



From left to right: Rick, Bill, David, Judy, and Rob Sunseri

Pennsylvania Macaroni Company

Family Values and Tradition

An Enduring Legacy in the Strip

by Christopher Cussat

Did you know the best place in the Strip District to get a taste of Italy, literally and figuratively? If you answered Pennsylvania Macaroni Company (Penn Mac), you're right. For more than a century, the company has supplied Italian and other international foods to delight the taste buds of Pittsburghers.

Founded in 1902 by Augustino, Salvatore, and Michael Sunseri, Penn Mac grew from a dream in their home village of Trabia, Sicily. The three Sunseri brothers combined hard work and determination to get to America and to build a successful business here. With its Sicilian roots and American hope firmly planted, the Pittsburgh retail store soon began to bloom after their arrival.

The Sunseri brothers started by manufacturing pasta. Shortly after starting the business, a devastating fire almost crushed their dreams. But they bounced back even more determined. They rebuilt and expanded the pasta company by adding olive oil, spices, specialty foods, and cheeses to their retail offerings.

Late in the 1940's, Augustino's sons, Robert and Salvatore, took the corporate reins and the company's success mushroomed. Today, Penn Mac is a Strip District legend and is renowned as one of the premiere specialty-food operations in the country. The highly recognized, heavily visited, landmark store

is located at 2012 Penn Avenue.

Penn Mac is now in its third generation of family management and operation. Co-owner, David Sunseri, carries on the company's legacy and tradition with his brothers Rob, Rick, and Bill, and sister, Judy Como. They are all partners in the business. David started working at Penn Mac when he was just five years old, putting labels on spices and packaging pasta.

*The familial Penn Mac store
2010 Penn Avenue*



According to David, Penn Mac now operates two successful businesses – the retail store and a wholesale division. As a food-service, wholesale distributor, the company sells products in five states – Pennsylvania, West Virginia, Ohio, Maryland, and New York. With 35 trucks, 115 employees, and over 9,000 items, Penn Mac wholesales to numerous restaurants, delis, colleges, grocery stores, and pizzerias. The food-service distribution center is located on 14 acres in Greentree inside an 88,000-square-foot warehouse.

Penn Mac's famous retail center on Penn Avenue in the Strip stocks more than 5,000 specialty products, including nearly 400 different kinds of cheese, 150 different types of olive oil, and gourmet food products from around the world. On average, Penn Mac sells more than 200,000 pounds of cheese every week.

specific area of the business. If that occurs, families and businesses can survive, and the next generation will have an opportunity to continue the success of the previous generation."

Penn Mac's business model is built on the principles of pride, tradition, and determination. The Sunseri recipe for success plays a part beyond the everyday workings of a company, and can be applied to the way people live their lives. David and the entire Sunseri family embody this sentiment.

In his heart and mind, David has intertwined the strong work ethic he has inherited with his passion as a business owner, his enjoyment of working with people, and his genuine love for his family.

"My goal with Pennsylvania Macaroni has always been to provide an income for my family and our employees," he says.

"There's a sense of responsibility that a

businessman must realize to succeed. He's got to take care of the people who work for him and take care of his family members. My goal is to keep my family together."

David adds that sometimes, family businesses don't make it because of inner conflicts and heads colliding. The Sunseri family works diligently to assure that this never happens at



From left to right: David, Cindy, and young David Jr.

David attributes Penn Mac's longevity in part to its emphasis on offering the best foodstuffs at affordable prices. "I think we sell at a reasonable price, and our products are fresh. People come here for good quality at a good price," he says.

He also notes the importance of customer service and loyalty in sustaining a successful business. The same customers keep coming back for great service from familiar faces. "We have an excellent relationship with our customers, and there's usually a Sunseri family member here to greet them as they come in," he says.

David attributes the success of Penn Mac to hard work and perseverance. And he believes that keeping one's family together is essential to maintaining an enduring family business.

"When you own a family business," he says, "it's most important that you work hard and keep the family together. To do this, each person has to take care of a

Penn Mac. "We're a third-generation business, and it's important to me to continue our family legacy," he says.

Perhaps, the only thing that David loves almost as much as working with his family is meeting and seeing familiar and new faces every day. "The people are wonderful, and our customers, employees, and my family are all important to me," he says. "I enjoy

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*Cheese and more cheese
Over 400 varieties available*

interacting with everyone all day long. I don't like being confined to an office. I think it's important that you get to see your customers and employees everyday and to make yourself visible rather than hiding behind a desk."

David recognizes Penn Mac's location in the Strip District and how the neighborhood quality of the Strip contributes to his company's longevity and success. "The Strip is just a wonderful area. It's Pittsburgh's market place and it's pretty much a 24-hour community," he says. "You've got food-service companies, retailers, night-clubs, restaurants, and many other businesses in the Strip that operate around the clock."

David credits the Neighbors in the Strip (NITS) association for supporting all the businesses in the Strip. "NITS communicates and gets along with everybody in the Strip, and I truly think that Becky Rodgers

Pennsylvania Macaroni Company continued

and her staff are right in maintaining it as Pittsburgh's marketplace and not making it into something that it isn't."

As David sees it, the Strip continues to be a place where businesses like the Pennsylvania Macaroni Company have existed for a long time and their traditions live on."

Pennsylvania Macaroni Company's hours of operation are Monday through Saturday, 6:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. and Sundays from 9:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. Delivery sales are also available, and you can shop from the convenience of your home or office at www.PennMac.com. If you've never visited the Sunseri's store on Penn Avenue, make a point to come in, taste a piece of rich Strip District tradition, and get to know the Sunseri family.

This article is dedicated in loving memory to David's son, the late David Sunseri, Jr. !

Sally and Salvatore Sunseri



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