

Mario Batali Sued and Under Criminal Investigation in Boston for Alleged Groping



Craig Sjodin/Getty



JESSICA FECTEAU

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Mario Batali is facing another investigation following the initial probe by the New York Police Department in May.

On Thursday, *Eater* reported the disgraced chef is under criminal investigation by the Boston Police Department after 28-year-old Tene filed a complaint against him on June 22 for allegedly groping her at a bar last year. Tene is also suing Batali in Massachusetts superior court for sexual assault and battery and seeking damages for "emotional distress" and humiliation, according to the suit obtained by PEOPLE.

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The news of several accusations against Batali first surfaced last December when four women came forward alleging encounters they'd had with the celebrity chef, 57, where he inappropriately touched them. In May, several more women, including Tene, came forward sharing their own experiences.

Tene told *Eater* in May that Batali groped her in April 2017, alleging he "suggested they take selfies together, then rubbed her breasts, grabbed her backside, put his hands between her legs, and kept squeezing her face into his as he kissed her."

In a statement to PEOPLE, Tene's lawyers Eric Baum and Matthew Fogelman said: "Mario Batali's actions were cruel and dehumanizing, and he has shown

absolutely no remorse for his conduct. Natali has come forward, not only to redress the direct harm that she endured, but also to bring light to a widespread and prevalent issue. Anyone who is the victim of sexual abuse should hold their head up high, recognize that they are not alone, and know that there are people who can help them."

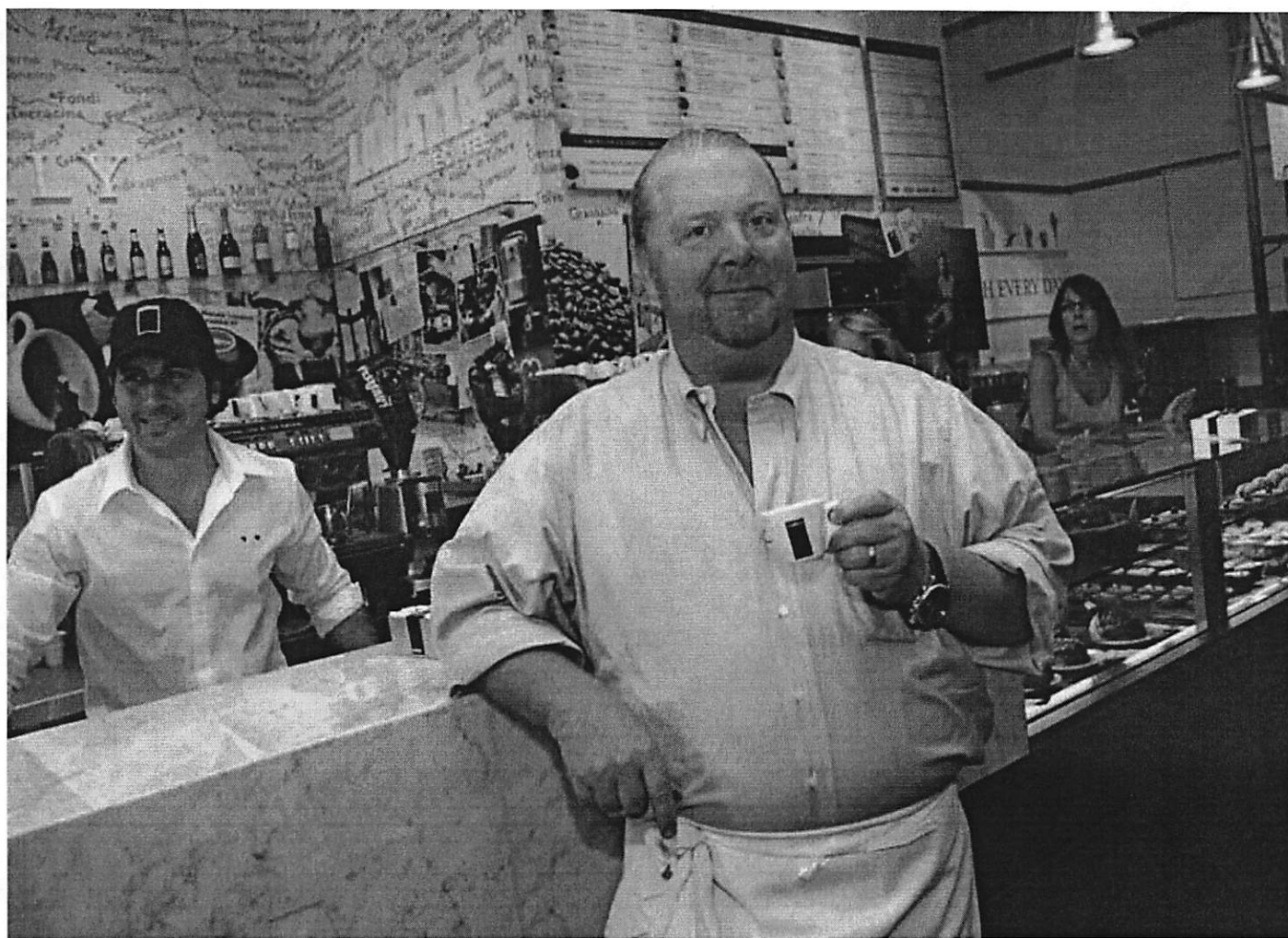
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Representatives for Batali did not respond to comment about the new lawsuit, but in a statement he released in May he said: "I vehemently deny any allegations of sexual assault. My past behavior has been deeply inappropriate and I am sincerely remorseful for my actions. I am not attempting a professional comeback. My only focus is finding a personal path forward where I can continue in my charitable endeavors - helping the underprivileged and those in need."



