

# HELLO!

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## KATE'S BIRTHDAY TREATS

• THE QUEEN'S  
'GIFT' TO THE  
PARENTS-TO-BE

• PREGNANT  
DUCHESS MAKING A  
'STEADY RECOVERY'

• AN UNFORGETTABLE  
FAMILY OUTING ON  
HER BIG DAY



'It's amazing  
brilliant'



03



DESIGNER AND WIFE OF  
HOTEL TYCOON SIR ROCCO

# ALIAI FORTE

MODELS HER OWN  
CREATIONS AT HOME  
WITH DAUGHTER LYDIA

'My designs are for women  
who like to celebrate  
their individuality,  
like my daughters'

**A**liai Forte has a stylish *joie de vivre* that draws people straight to her, both on the international social circuit and in London, where she lives with her family in a beautiful Victorian townhouse in the heart of Chelsea.

Lady Forte, the wife of hotel tycoon Sir Rocco Forte – whose father Baron Forte of Ripley established the Trust House Forte chain and was credited with transforming Britain's catering industry – is, like her husband, of Italian origin. She met Rocco, two decades her senior, when she was just 16, and married him five years later in Rome, in a much-reported wedding for which she designed her own Renaissance-style gown.

Since then, like a true Italian *mamma*, Aliai has put family first. The couple's three children, Lydia – who has been mentioned as a potential candidate for Prince Harry's affections – Irene and Charles, share both their mother's love of the arts and their father's work ethic, and all look set to take the family business forward. Aliai is clearly proud when she talks about them. "They study, they work and they don't give me anything but satisfaction," she tells us.

#### CREATIVE INSTINCTS

But now they have flown the nest she has more time to indulge her creative side, which she has channelled into a clothing line, *Aliai Forte*.

The lace and crochet-embellished garments, which are often seen on herself and her glamorous daughters, are made, she explains, for women like themselves, who "like to celebrate their individuality rather than conform"

**Aliai is a very unusual name.**

"It has its roots in Arabic and was chosen by my father, a great student of ancient civilisations."

**And now it's the name of your label. When did you start designing professionally?**

"I've always designed for myself, my children and my friends, but it turned into a job when we opened our resort in Verdura, in Sicily. I wanted to express what I felt about Sicily.

"There's a lot of unemployment – and a long tradition of embroidery and crochet. It would have been disrespectful and unorganic to sell products in the resort that weren't made on the island. I started designing clothes that reflected what inspired me about the place: nostalgic images of the 1970s, because it seems





**'My daughters are as interested in fashion as I was at their age... They're more drawn to their father's line of work'**

and the local traditions. I fuse all together and come up with simple, modern designs."

**Tell us more about them.**

"They're for women who like traditional things but who like to celebrate their individuality rather than conform. As far as the 'look' goes, I design with my daughters in mind – and of course myself."

**Where can we buy your creations?**

"It's still early days but so far I have boutiques in two beautiful London locations: in Mode and The Cross. I also sell online and in a shop in Sicily. I hope soon you will be able to find my designs all over the world."

**You're also keen on interior design, aren't you?**

"I have always designed my homes myself. This house is Victorian and I have tried to make sure the decor is in keeping with that, but of course with modern comforts and conveniences."

**What's your favourite room?**

"The kitchen, because it leads out into the garden and has lots of light. I love entertaining and we do it all the time."

**When did you and Sir Rocco find the house?**

"We got it soon after we were married. It's worked out well for us. Chelsea is a bit like a villa. It's a privilege to live here."

**FAMILY TRADITIONS**

**Tell us about your children.**

"I'm very proud of them. They study, work and give me nothing but satisfaction."

**Do you advise your daughters what to wear?**

"Sometimes, but they have their own style and they're not as interested in fashion as I was at their age."

**Are they more business-minded like Rocco?**

"All three of them definitely are more drawn to his line of work. Your father-in-law, Sir Charles Forte, who was originally from Italy, founded an empire of luxury hotels and restaurants in Britain that your husband went on to expand internationally."

"My father-in-law was the most extraordinary person I've ever known. He built an empire from nothing, showing a vision and determination that are absolutely unique. In business, everything he turned his hand to was a success. And what's more, his approach to business was always

Principles very rare and admirable in today's business world, where few are concerned with building something that lasts'



He never forgot his origins – his family weren't rich but they had a strong work ethic. He always helped anyone he could and always gave generously to charity. "My husband is very different from my father-in-law – if anything he's even more determined – but he lives by the same principles, very rare and admirable in today's business world, where everyone wants to make money fast and get it fast, and few are concerned with building something that lasts."

Do you go back to Italy often? "Yes, to see my beloved parents, because I work there – and because it's the most beautiful country in the world."



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MAKE-UP: WWW.CHARLOTTECOWEN.COM  
HAIR: WWW.HERMANHO.COM  
JEWELLERY: CELIA WEINSTOCK/  
LYME FINE JEWELLERY

The decor of the house, a blend of classic and contemporary, is very much a reflection of Aliai's tastes, as are the dresses she and Lydia are wearing – beautifully-detailed creations from her collection, which is made in Sicily and features hand crochet and embroidery by local artisans