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NEW VINTAGE FOR HOTEL DEREK

**LEGENDARY RESTAURATEUR PIERO SELVAGGIO
OPENING VALENTINO HOUSTON THIS FALL**

Houston, Texas... (June 4, 2009) An Italian legend is headed to Houston. For more than 37 years, Piero Selvaggio has been celebrated for providing a true taste of Italy at his award-winning restaurants in Santa Monica and Las Vegas. His passion as a wine collector, over 130,000 bottles and growing, just earned Selvaggio induction into the Italian Wine Hall of Fame. Soon, Houstonians will be able to experience the exceptional Italian cuisine, award-winning wine cellar and legendary hospitality when PS Valentino Vin Bar opens at the [Hotel Derek](#), the fashionable boutique hotel in the Galleria. The restaurant will open this fall.

PS Valentino Vin Bar will house two special dining experiences, an intimate fine dining restaurant and the more casual Vin Bar. Houstonians and Hotel Derek patrons can enjoy Selvaggio's commitment to an authentic, yet inventive Italian dining experience or choose the eclectic Vin Bar with its wide selection of innovative dishes in a "primi" or small plate format as well as an extensive by-the-glass wine list. The restaurant will also feature multiple private dining areas for special occasions and business functions. Executive Chef and partner, Luciano Pellegrini, who was awarded one of the culinary world's highest honors, Best Chef in the Southwest by the James Beard Foundation in 2004, said "we'll serve traditional and inventive food with a deep rooted Italian influence that takes into consideration local ingredients, seasonality, and market availability."

Hotel Derek General Manager, Hans Schmitt, said "we are thrilled to be working with the Valentino team. This truly is a perfect partnership for Hotel Derek as we pride ourselves on exacting hospitality in a chic and welcoming setting. Selvaggio and Pellegrini have developed an incredible restaurant concept which we believe will suit our guests perfectly. Houston is an international city with an appetite for new and exciting food and wine. With both the intimate dining setting and the more casual Vin Bar bistro area under the same roof, overseen by these legendary culinary entrepreneurs, Houstonians and our hotel's patrons can look forward to a truly memorable experience."

The Valentino Restaurant Group is home to Valentino, the flagship restaurant founded in Santa Monica in 1972 by restaurateur Piero Selvaggio. Following the success of the original Valentino Restaurant, Selvaggio opened Valentino Las Vegas at the Venetian Hotel in 1999 and Giorgio, in the Mandalay Bay Hotel and Casino in 2004. Selvaggio is considered one of the modern fathers of Italian cuisine in America, capturing the charm, warmth and festive spirit of Italian hospitality. For details visit www.valentinorestaurant.com.

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About Piero Selvaggio:

“The restaurant world is a blend of business and poetry,” states restaurant owner, Piero Selvaggio, who has mastered the balance of both. Expanding a \$4,500 venture into a multi-million dollar business has enabled Selvaggio to realize his vision: to bring the food of Italy with authenticity and style to Los Angeles, Las Vegas and now, Houston. Born in Sicily, Selvaggio started his culinary career at the age of 18 opening a small restaurant in Santa Monica. Inspired by his mother’s simple, traditional Italian cooking, Selvaggio said “we served what we knew. Hearty sauces, and American dishes with names like Baked Mostaccioli.” The restaurant was named Valentino. “It reminded us of Rudolph Valentino,” recalls Selvaggio, “which we associated with glamour and sophistication and, of course, he was Italian. It was perfect.” His culinary journey took him back to Italy where Selvaggio vowed his restaurant in LA would be as great as those in Italy. He was the first restaurateur to import made in Italy products, importing exciting new ingredients and artisanal products like fresh buffalo mozzarella, white truffles from Alba, fresh porcini mushrooms, fish from the Mediterranean and Adriatic Seas, and handcrafted, cured meats and cheeses—all now popular in America. Valentino evolved into a true Italian restaurant, one unlike anything else this country had ever seen. Selvaggio’s passion for wine collecting matched his love of food. Today that passion has earned him a place in history. In fact, Valentino’s wine cellar is considered one of the best in the world.

Among the numerous awards and accolades the restaurant and owner Piero Selvaggio have received over the years, countless James Beard Awards in three different categories and the California Restaurant Association’s Lifetime Achievement Award in 2004. Other recognitions include Wine Spectator’s Grand Award, which the restaurant has garnered each year since 1981, and Restaurants and Institutions’ Ivy Award of Distinction in 2000, as well as Italy’s highest honor, the Premio del Riconoscimento, in 2002 as Best Italian Restaurant Abroad. Valentino received a coveted 1 Star rating from the prestigious Michelin Guide for Los Angeles in both 2007 and 2008. And in January, 2009, Selvaggio was inducted into the Italian Trade Commission’s Hall of Fame.

About Luciano Pellegrini:

James Beard Award-winning chef Luciano Pellegrini was born in Bergamo, Italy, and like most Italian chefs, began his culinary experience in his mother’s kitchen. At age 13, he enrolled at San Pellegrino, one of Italy’s most prestigious hotel schools. After graduation, Pellegrini was exposed to dining at its finest when working at Locanda dell’Angelo in Bergamo.

In 1985, Pellegrini moved to the United States to work with restaurateur Piero Selvaggio, who had achieved a solid reputation for bringing genuine Italian cuisine to California. Pellegrini quickly developed both his cooking and kitchen leadership skills as a pasta chef at Selvaggio’s restaurant, Primi. Pellegrini was immediately recognized for his talents and was critically acclaimed by both the *Los Angeles Daily News* and the *Los Angeles Times* whose renowned restaurant critic S. Irene Virbila, commented that Pellegrini executed “the kind of rustic main courses you might find in the Italian countryside.” Looking to take his culinary skills to the next level, Pellegrini returned to Italy, to learn the art of grilling on the “fogolar,” a traditional, flavorful way of cooking on a wood-burning open hearth. He also spent a great deal of time with Bruno Libralon, a renowned Italian Chef and head of the Italian Chef Association, who is often referred to as the “King of Fish.” He spent time with a local sausage expert perfecting the art of sausage-making, key in Italian cooking. During different stages in his travels, Pellegrini has worked with some of the most creative and respected Italian chefs in the world including Gianfranco Vissani, Fulvio Pierangelini, Paola DiMauro and Nadia Santini. Pellegrini is now testing his skills in front of a camera, filming cooking segments for “Cheflive”. View some of his early work on www.cheflive.com and on www.hulu.com.