

Herbert W. Vanden Brul Entrepreneurial Award Recipient

Giovanni (John) LiDestri

CEO, LiDestri Food & Drink



John LiDestri is CEO of LiDestri Foods, Beverages, and Spirits headquartered in Fairport, NY. He was born in Italy and in 1960 at age 14, emigrated to the U.S. with his parents and three siblings to the Rochester area where all his family members found employment. John's brother Santi was working at Ragu Foods and offered John a part-time job washing bottles there when he was 16. During his high school and college years, John worked in various manufacturing and logistics positions at the Ragu plant. He left Ragu in 1976 when Ragu's former owner and president, Ralph Cantisano,

owner and president, Ralph Cantisano, hired him as the General Manager of Cantisano Foods, Inc. In 1991, John became the President, and 6 years later he was named CEO. After the Cantisano family divested themselves of the business in 2002, John became sole owner of the company, and the name was changed to LiDestri Foods, Inc.

Today the company is one of the world's largest manufacturers of tomato-based products including salsas and pasta sauces. In the last several years the company has expanded into aseptic beverages and a line of spirits. Then more recently, LiDestri formed a joint venture with G's Fresh Ltd, one of the largest produce growers and marketers in the U.K. to process beet products for distribution throughout the U.S. There are now five plants located in Fairport, NY; Rochester, NY; Fresno, CA; Pennsauken, NJ; and most recently Lansdale, P.A. where Zeigler's cider and other beverages are produced. LiDestri currently has over 1,000 employees with annual sales in excess of \$500 million.

John is a past board member of the Mary Cariola Children's Center and currently on the board of Rochester's Italian Heritage Foundation. He sits on the board of the Genesee Regional Bank. He is on the Board and has been a longtime supporter and benefactor of the Hole in the Wall Gang, a camp for seriously ill children founded by Paul Newman.

John lives in Rochester, N.Y. with his wife Dr. Cynthia Reddeck-LiDestri. They have three grown children, John C., Stefani, and Dylan. When he is not in the office, you might find John enjoying his boat, riding on his Harley or swinging a golf club.