

serendipiTEA



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Christopher G. Villano **Majority Partner, SerendipiTea**

Chris Villano was born and raised in New York into a family of restaurateurs & specialty food entrepreneurs. He received a business degree in hospitality from Boston University and worked at several corporate hotels and restaurants while there. He furthered his studies at the Culinary Institute of America (CIA) where he received a degree in Culinary Arts. Chris' culinary and management/operating highlights include taking over as Executive Chef at Solera, the restaurant he had been working at while attending CIA, shortly after graduation. Solera, an Iberian restaurant that served tapas, paella, and other fine European gastronomic goodies had two locations: Manhattan and Westchester.

A few years later, with the help of family and friends, he purchased the famed Mickey Mantle's Restaurant and Sports Bar on Central Park South. A complete makeover and modernization of the facility along with improved cuisine and service enabled the restaurant to thrive for 10 more years.

In addition, Chris and two business associates responded to a City of New York Request for Proposal (RFP) for a concession and marina development on an abandoned and dilapidated 3-acre parcel of land on the Hudson River in Upper Manhattan. They were awarded the contract and opened La Marina, a waterfront restaurant, bar, lounge, beach, and marina destination that can service up to 3,000 people.

During this same period to date, Chris became involved with several other specialty food-related businesses as an investor, board member, and/or operator. These include: Ciao Imports, a Miami-based specialty food importer and distributor; Really Nice Restaurants which owns/owned several restaurant concepts in Chicago, Atlanta, and California; and SerendipiTea, an award-winning organic specialty tea importer, blender and wholesaler.

In 2018, with over two decades of culinary, operating, management and ownership experience in the restaurant/food & beverage industry Chris moved into the role of majority partner at SerendipiTea with an eye on the future. Noting that the Specialty Tea and the Organic industries are rapidly expanding Chris, while remaining true to the company's founding mission, is steering SerendipiTea toward expansion and wider growth as it nears its 25-year anniversary.