

COOKING
UP

Love

For most people, it is hard enough to divide the chores and figure out which one is cooking and which is doing the dishes. For a handful of couples in Scottsdale, however, spending every day in the kitchen together is something they not only enjoy, but they do it for a living. These couples, all of whom have been together for decades, share their secrets of keeping love alive even when the temperatures get hot.

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Bob and Sally Ann Molinari

UNCLE SAL'S ITALIAN RESTAURANT & BAR
3370 N. HAYDEN ROAD, #120
480.990.2533 | WWW.UNCLESALSAZ.COM

Bob and Sally Ann Molinari met in college in Michigan, and married and moved to Arizona a few years later. Now, after 39 years of marriage, they find themselves partners of another type—business partners at Uncle Sal's Italian Restaurant & Bar.

Uncle Sal's has been a fixture in Scottsdale since 1988 and Sally Ann originally worked for the previous owners as a bartender and waitress. She is now in her 15th year at the restaurant. When she had an opportunity to take over the restaurant a few years ago, the Molinari family decided to make Uncle Sal's a real family affair.

Bob, who had grown up in the restaurant industry, was working in sales for the National Restaurant Association six years ago when he started at Uncle Sal's as one of the proud new owners. Bob handles the administrative duties at the restaurant while Sally Ann oversees operations and the front of the house. The couple also brought their twin sons into the business with them. To create their classic Italian cuisine, they recruited son and award-winning chef James Molinari. Son Nick spends part-time at the restaurant on the floor.

Bob says it is gratifying to have his grandkids running through the restaurant, just as he used to run through his own parents' restaurant.

Bob and Sally Ann work hard to create a family atmosphere for the diners at Uncle Sal's.

"We watch couples come in who used to come here as kids themselves," says Bob. "Now they even have their own children."

The Molinari's pride in their restaurant is obvious. "Everything here is what we make it," Bob explains. "This is just a great neighborhood joint."

Growth and development is always a part of Uncle Sal's and Bob finds that to be one of the most rewarding parts of working together.

"We fight the problems together. You want to be able to grow with your clientele. It's rewarding to see your business succeed."

Having a family business can often be a challenge, though. "No decision is easy when it involves family," he says. "Personal feelings are intertwined and there can be differences of opinion."

Yet in the end, Bob knows that their business partnership works because he is married to his best friend. "It's like Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid—when you go into battle, you have to have your partner with you. Sally Ann is my partner."