Metro

Massachusetts woman sues Mario Batali, accuses him of sexually assaulting her in Boston



JEMAL COUNTESS/GETTY IMAGES

Chef Mario Batali at Eataly in New York City in 2010.

By Jaclyn Reiss

GLOBE STAFF AUGUST 23, 2018

A 28-year-old Massachusetts woman is suing celebrity chef Mario Batali, accusing him of forcibly kissing and groping her while the two were at a Boston restaurant in April 2017.

The lawsuit, filed Wednesday in Suffolk Superior Court in Boston, alleges that when Natali Tene saw Batali in the restaurant she took a photo with her phone's camera. Batali is behind the massive Eataly complex in the Prudential Center and also cohosted ABC'S "The Chew" at Towne Stove and Spirits in the Back Bay.

Batali noticed Tene and invited her to take a selfie with him.

But when she approached him, "Batali grabbed and kissed Ms. Tene's face, rubbed her breasts, grabbed her buttocks, put his hands between her legs and groped her groin area, and kept forcefully squeezing her face into his as he kissed her repeatedly," according to the complaint.

"Without asking her permission or giving her any warning, and without having received any indication that she had any sexual interest in him whatsoever, which she did not, Batali sexually assaulted her," the complaint alleges. "Batali's actions . . . were unwanted and disgusting, and made Ms. Tene feel shocked and highly uncomfortable."

Tene is seeking unknown damages "for the severe emotional distress she suffered," including anxiety, self-doubt, and "a specific fear of being assaulted and/or touched in an inappropriate manner in public," according to the complaint.

Tene's lawyers, Eric Baum and Matthew Fogelman, called their client's experience "a nightmare."

Batali could not be reached for comment.

Batali, who had owned dozens of restaurants worldwide — including Eataly at the Pru and Babbo Pizzeria on Fan Pier — stepped away from his restaurant empire in December 2017 after several women lodged sexual misconduct allegations against him on the website Eater. The allegations in the Eater story revealed a pattern of alleged groping, sexual innuendo, and other inappropriate and aggressive behavior over the course of several decades. In a

statement to Eater at the time, Batali said that “much of the behavior described does, in fact, match up with ways I have acted.”

