



Photos courtesy Soprano's Last Supper

Sit down to dinner with a very unusual "family" at "The Soprano's Last Supper" at the Tropicana Hotel in Las Vegas.

# The mob is alive and well in Vegas

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## the Soprano's Last Supper

It's not every day that you get to sit down to dinner with an infamous mob boss, enjoy his "going away" party and then try and take over his job. But then "The Soprano's Last Supper" at Tropicana is not your ordinary show.

Instead of just watching, "The Soprano's Last Supper" lets you interact with the performers as they celebrate Tony Soprano's going away (to jail) party. This show has it all - singing, dancing and comedy from the wacky antics of the Sopranos as they search for someone in the audience to be the next mob boss.

Most people know of the Sopranos from the hit HBO series which premiered in 1991. The series was based on the character, Tony Soprano, an Italian American mobster who struggled with his conflicting roles as a husband, father and mob boss. Although the television show ended in 2007, people can still relish everything they loved about the show at "Soprano's Last Supper." Even if you never saw the television show, the performers waste no time letting you know what's happening with the family and who each character is.

"You don't have to be a 'Soprano's fans to come sing, dance, eat, party and have a good time," said Maggie Cupp, one of the show's producers. She and co-producer Ryan Sands did the show for six years on the East Coast before bringing it to Las Vegas in 2006. They also produce several other interactive shows including "Joey and Maria's Comedy Italian Wedding" that perform across the country and in Ireland and Australia.

Aside from appealing to fans from the television show, "Soprano's Last Supper" is a good option for visitors looking to

experience a mob-themed activity during their stay in Las Vegas.

Mayor Oscar Goodman and Steve Schirripa, the actor who played Bobby on the original television series, have both been guests at the show. The performers from "Soprano's Last Supper" have also appeared with the mayor, a former lawyer for mobster Anthony Spilotro, for various promotions, according to Cupp.

"Soprano's Last Supper" was created as a parody of the original HBO series and incorporates some of the same plot points and characters from the television show. Guests have the opportunity to interact with the performers as though they were talking to the real characters.

"My whole theme since we've been doing this is I want people to come thinking they're going to be entertained and they leave and they felt like they were part of the family. They felt like they were actually with the Sopranos because they were part of the entertainment," said Cupp.

The experience starts as soon as you enter the showroom. Performers mingle with the audience, helping to set the premise for the upcoming events. In addition to the mafia references from the actors, the showroom adds to the experience. Tucked away behind a deli in a little known corner of the Tropicana, The Cellar showroom has a sense of secrecy about it like a real mob hideout.

"If you know anything about the 'Sopranos,' the back of the Italian deli is where they have all of their secret meetings," said Cupp.

Guests are seated at banquet tables situated around a dance floor and stage. Each table has been assigned a family name like the Provolones and the Salamies, which adds to the fun of assuming your new identity as a mobster. The intimate showroom puts everyone close to the performers and the dance floor.

The show starts with a film clip that's similar to the television show but instead of picturing Tony driving on the New Jersey Turnpike and parking in his driveway at home, he's driving on the Las Vegas Strip and parks at the Tropicana. Next a character named Silvio Stugots, played by John Paul Raniola, gets on the microphone and welcomes everyone to the show. He acts as the host for the evening.

Raniola has been performing in the show since it opened. He explained that the interactive aspect of the show creates some unique challenges as an actor.

