Francesco and Mary Giambelli Collection, ca. 1940s-2009 (bulk 1960s-1990s)

**Extent** 9 boxes

**Creator** Francesco and Mary Giambelli

**Language** English and Italian

**Abstract** The collection includes photographs, memorabilia, artifacts, scrapbooks, awards, and clippings collected by Francesco and Mary Giambelli and related to their Italian restaurants in New York City.


**Access** Open for research by appointment.

**Acquisition** Donated by The Francesco and Mary Giambelli Foundation, Inc., 2014.

*Last updated 2/25/2015*

**Biographical Information**

Francesco “Frank” Giambelli (1915-2006) was a restaurateur in New York City and pioneered Northern Italian cuisine and high-end restaurant service in his restaurants. He was born and raised in Voghera, Italy and worked at several European restaurants before opening his own, Il Pesce d’Oro, in Voghera in 1948. Several years later he emigrated to the United States where he met his wife, Mary Azalone (1916-2013). In 1956, Giambelli opened Giambelli’s Ristorante at 238 Madison Avenue. In 1960, the restaurant was relocated to 46 East 50th Street and renamed Giambelli 50th. Giambelli also owned Mercurio Restaurant at 53 West 53rd Street from 1975 to 1982. Giambelli 50th, after serving customers for almost fifty years, closed its doors in 2009.

Highlights from Francesco Giambelli’s career include:

- In 1975, Giambelli purchased at auction an 1878 bottle of Chateau Lafite Rothschild for $3,500.
- In 1995, Giambelli 50th prepared a banquet for Pope John Paul II and fifty guests at the Cardinal’s residence in New York City.
- In 2004, Giambelli purchased a 2.4 lb white truffle at auction for $41,000. He was awarded the Guinness World Record for “most valuable white truffle sold at auction.”
Scope and Content
The collection consists of materials collected by Francesco and Mary Giambelli related to their careers as restaurateurs in New York City and their three Italian restaurants—Giambelli’s Ristorante, Giambelli 50th, and Mercurio. Included are photographs, scrapbooks, memorabilia and artifacts, awards and certificates, correspondence, menus and wine lists, papers, and clippings.

There was very little original order so collection was primarily arranged by type of material and size of material.

Arrangement

Photographs - includes a few historical photographs of Francesco Giambelli as a child and young adult, and of Pesce d’Oro, his first restaurant in Voghera, Italy. Photographs are primarily of the Giambellis at Giambelli 50th and various special events. Photograph albums have been kept intact. Large framed photographs are stored in oversized boxes. Other photographs may be found in scrapbooks.

Albums

- 1988 Gruppo Ristoratori Italiani event (2 albums – maroon and green albums)
- 1995 small red album with photos of Pope and cake for event
- Undated – small brown photo album of event with man in gray robe and blue hat

Mixed albums

- Historical photographs (young Francesco, Pesce d’Oro) and more recent photos, clippings, Duca di Salaparuta certificate, Francesco and Mary standing outside front entrance, photos of Francesco and Mary at Centro Socio Educativo in Voghera
- Small maroon album - Giambelli 50th celebrates its 30th, etc., events, exterior of restaurant, and more photos of Gruppo Ristoratori Italiani event

Scrapbooks – two scrapbooks

- Oversized black scrapbook about the wine auction, 1975-1976; includes original documents, correspondence, newspaper and magazine clippings, information about Rothschild, press sheets from Heublein Inc. (who ran the auction). In 1976 he missed out on a bottle 1806 bottle of Lafite Rothschild sold at a New Orleans auction (“he was out walking with his wife and missed the lot”); correspondence from James Farley, politician and chairman of Coca Cola.
- Red scrapbook with portrait of FG on the cover about Giambelli’s 50th restaurant, mid-1960s-early 1980s; newspaper and magazine clippings and advertisements about the restaurant (magazines include Visitors East, Promenade, Where, New York, Gourmet, etc.; American Express advertisements) photographs of the restaurant; postcards; reviews; invitations for
Truffle festival dinners (1971, 1974); Grossinger’s Italian Style weekends; napkin with the logo; few clippings about Mercurio; one letter on Giambelli letterhead (Il Cuoco d’Oro Internazionale: art of high cuisine and gracious hospitality; gala dinner held at Giambelli 50th in 1978; autographs of attending guests on Giambelli letterhead)

