

Pietro Marzotto's Food Play

By LUISA ZARGANI

MILAN — Pietro Marzotto has turned his sights on gastronomy.

With a majority stake in Milan's historical gourmand store Peck, Marzotto has renovated the brand's restaurant, with plans for franchises around the world, from South Korea, China and the Philippines to the U.S. and Brazil.

"I was attracted by Peck's extraordinary range of products and superior quality maintained in time and always improved," said Marzotto at the inauguration of the renovated Peck Italian Bar and restaurant, which used to close at 7:30 p.m. and will now stay open until 11:30 p.m.



Angelo Steppani, Pietro Marzotto and Leone Marzotto.

"I would like to contribute to Peck's long-lasting success and bring it around the world, where there are enormous possibilities through licensing ventures, while maintaining its high-end quality and image," said Marzotto. The entrepreneur added that he's "always been passionate about cuisine and always loved to cook," since he was a boy.

With the help of Michelin star chef Matteo Vigotti, Marzotto plans to further raise the level and prestige of the restaurant, which offers typical dishes from the Lombardy region, from risotto Milanese with saffron to the Mondighini meatballs. Marzotto tapped Beretta

Associati architects and artist Angela Ardisson to fine tune the decor without overhauling it, with the addition of artistic metallic fabric strips to the lighting plaques, or warm, salmon-colored curtains to the honey-hued boiserie.

The Peck store was first opened in 1883 by Francesco Peck. The Steppani family, who took control in the Seventies, continues to own a third of the company. In addition to anything from fresh pasta and meat to pastry and fruit, the store carries almost 3,000 wine labels. Peck has sales of 20 million euros, or \$25.6 million at current exchange.

Through a 20-year-long collaboration with Japan's Takashimaya group, there are 11 Peck stores in that country.

Marzotto — the former chairman and chief executive officer of Marzotto who spearheaded the expansion of the family-owned textile group in the Eighties and Nineties and engineered the acquisition of men's wear giant Hugo Boss in 1991 — is joined in this new venture by his son Leone, a lawyer who is in charge of building the international development of Peck.

Asked to comment about the recent legal troubles that have hit some members of his family, Marzotto, who has not been targeted by the country's tax police, said he did "not know anything about the allegations." However, the outspoken

entrepreneur, who was pushed out of the family's company in 2003 by a new shareholders' pact established by some of the Marzottos, took the opportunity to underscore once again his displeasure with a number of strategies undertaken over the past few years by his relatives, including the sale of Hugo Boss.

"The family has become richer while they depleted the company," he said.

He also did not mince words about the "fetid political" figures here that have contributed to Italy's recession — although he supports Prime Minister Mario Monti and believes Italy still has a bright future.