"The biggest feat is trying to impersonate the specific character because most of the people who come are big 'Soprano's fans so if you slip up they're going to know," said Raniola. "It's not a regular script where you come up with everything but you really don't have to worry about a back story because you're on the stage

### Some mob stops for all those wise guys and gals

It's no secret that the mob had a role in Las Vegas history. Even the city's current mayor, Oscar Goodman (formerly a criminal defense attorney), was a self-professed "mouthpiece to the mob." Here are some mob-related places to visit in Las Vegas:

- After acquiring the Flamingo from Billy Wilkerson, Benjamin "Bugsy" Siegel opened the hotel in 1946. He was murdered a year later, but the hotel built a monument in his honor. It's located in the hotel's pool area near the wedding chapel. This bronze statue is the only place that formally acknowledges organized crime in Las Vegas.
- Before opening the Flamingo, Siegel purchased El Cortez on behalf of Meyer Lansky in 1945. He used profits from the sale of the casino towards financing the Flamingo.
- The parking lot between Marie Calender's (600 E. Sahara Ave.) and Tony Roma's (620 E. Sahara Ave.) is the site of Frank "Lefty" Rosenthal's car bombing which took place in 1982. Many people might know of this incident from the scene in the 1995 movie "Casino." Although the car bombing scene was filmed in Las Vegas it was not shot at the actual parking lot where the incident occurred. Instead it was shot at Main Street Station.
- Rosenthal's former home is located at 972 Vegas Valley Dr.
- Capo's Italian Steakhouse is known as

"the original mob speakeasy." The décor and dim lighting make it feel like you are sitting in a real mob hideout. Even the entrance is slightly hidden. The menu has dishes like "Spilotro Spiedini" and "Wise Guy Alfredo." There are two locations: 5795 W. Tropicana Ave. and 5675 W. Sahara Ave.

• Three years after moving to Las Vegas from Chicago, notorious mobster Tony "The Ant" Spilotro purchased a home in 1974 located at 4675 Balfour Dr.

• The Tropicana was another Las Vegas Strip property run for a time by organized crime. In 1957 Frank Costello, a New York godfather, was shot and wounded. While he was receiving medical treatment, New York police checked Costello's coat pocket and found a tally of the Tropicana's daily casino take, suggesting he was one of the property's secret owners.

• While walking around Riviera you might notice that the gaming floor looks familiar. This is because all of the casino scenes from the movie "Casino" were filmed here. To avoid getting in the way of real gamblers and guests filming took place in the early morning hours.

• Mobster Frank Cullotta had close ties with Spilotro before trading sides and becoming a government witness. He admitted to murdering government informant Jerry Lisner at 2302 Rawhide St., Las Vegas in 1979.

40 feet away from everyone."

Brief scenes between the various characters (Tony Baritone, Dr. Melfri, Adrianna Lacerba, Uncle Junior, Paulie Wacknuts, Bobby Baclava and Christopher Multisanti) are performed from the dance floor or near guests' tables. This intimate environment puts guests in the center of the action, but it also means that the performers can see instant feedback from the crowd. The improvisational part of the show enables the performers to instantly adapt each scene according to the crowd response.

"You have to read the audience and know what works and where to take them and what to do," said Raniola. "It's keeping them engaged and making sure that they have a good time. It's catering to the audience in every way with this show."

As the show progresses it becomes clear that the Sopranos are searching for a rat in the family and someone from the audience to take over while Tony serves jail time. Later in the show three people from the audience get to stand on stage and demonstrate their best mafia accent in hopes of becoming the new mob boss. The segment elicits laughs from the audience as the three try their best "mob" patter.

VIP ticket holders get to enjoy a buffet-style Italian dinner that's served midway through the show. It includes bread sticks, salad, a pasta dish and chicken marsala. After dinner, waitresses come around to serve dessert.

Along with the actors' antics there's

also singing from a dazzling character named Dee Dee Diamond (Tony's girlfriend) who performs throughout the show. At various times guests are also invited to get on their feet and shake it on the dance floor with some of the performers. Part of the fun of experiencing this show is just waiting to see what's going to happen next, and just like the TV episodes, this Sopranos story has a surprise ending.

"We're all about the guest experience. My feeling with interactive shows is I want people to come thinking that they're going to be entertained when they actually become part of the entertainment and don't even realize it," said Cupp.



Crazy antics abound in "The Soprano's Last Supper."



Audience members at "The Soprano's Last Supper" often become part of the entertainment.