



# Keeping Close to Home(town)

Long Island natives launch a new type of mobile flower shop.

The granddaughter and daughter of New York florists, **Jaclyn Rutigliano** has spent her career as a public relations, branding and media consultant for other people's businesses. But last year, she melded her two worlds – flowers and marketing – putting an entirely personal spin on things.

Along with husband, **Marc Iervolino**, she launched **Hometown Flower Co.** in May 2019 – Mother's Day weekend, in fact. Their "hometown" is Huntington, N.Y. – on Long Island. The couple runs Hometown Flower Co. as a family operation with their two young daughters, **August** and **Sage**. Rutigliano oversees floral design, creative marketing and branding for the company. Iervolino oversees the day-to-day business operations and logistics.

Hometown Flower Co. wants to connect customers with Long Island farmers who grow their flowers. Rather than a brick-and-mortar retail flower shop like her grandparents opened in Queens, N.Y., in 1948, or a special events and wedding florist like her parents later established (and still run) that serves Long Island and the tri-state market, Rutigliano and Iervolino envisioned the traditional neighborhood florist with a twist.

"We launched a radically different brand from what I'm used to with my family's legacy in flowers," she says. "We are Long Island's first fully mobile and digital florist, and we source everything exclusively from a collective





Portrait of Jaclyn and Marc,  
courtesy of Hometown Flower Co.

of local flower growers on the island. We abide by one rule, which is sourcing only in our ‘backyard’ – with what is seasonally available.”

Before launching Hometown Flower Co., Rutigliano and Iervolino spent a season visiting Long Island flower farms to establish connections. Today, they work with around 10 flower growers of various sizes and specialties.

“Being mobile, or even digital, allows us to provide access to locally grown flowers in places that farmers traditionally can’t reach,” she says. “Our farmers either are strictly wholesale or operate on a very local level. So, unless you’re going to catch them at the farmers’ market or pick up from their farms, they don’t have a way to easily distribute to many consumers. We are literally going end to end on this island to pick up our flowers to make that happen.”

Hometown Flower Co. has quickly gained attention on Long Island and in the New York media market, thanks, in large part, to Rutigliano’s savvy marketing. The “buy local” message resonates, but there’s an added novel and visual impact, thanks to the mobile flower shop, a.k.a. “Baby Blue,” a vintage 1976 Ford pickup truck.

The business model includes a CSA-style flower subscription called “Flowers in a Bag.” “People get to choose weekly, biweekly or monthly delivery, and we have four sizes. No two arrangements ever look alike, and everything arrives in a brown paper bag,” Rutigliano explains. Then there are the “Baby Blue” experiences, where Rutigliano and Iervolino sell from their truck, either at a farmers’ market or at the invitation of host businesses or for private events. The truck bed has been transformed into a flower stand with a charming black-and-white striped awning.

The goal of “pop-up” appearances is to immerse people in flowers. Some hosts ask Rutigliano to teach a flower crown workshop for guests; others want a “flower bar” setup that allows people to select their bouquet elements.

“I think the core differentiator for us – besides the local message – is the interactivity,” she says. “We are showcasing flowers that look kind of familiar but a little different, and certainly not something that you would get from a traditional florist. But also, it’s important for people to have an experience that connects them to their flowers so they understand why we’re doing this. And maybe they walk away valuing flowers more.” ■

## DETAILS

**Hometown Flower Co.**, [hometownflowerco.com](https://hometownflowerco.com), [@hometownflowerco](https://www.instagram.com/hometownflowerco)



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