Memorabilia and artifacts—restaurant memorabilia includes notecards, match books, and souvenirs from the restaurants, primarily Giambelli 50th. Artifacts include tableware from Giambelli 50th; a commemorative plate; a Mumm Cordon Bleu magnum wine bottle with portrait of Giambelli and logo; the 1878 bottle of Chateau Lafite Rothschild purchased at auction in 1975 and the glass trunk, metal stand, and decorative grapes with which the Giambellis displayed the bottle at Giambelli 50th.

Awards, certificates, plaques, medals – Francesco and Mary Giambelli received numerous awards during their careers for their service and high standing in the restaurant industry and Italian community. Many of these awards are framed and stored in oversized boxes. Medals are from various awards and events (including one from the Pope’s visit in 1995).

1971 Columbia Coalition (in large orange album)
1977 Il Cuoco d’Oro Internazionale (unframed)
1977 Italian Grade Commission Wine Promotion Center to Giambelli 50th in recognition of the excellence of its Italian Wine List, Sept 1977 (framed)
1980 Park Avenue and Madison Avenue Communities (framed)
1980 Ente Nazionale Italiano Turismo, Diploma di Benemerenza (framed; inscribed by Maya Picasso, 1980)
1981 New York Veteran Police Association (framed)
1982 For Dining Distinction: 1982 Travel/Holiday Magazine Recommends Giambelli 50th as one of the Outstanding Restaurants of the World (framed)
1985 l’Vlpia di Roma al Giambelli di New York, Roma (plaque)
1988 Gruppo Ristoratori Italiani (unframed)
1988 Federazione Italiana Cuochi, 800- dello ORDO COCARIE della Lunigiana (laminated)
1991 Five Star Diamond Award (framed)
1993 La Casa Vinicola Duca du Salaparuta, Diploma di “Maestro di vini” (in black album)
1994 Five Star Diamond Award (plaque)
1995 Pope John Paul II, Papal Visit, Saint Patrick’s Cathedral New York
1996 State of New York Certificate of Appreciation, "Couple of the Year" by Nassau Chapter of the Cooley's Anemia Foundation (unframed)
1996 Il Presidente della Repubblica capo dell’Ordine al Merito della Repubblica Italian, Ha Conferito L’Onorificenza di Commendatore (unframed and framed)
1997 Commissione Centrale per L’Insegna del Ristorante Italiano (unframed)
1999 Camera di Commercio Industria Artigianato e Agricoltura Pavia premio Pavesi nel Mondo (rolled certificate)
2001 Zagat Survey Award of Distinction Giambelli New York City Restaurants (plaque)
2004 Ellis Island Medal of Honor (unframed and book)
2004 Guinness World Records (framed and unframed)
2006 Certificate of Recognition Hope for a Healthier Humanity to Maria Giambelli as a silver sponsor Oct 4, 2006 (framed)
2009 Wine of Italy Hall of Fame (plaque)
n. d. Italian Culinary Institute for Foreigners (medal)

**Correspondence** – Letters from patrons written to the Giambellis (bulk 2000s); see also scrapbooks

**Menus and wine lists** – 3 menus and 3 bound wine lists, n.d.

**Papers** – includes papers about a sunflower sculpture by Robert St. Croix commissioned by the Giambellis; papers related to the mausoleum in Voghera where Francesco Giambelli was interred and a full-length statue of him was placed; and miscellaneous ephemera.

**Clippings** – miscellaneous magazine and newspaper clippings relating to the Giambellis and their restaurants; includes advertisements. See also scrapbooks.