

Feeding Speakitaly's Promising Future

Sara Krevoy (January 31, 2018)



In a little less than one year, Raffaella Galliani has nourished her very own language school into a growing, thriving business. The language teacher of nearly 12 years has broken out on her own, working both with adults and children to enrich their working knowledge of Italian language and culture.

Sometimes, determination can be even more powerful than a dream. Such is the case for Raffaella Galliani, whose full energy and tenacity have driven her across an ocean from Italy to New York, where she is currently a successful entrepreneur.

Galliani is the founder and proprietor of [Speakitaly NYC](#) [2], an intimate Italian language school headquartered in Chelsea. Using a program based largely on the [Common European Framework of](#)



[Reference for Languages](#) [3](CEFR), Galliani's teaching method incorporates immersive and experiential methods which play on the individual interests of her students. She often uses games and music to capture their attention.

"I want to be associated, surely, with something fun and high energy. I want you to learn but I want you to love it," the language teacher explained.

Finding Her Way:

Though [Galliani](#) [4] has been teaching for many years, building her own language school in the US was not always her plan. The seeds leading to Speakitaly's creation were planted long before it was ever a conscious thought. And the path to building the business is one that demonstrates the power in the law of attraction- what you put into the universe is often what you get back.

Galliani was in New York on a three-month visa when she ran into the man who would eventually become her husband at the annual Halloween Parade in the Village. She wasn't planning to stay in the US, but she couldn't deny the desire to remain in NYC and give her budding relationship a chance.

It was then that Galliani was asked to temporarily fill in at a language school. It was her first time teaching at a school, but she enjoyed the experience. So did the students, so Galliani was asked back to teach on a more regular basis. After two months, the school sponsored her for an internship.

She stayed for a year and half, at which point circumstances seemed to indicate that returning to Italy for a fresh start was the right choice. In Italy, Galliani strengthened her foundation in teaching, becoming certified at the University of Perugia and teaching Italian for foreigners in Milan.

Three years passed, but the man Galliani left behind in NY was still in her heart. Meanwhile, she had made the decision to move to Rome and teach Italian. She had an apartment and everything, but at the last minute Galliani felt compelled to travel to the US once again. Her intentions were to close the door of the past but instead she fell in love again.

Galliani then knew she needed to find a way to stay in NY and be with the man she would marry four years later. She contacted the school she worked before she left for Italy, and they accepted her back. They also sponsored Galliani for a working visa.

"I just have a lot of will to make things happen, and that's what I feel has always paid back in my life," said Galliani. And it is this assertive drive that she used to construct Speakitaly from the ground up.

As Galliani continued teaching Italian, she accumulated a wealth of students attracted by her dynamic energy and exciting teaching style. She soon realized that traveling around the city each day for private lessons was too taxing, and she needed a central office of her own.

Galliani eventually found a space in Chelsea. She didn't know how she was going to find the money for rent, but she signed a year-long lease for the office, and Speakitaly was born. Ever since, the language school has been thriving on the time and love that Galliani infused into its conception. She taught herself how to make a website, how to advertise and how to use social media to her advantage. As a result of her efforts, Speakitaly NYC became a success, and Galliani enjoys a future with the love of her life.

"I have many people who are happy, and that's what makes me happy. That's what is most important, to see someone start from zero, and then be able to say a few words, and then they become more and more independent. È una soddisfazione (It's a satisfaction), it just makes you happy. That's why you do it."

Full Stomachs, Lasting Memories:

In less than a year, has grown from one-on-one learning to include small classes of about four



students. Galliani was also able to hire another teacher to work with classes two days a week. She is looking to incorporate another teacher on staff, so that she can focus on the latest addition to Speakitaly's repertoire- working with children.

Galliani has recently began teaching cooking classes for kids, using her husband's space prepare treats like ravioli, pizza and tiramisu. The classes are more of a cultural endeavor, but the goal is to begin teaching them Italian language in the near future.

For adults, Galliani has long been [forging bridges](#) [5] between cuisine and country. She organizes [pasta-making](#) [6] workshops, after which students are given recipes to bring home alongside their fresh pasta so they can share what they learned with family and friends. Galliani also coordinates popular wine tastings, bringing her pupils to restaurants that specialize in food from a specific region. The meal consists of four different wines, paired with four regional dishes.

"I am not a promoter of dialects," she revealed. "But I do love regions, because they have their identity, and their food, and their way of being part of a bigger picture."

Galliani has noticed that, especially in NYC, people have a fascination for all things Italian—one that is easily susceptible to misconception. Through these culture-centric activities, the language teacher hopes to expand students' horizons when it comes to Italy. "The biggest connection for me was to make sure that Italy was not only a plate of ragu bolognese," she said. "I mean I love it, but that's not what it's about."

And for Galliani, who grew up helping her mother and grandmother prepare Sunday dinner, sharing food with her students holds an even greater significance. It means passing down traditions and creating positive memories that last a lifetime.

"It was something that I learned, and I treasure those moments that nobody will ever give me back," she mused, tearing up. "And what I do with the kids, I think, well they're not gonna remember me, but in their heart they will have something cool, and maybe they will pass it."

Looking Toward the Future:

In the coming months, Galliani is looking to expand class sizes to nearly 7 or 8 students. Gradually, Speakitaly NYC aims to acquire revenue for advertising and generate more traffic for the program.

Galliani's dream is to one day open a school in Milan or Rome, where she can send students from the US to enhance their language skills through crucial on-the-ground experience. In fact, it was a combination of adventurous spirit and a desire to communicate with people outside of her own community that brought her fluency in three languages in addition to her native Italian: English, French, and Spanish.

Training one's brain to communicate in foreign language also allows a student to access alternate versions of oneself, according to Galliani. "And that's the beauty of it," she said. "You can always be, not somebody else, but maybe someone who is closer to you in another thought, in another world...another you."

To accomplish one's goals takes dedication, patience and heart—all qualities which Galliani expresses to the fullest extent, embodying them into the driving force behind her language school.

"The degrees you have count. But I really think that what shows to people and what you get back in life, is truly who you are. And what you want to give to the world."

Even with her growing business, Galliani still works around 12 to 13 hours daily. "Every day when I finish at 9pm, and I close the door of that tiny little space," she said with a full heart, "I think: 'I'm proud.'"

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For more info check out the Speakitaly website here [>>](#) [7]

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[2] <http://www.speakitalynyc.com/>

[3] <http://www.cambridgeenglish.org/exams-and-tests/cefr/http://www.cambridgeenglish.org/exams-and-tests/cefr/>

[4] <http://www.speakitalynyc.com/about-us>

[5] <http://www.iItaly.org/magazine/events/article/italian-championship-pasta-kicks>

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