



Lena Cappadona

November 30, 1935 - February 28, 2026

Lena Cappadona, age 90, of Westwood, formerly of Ridgefield, passed away peacefully after a brief illness.

Born in Neirone, in the province of Genoa, Italy, Lena was the cherished daughter of Matthew and Rose Gardella. She immigrated to the United States as a teenager following World War II, arriving with courage and determination, and without speaking English.

In 1961, she married the love of her life, Joe, and together they lived the true American dream, bought a house and raised three children. Lena was a dedicated and loving mother, and later, a proud and adoring grandmother whose home was always filled with warmth, laughter, and the best Italian food.

After the heartbreaking loss of her beloved husband in the prime of their lives, Lena showed remarkable strength. Determined to remain active and independent, she returned to the workforce, trying several roles before finding her place as a sales associate at Lord & Taylor, where she took pride in her work and formed lasting friendships.

She traveled extensively, including many pilgrimages with the Holy Rosary Society of Saint Nicholas Church, embracing both devotion and adventure with equal enthusiasm. From a sunset dinner at the Eiffel Tower to dipping her

toes in the Dead Sea to riding a camel in Jerusalem to Holland where she saw beautiful fields of flowers.

Two of Lena's favorite hobbies were sewing and cooking. She would often sew her children's clothes and hem or stitch any and everything, including socks! In the kitchen, her Bolognese and Pesto sauces became family favorites, and she faithfully passed down her most treasured traditions. She spoke beautiful Italian and was deeply proud of her heritage, instilling in her children and grandchildren a lasting appreciation for their roots. Determined that her children would know where they came from, she took them to Italy for one month, sharing her history and the family ties that meant so much to her.

Lena is lovingly survived by her daughter Nadia and son-in-law Giuseppe; her son Joseph; her daughter Liana and son-in-law Dennis; and her five cherished grandchildren, Liana and her husband Casey, Dominick, Jacqueline, Isabella, and Sofia. She is also survived by her brother-in-law, George Mestrov, and many nieces and nephews.

She was predeceased by her beloved husband, Joseph; her sister, Helen Mestrov, and her brother, Charles Gardella.

Lena's life was a testament to resilience, perseverance, devotion, generosity, and enduring love. She will be deeply missed and forever remembered by her family and all who were blessed to know her.

Cemetery Details

Madonna Cemetery

2070 Hoefleys Lane
Fort Lee, NJ 07024

Previous Events

Visitation

MAR 5. 4:00 PM - 8:00 PM (ET)

Barrett Leber Funeral Home
148 Dean Dr
Tenafly, NJ 07670
(201) 568-8043
<https://www.barrettleberfuneralhome.com/>

Funeral Mass

MAR 6. 10:00 AM (ET)

St. Therese of Lisieux Church
120 Monroe Ave
Cresskill, NJ 07626-1405
(201) 567-2528

Entombment

MAR 6 (ET)

Madonna Cemetery
2070 Hoefleys Lane
Fort Lee, NJ 07024

Tribute Wall

“ There are so many things about my aunt Lena I remember. I wanted to share a few of them here.

I hated eating more than anything as a kid—especially anything with meat. I would sit in front of the plate for hours while my dad tried to feed me. All I wanted was plain red sauce. Anything else, I would give to my dog Sandy so I didn't have to eat it. But when we used to go to Aunt Lena's on Sundays to eat, I would be thinking oh no, Aunt Lena is going to have that green sauce on the bow tie pasta! No plain red sauce. My dog Sandy wouldn't be able to save me this time!

Of course, picky little kids can't appreciate a good thing like homemade pesto sauce. By the time I was in my 30s, pesto was so popular. It was everywhere! I would proudly tell everyone I met: "I only eat my Aunt Lena's pesto. She's from Genoa!" One day, I called Aunt Lena; she came over and taught me how to make it. "Don't forget, use young basil only."

"I got it, Aunt Lena."

I made so much of it and froze it in ice cube trays. Then she taught me how to make stuffed baby zucchini and her Bolognese sauce, which funny enough I also didn't like as a picky little kid. It's funny how things turn around— those things I couldn't stand as a kid, are the things I love to eat the most now.

Even breakfast at Aunt Lena's was always healthy when I was a kid—there was no Count Chocula in her house. She made yogurt from scratch with some kind of a machine. She knew all the good places to get good food. I remember going with her to Raffetto's for ravioli and watching them roll out pasta on the machine from the 1920s. Then we would go a few blocks away to LaGuardia Bakery and get onion focaccia.

Aunt Lena was so ahead of her time. She was my cool aunt who knew how to drive. She was so sophisticated. She spoke real Italian.

She took me to my first movie ever. When I visited her recently I said, "You know Aunt Lena, you took me to my first movie." She looked surprised and asked, "Which one?" I said, "Song of the South." I remember the huge screen, the birds chirping, the man

singing Zippity Doo Da.

I have such wonderful memories of her. She was so generous and kind to me. She had the best laugh. Nadia, Joe, and Liana were so lucky to have such a great mom... and I was so lucky to have such a hip aunt. Mary Saltalamacchia

Mary S - March 04 at 08:51 PM

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“ *Cinzia lit a candle in memory of Lena Cappadona*



Cinzia - March 02 at 11:40 AM