



## **In the Eyes of Massimo Ferragamo and Giovanni Colavita**

Letizia Airos Soria (October 14, 2019)



The two Presidents of the US branch of their respective family businesses march down Manhattan's Fifth Avenue at the Columbus Day Parade, after having been honored at the Columbus Citizen Foundation Gala.

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Their eyes look around, under the Fifth Avenue sun. They ride on Italian cars, two Maseratis,

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elegantly caressing the road, surrounded by dozens of people and countless Italian flags.

The eyes of two Italians. Two Italians at the 2019 Columbus Day Parade: those of this year's Grand Marshall and Honoree chosen by the [Columbus Citizen Foundation](#) [3].

The eyes of Massimo Ferragamo, President of [Ferragamo USA](#) [4], seated next to his wife and followed by his family, and of Giovanni Colavita, President of [Colavita USA](#) [5], in the car with his son, while the whole family follows. Their gazes are unmistakably filled with conviction as well as emotion, pride as well as surprise.

Few eyes can tell such an intense tale between Italy and America. A tale with an increasingly important past, present, and future. These two Italians share ties to America of course, but also long-standing family traditions, which characterize both their success. A success with many secrets, above all the one of a family who cradles its brand, from one generation to the next. In this case, the family business, the Italian secret to success, also has an Italian American story.

Massimo Ferragamo, is the son of Salvatore, an artisan from Avellino. His father began by opening a store in the 1920s in Santa Barbara, California. He became the "shoemaker of the stars." Actors and actresses ordered custom-made shoes from him. A great success for a leather artisan.

Those were the years when Hollywood's film industry was taking shape, but Salvatore went back to Italy and in 1927 he opened the "Calzaturificio Ferragamo" in Florence.

He entrusted Futurist artist Lucio Venna with the realization of his first ad campaign. This is one of the infinite key choices that Ferragamo will make. Creative, often genius choices, up with the times but always respectful of tradition.

Today, Ferragamo is perhaps the most well-known Florentine luxury brand, with a distribution network of 672. The group is present on the stock market and its offer combines attention to style with the high quality and artisanality typically associated with Italian products. Every woman wants a Ferragamo!

The story of Giovanni Colavita's business runs all the way back to 1938, when Giovanni and Felice Colavita created a small family-run oil mill in Sant'Elia a Pianisi, a town in Molise. Today it constitutes a long-standing family tradition now in its fourth generation.

With a visionary look towards internationalization, Enrico and Leonardo Colavita, respectively Giovanni's uncle and his father, built a sturdy commercial network in the US with a local partner, another family business, this time an Italian American one, that of John Profaci.

It was 1978. Nobody knew about the Mediterranean Diet and the importance of extra virgin olive oil. It was Colavita who disseminated not just a product, but also a culinary lifestyle. They did so starting with the families of Italian immigrants and arrived to Americans. Today, Colavita is present in over



70 countries worldwide, and not just their olive oil. It is also a leader in the importation of Italian food products in the US.

I believe that by awarding Massimo Ferragamo and Giovanni Colavita, the Columbus Foundation has also brought attention to an Italian way of conducting business. There's a red thread that connects many Italian companies, including ones smaller than Colavita and Ferragamo. It's that way of doing business shared by small, medium, and large companies alike, starting with family.

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