

# Rent Hike Closes Da Silvano, Let's Save Caffè Vivaldi

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On December 20th, the West Village lost another institution to the greed of area building owners. Da Silvano, one of the best Italian restaurants in the City, which sat just below 6th Avenue and Bleecker Street for 41 years, closed. Da Silvano was one of the first restaurants in New York to popularize Northern Italian cuisine.

According to Silvano Marchetto, his monthly rent had risen to \$41,000 per month. When he opened in 1975, his rent was \$500 per month. Always highly rated by Zagat, Da Silvano was known as a celebrity hangout, with regular appearances by Madonna and Sean Penn. In recent years, as the rent increased, prices went up, putting the restaurant beyond the reach of most locals.

Rent hikes in local restaurants have become absurd, with landlords willing to sit with empty storefronts for a year or more until they get a taker. New restaurants need \$1 million in capital to get started, and many don't last. The situation is ludicrous.

We residents have a chance to fight back even though the political establishment does nothing to advance the idea of commercial rent regulation. Caffè Vivaldi, at 32 Jones Street, is resisting efforts by villainous landlord Steve Croman to force them

out. Croman has been in court since 2011, when he tried to impose a 400% rent increase. After 5,000 people signed a petition, Croman backed down.

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The new lease, in return for more money, was to allow basement access, which would provide both storage and customer space. But Croman never allowed them to use the space. When Caffè Vivaldi withheld a portion of the rent, Croman went to court. In February 2013, Judge Lynn Kotler ruled for the Caffè. However, Croman still never permitted access to the basement, and kept serving eviction notices. In 2014, the Caffè sued Croman. Predictably, Croman dragged out the proceedings; his May 2016 arrest delayed things even more.


Caffè Vivaldi has, for 30 years, been a gathering place for creative people, some well known, most unknown. Patrons have started a petition to the judge deciding the latest case against Croman. You can find the petition at [www.MoveOn.org](http://www.MoveOn.org) (<http://www.moveon.org/>). Better yet, drop by the Caffè, just east of 7th Avenue, and ask how you can help. Beating Croman and keeping a local eatery open are worthy goals, which we can help accomplish!

—Arthur Z. Schwartz

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