

KRAFT HOTEL FLORENCE - History of the Kraft Family

INDICE:

1. The roots of their hotel activities in Switzerland
2. In 1883 Gerardo Kraft opened his first hotel in Florence
3. 1960 - opening of the Hotel Kraft in Florence

1

The roots of their hotel activities in Switzerland



The Kraft family's involvement in the hospitality industry began in 1854 in Berne, Switzerland, when Jean Kraft constructed and inaugurated the Hotel Bernerhof. From 1851 Jean Kraft had managed the famous Gasthof Krone in Berne, where he gained his considerable experience.



Under Kraft's management the Bernerhof luxury hotel, with 123 rooms and 185 beds, hosted many illustrious names as guests such as the Queen of Napoli in 1862, King Leopold of Belgium in 1864, Marshall Juan Falcon, President of Venezuela in 1869, Rockefeller in 1894, Gabrielle d'Annunzio in 1905 and Paderewski in 1906. The Bernerhof was later handed over to the Swiss Federal Government by the Kraft family in 1924.

In 1878 the youngest son of Jean Kraft, Gerardo leaving his siblings in Berne to manage the Bernerhof, choose to come to Italy, to Turin to be exact, to his aunt Constance, who was owner of the Grand Hotel of Turin. In 1880 he went to Rome to manage the Hotel Quirinale and in 1883 married Emma Wegenstein, whose family were the owners of the Hotel Schweizerhof located at the Reno waterfall in Neuhausen, thereby joining two great families of the hotelier tradition.

In 1883 Gerardo Kraft opened his first hotel in Florence

After leaving Rome Jean Kraft proceeded to Florence and in 1883 bought the Hotel Italia and then later in 1897 the Royal Peace Hotel, which he renovated adding a fourth floor, and renamed it the Grand Hotel, with 120 rooms and 240 beds.



His children in the meantime returned to Switzerland to study and later began their hotel apprenticeships firstly in a hotel in Germany, then Cannes, London, Interlaken, Naples and finally they returned to Florence. In 1928 Gerardo Kraft expanded the Hotel Italia in Piazza Ognissanti in Florence which became the Hotel Excelsior. It had the same architectural style as the Bernerhof with 170 rooms, it was inaugurated on the 1 April, 1928.



Present day foto - from left to right: Grand Hotel of Florence, [French Institute](#), the church of Ognissanti and Hotel Excelsior

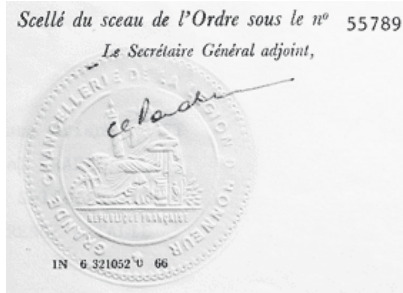
The two extremely luxurious hotels in Florence played host to an array of illustrious guests: the Romanov family, Emperor William II of Prussia, the Duke and Duchess of Windsor, the Shah of Iran and his wife Soraya, Princess Margaret of Great Britain, Elena of Rumania, Queen Sofia of Greece, the King of Yugoslavia, British Prime Minister Winston Churchill and numerous other artists of international fame: Johann Strauss, Backhaus, Cortot, Rubinstein, Menuhin, Toscanini, Benedetti Michelangeli, Bruno Walter, Furtwangler, Beniamino Gigli, Maria Calla, Josephine Baker, Maurice B ejart, Carla Fracci, Marcello Mastroianni and Gina Lollobrigida.



The Emilio Kraft Family in 1928 and 10 years later

1960 - Opening Of The Hotel Kraft Florence

In 1959 the Kraft family sold both hotels to the CIGA (Compagnia Italiana Grandi Alberghi), and today they belong to the [Starwood Hotels and Resorts Worldwide Inc.](#) Hermann Kraft, eldest son of Emilio Kraft who was the son of Gerardo Kraft married Ariane von der Weid. Ariane was the daughter of Charles von der Weid, who was decorated on February 3rd, 1983 with the Chevalier of the Legion of Honour No. 55789 for his services to France before and during the Second World War. He was also cousin of the founder of [Antenna Technologies](#) , Denis von der Weid.



In 1960 Hermann Kraft restored and transformed Hotel Bianchi Byron in Via Solferino, Florence and renamed it after his family, Kraft Hotel. After only six months from its re-opening, Hermann had to deal with the damage caused by the unexpected [flooding of Florence on November 4th, 1966](#), which led to its closure for six months.

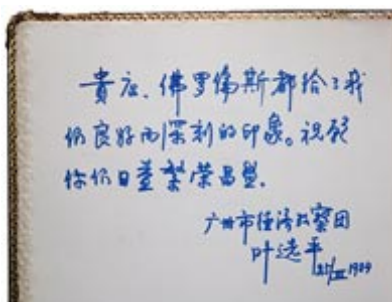
The Hotel Kraft is currently run by the daughter of Hermann, Monique Kraft who continued in the entrepreneurial spirit of her family, by opening a new structure in the Tuscan countryside. As a result of the numerous activities carried out by Monique Kraft she has become part of the [Rotary Club of](#)

[Florence](#)  and [AIDDA](#) **AIDDA** (Association of Women Directors and Managers) affiliated

with [World Enterprise for Women Chefs](#) , as well as being a member benefactor of the [Teatro](#)

[del Maggio Musicale di Firenze](#) .

The Kraft Hotel has also adhered to the project "The City of the A.R.T. Absolutely Refusing Trash", a project that wants to increase the value of the environment, cultural resources and tourism. The project is sponsored by the Province of Florence and headed by the section of hygiene and well-being of the Quadrifoglio society. The project follows indications of Ecolabel and the certification UNI EN 14001 on the System of Environmental Management.



"We are really happy to be in Florence, your hospitality has been magnificent. We wish you much prosperity".

*The municipal delegation of Canton Ye Xuan Ping
25-3-1984*

From the book of signatures of the Hotel Kraft

The beautiful new structures in the Tuscan countryside

"IL POZZETO"

A splendid 16th century residence, restored with care to guarantee its ancient feel, it was a spiritual retreat to the Franciscan Brothers during their pilgrimages between Verna and Assisi. It is located in the Comune of Anghiari, between Arezzo, Sansepolcro and Cortona.

www.ilpozzeto.it

"BORGO SAN LUIGI"

Immersed in the green and tranquil countryside of the hills between Florence and Siena, located in the Comune of Monteriggioni, it is run by the son of Monique Kraft, Vieri Michelagnoli.

www.borgosanluigi.it

"LA CIABATTA"

Fascinating retreat in an ancient town in the Comune of Casole d'Elsa near Sienna, La Ciabatta is run by another son of Monique Kraft, Giuseppe Michelagnoli.

www.laciabatta.it