The lawsuit filed in Boston on Wednesday cites that report, as well as a “60 Minutes” segment that aired in May, in which several women who worked at a New York City restaurant frequented by Batali alleged that he tried to grope them.

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Mario Batali sued by woman who claims he groped her

By Sandra Gonzalez, CNN

🕒 Updated 4:08 PM ET, Fri August 24, 2018

NYPD investigating Mario Batali for sexual misconduct 02:45

(CNN) — Mario Batali is being sued by a woman who claims the celebrity chef kissed and groped her at a Boston restaurant and bar last year, according to court documents obtained by CNN.

The suit comes several months after Batali first faced allegations of sexual misconduct.

Natali Tene states in a suit filed this week that Batali rubbed her breasts, kissed her repeatedly and groped her buttocks and groin area during an encounter at a Boston-area restaurant in April 2017.

Tene did not know Batali personally but was familiar with his career, according to the suit.

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Representatives for Batali have not returned CNN's request for comment regarding the suit.

"What Mario Batali did to Natali was disgusting and vile," Tene's lawyers, Eric Baum and Matthew Fogelman, said in a joint statement to CNN. "Batali sexually assaulted our client in open view and without hesitation. He has shown no remorse. His actions cannot go unanswered."

In December, restaurant news website Eater published a report in which four unnamed women, some of whom worked for Batali, claimed the chef touched them inappropriately "in a pattern of behavior that appears to span at least two decades."

Batali later said in a statement to CNN that he was "deeply sorry" and apologizing "to the people I have mistreated and hurt."

"That behavior was wrong and there are no excuses," he said.

Batali left his ABC daytime series "The Chew" in light of the allegations. The Food Network also halted its plans to bring Batali back to its programming lineup.

In May, Batali's restaurant group ended its partnership with him after allegations of sexual misconduct against him prompted a police investigation.

Anderson Cooper, reporting for a segment of CBS's "60 Minutes" in May, sat down with several of women who say that sexual harassment and assault were common in restaurants owned by Batali.

Shortly after it aired, the NYPD confirmed to CNN that it was investigating "allegations raised in the '60 Minutes' report" and had spoken to half a dozen women.

One accuser told CNN that authorities questioned her in February, indicating that an investigation has been going on for months.

At the time, Batali released a follow-up statement to CNN "vehemently" denying any allegations of sexual assault.

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Mario Batali accused of sexually assaulting woman while taking selfie together in Boston pub

By RICH SCHAPIRO
NEW YORK DAILY NEWS | AUG 23, 2018



Mario Batali has been accused of sexual assault in a new lawsuit. (Laura Cavanaugh / FilmMagic)



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The lawsuit says Batali beckoned her to his table to take a selfie after spotting her taking a photo of him.

Tene was 28 years old at the time. Batali, owner of a nearby Eatery, was 57.

As they prepared to take the picture, Batali pounced, the suit says.

“Batali grabbed and kissed Ms. Tene’s face, rubbed her breasts, grabbed her buttocks, put his hands between her legs and groped her groin area, and kept forcefully squeezing her face into his as he kissed her repeatedly,” says the lawsuit filed Wednesday in a Massachusetts court.

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shocked and highly uncomfortable.”

The suit adds to a growing list of sexual assault accusations against the owner of such famed New York restaurants as Babbo and Spotted Pig.

Batali is the subject of a criminal probe by the NYPD and a civil investigation by the state attorney general’s office.

His once-high-flying restaurant empire has crumbled since sexual misconduct allegations began surfacing against him in December.

At least six of his eateries have closed, and he was fired from the ABC food show “The Chew.”

A Batali spokeswoman did not immediately return a request for comment.

Lawyers for Tene described him as a sexual predator.

“What Mario Batali did to Natali was disgusting and vile,” attorneys Eric Baum and Matthew Fogelman said in a statement. “Batali sexually assaulted our client in open view and without hesitation. He has shown no remorse. His actions cannot go unanswered. We live in a society where no one should ever use their power to violate and sexually assault another person.”



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