

Haven at Home

By revamping a Tudor mansion, this Mom made space for work and family.



By RENNIE ACKERMAN



Above, Caterina Castaldo in the welcoming parlor of her Morristown wellness studio. Left, 10-year-old Fabiana and 16-year-old Giancarlo with their mother, and dog Coco, outside Bellezza Si Esthetics.

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CATERINA CASTALDO WANTED IT ALL—A BUSINESS TO showcase her more than twenty years of skin- and body-care experience, and a lifestyle that would allow her to be a hands-on mother to her two children.

For almost two decades, Castaldo had been renting a location on Elm Street in Morristown, building up a clientele for her services as a world-class aesthetician. But there was something missing. “I didn’t feel that my family and my business were connected, and I wanted my children to appreciate the hard work that goes into any career,” Castaldo says.

So she and her husband put their home in Chester on the market and bought a stately, 22-room, turn-of-the-century Tudor mansion in Morristown with the intention of making it their new home, while creating a high-end luxury wellness studio on the lower level.

The result is Bellezza Si Esthetics.

When word of the planned business venture got out, Castaldo’s new neighbors were not pleased. “Old timers in the neighborhood didn’t want it,” she says. “They were nervous about the traffic, or that I’d put up neon signs. They didn’t understand my concept.”

In time, the neighbors learned the subtlety of Castaldo’s approach. The Gatsby-esque estate, just two blocks off busy Route 124, is surrounded by lush landscaping. Neon signs? Not a chance. In fact, there are no signs at all on the front of the property. Clients drive into a small, side-entrance parking area that appears completely residential.

Upon entering the impressive wrought-iron gates, guests are greeted by Coco, Castaldo’s 6-year-old Shitzu, who leads them into a gracious parlor—opulent without being ostentatious. It is stunningly appointed

Mom 2.0



The family (and clients) enjoy the beautifully landscaped pool area.

with plush furnishings, luxurious fabrics, and sparkling fixtures. In all, the wellness studio sprawls across 3,000 square feet. On the beautifully landscaped property outside, there's even a swimming pool—available to clients before or after their treatments.

It was not an easy project. There were many agonizing months of planning-board meetings, zoning hearings, and neighbor objections. Finally, all was approved and Castaldo's brother, a general contractor, brought her five-room dream studio to life.

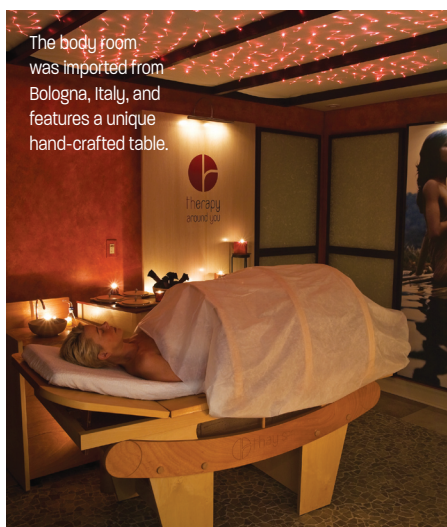
Lou Castaldo, Caterina's husband of 19 years, was supportive, though cautious, throughout the process. "He's not a fancy guy," says Castaldo of her husband, a computer analyst at Ricoh. "I have to force him to buy a pair of shoes." But Lou was impressed with his wife's vision and determination—even if he did feel some sticker shock over the price of the construction. "He loves me tremendously and is still my biggest supporter," Castaldo says.

Now that Bellezza Si has become a reality, Castaldo is able to split her focus between career and family—just as she always desired. "It goes by so fast," Castaldo says of her two kids, 16-year-old Giancarlo (a sophomore at Morristown High School) and 10-year-old Fabiana (a fifth grader at Saint Joseph Catholic School in Mendham). "I love that I can be there to drive them to school. It is so important to me to integrate my kids into my [professional] life, through the good and the bad."

The hours at Bellezza Si are Tuesday through Saturday, 9 AM to 3 PM, leaving plenty of time for mothering. "I wanted to be at home. I wanted my kids to see how it works, and now they're involved in everything." Castaldo's children are truly part of the business. Giancarlo handles inventory and

restocks supplies, and Fabiana creates hand-beaded bracelets and baubles offered for sale in the parlor as fundraisers for victims of Hurricane Katrina and for her school.

Castaldo, a native of northern Italy, discovered her calling by giving therapeutic massages and facials to willing family members in the front room of her in-laws' home as a newlywed in Passaic. Her subjects were so pleased, she decided to make it a career and eventually went back to



The body room was imported from Bologna, Italy, and features a unique hand-crafted table.



Caterina Castaldo takes a holistic approach when designing treatment plans for her clients.

Italy to train in the famous thermal region of Castello San Pietro, where she learned all of her facial, skin, and body treatments, and aroma-therapeutic techniques. She returns every year to get re-certified and to learn the newest specialties.

Her concept for Bellezza Si (Italian for "beauty is") is "to create a wellness sanctuary where I offer clients the most innovative treatments available." Castaldo consults with each client extensively

teachers to CEOs. She says some received mediocre treatments elsewhere, and now have fallen for her nurturing approach.

Castaldo, too, is smitten. "There's no going back. This is me. It's in my blood and I'm here to stay," she says. "When you get on the dance floor, you have to dance."

BELLEZZA SI ESTHETICS

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