Newport Blvd., Newport Rib Company moved to its current landmark location on Harbor Blvd. in 1999, having outgrown its previous location. Through hard work and unwavering dedication to quality and consistency, the Ursini family built a reputation for delivering delicious BBQ across Southern California.

At the heart of every family business is, of course, the family itself. Fran's three children—John, Laura, and Dave—each worked various jobs at the restaurant from a young age. They washed dishes, prepped and cooked food, served customers, and bussed tables. Reflecting on what makes the Newport and Naples Rib Company unique, Laura shared, "It's about quality, consistency, and treating everyone—employees and customers alike—with kindness and respect." The loyalty of their patrons stems from consistently great food, while the loyalty of their employees is nurtured by a culture that treats everyone like family. Many employees have been with Newport Rib Company for over 20 years. "We love it when employees who worked for my dad years ago still come in and share fond memories," Laura added.

"I feel privileged to be part of our neighbors' most precious events — from weddings and celebrations of life to birthday and graduation parties."

John joined the family business in 1990, after graduating from UCLA and working for Gallo Wine in on-premise sales. He started as a manager in the evenings and developed the catering side of the business. In 1992, when Fran acquired Naples Rib Joint in Long Beach, Dave, a UCSB graduate and CPA auditor at KPMG Peat Marwick, changed careers to join Fran and John in running the two locations. Fran managed the Newport site, Dave took charge of the Naples location, and John divided his time between both. Laura, now Laura Ursini Marroquin, returned to the business after raising her children, focusing on community outreach programs and special projects.

Costa Mesa, especially Mesa Verde, holds a special place in the hearts of Laura and her brothers. The Ursini family moved to the Upper Bird Streets in 1972, and both they and their children attended local schools—Adams, TeWinkle, and Estancia. The Ursinis have deep roots in the community, and giving back has always been a core family value. Laura even raised her own children in the same home she grew up in. "Our parents taught us to always give back to the community—it's a way of life for us, and it continues today," said Laura. Over the years, Newport Rib Company has supported local schools and sports organizations through donations and sponsorships, and they regularly partner with Goodwill to provide job skills and with Trellis' Life on the Streets (LOTS) team to help keep the community clean.

Since its 20th anniversary, the restaurant has made it a tradition to increase its charitable giving during milestone years, donating a portion of sales to various charities throughout October. "We are excited to celebrate our 40th anniversary by giving 20% of our sales in October to 20 charities that are close to our family and employees' hearts. It's important to celebrate the community that has supported us for the past 40 years," said Laura. Among the charities being supported are Trellis, The Autism Community in Action (TACA), and Breakthrough T1D.

Join the Ursini family at Newport Rib Company to celebrate this milestone year.

Enjoy great food and support some wonderful charitable organizations at the same time. Visit Newport Rib Company at 2196 Harbor Blvd., Costa Mesa, CA 92626, or call (949) 631-2110 for more information.

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