

## At the European Parliament for Calabria

L. A. S. (July 02, 2009)



Calabria was present at this year's Fancy Food Show with its best products as it embarks on a major promotional campaign in the U.S. We spoke with Mario Pirillo about it, from his perspective as a son of emigrants

On [his Facebook page](#) [2], he writes with satisfaction: "The only Calabrian in Europe. With 110,451 votes I was elected to European Parliament. Heartfelt thanks to all."

Mario Pirillo who hails from Amantea, Calabria entered politics in his youth. He has dedicated his life



to politics and supporting his region.

We approached him at a dinner hosted by the delegation from the Region of Calabria in conjunction with the Fancy Food Show. His region is not only playing an important role at the annual food show in New York. The Italian Trade Commission has also organized Discovering Calabria, a series of events devoted to the lesser-known wine and foods of Calabria, encouraging guests to taste the pleasures of this undiscovered region in Italy.

### **What does it mean to promote a region like Calabria in New York?**

It wasn't difficult to do. I'm the son of emigrants. My father lived in Venezuela for many years. I know what it means to live far away from one's land. We understand the difficulties that emigrant families face, whether they are those living abroad or those who remain at home. And so it is important to reach out to our fellow countrymen and their children and grandchildren. One of the means to connect is certainly through Calabrian products. By coming here we do two things: we get in touch with the emigrant who left Calabria and who perhaps feels nostalgic, and we promote quality products that can compete on a global level.

It's a project that we undertook in 2005 and continue to accomplish it with ease. We have already made great strides. The Italian Trade Commission knows it. We have improved the way in which we present ourselves over the years and I think this year has been the best one so far.

We have brought many products here. Young entrepreneurs have taken the reins of small companies; they are professionals, college graduates, motivated young people who can speak several languages... Calabria has changed. It has grown. We must have faith and confidence in the future.

### **So Calabrians abroad and those who love Calabria have become ambassadors in their own way....**

I believe that the best promoters of Calabrian products are Calabrians themselves, whether they live in Calabria or abroad. If a guest goes to a Calabrian family's home and they don't have wine from Calabria, how can we expect an outsider to appreciate it? Those who have ties to Calabria they are the best people to promote our products here. And there are so many...

### **You are now a member of European Parliament. What does this mean for your plan to promote the region?**

So far the regions and local organizations are using the resources within the local communities a great deal. The government has removed many local chapters that benefitted the region's cities, towns, and counties, and replaced them with taxes imposed on local citizens. Europe is becoming the source that can provide oxygen to local organizations. My presence there has that goal. I think I can do it because the resources are there, and so it has more to do with channeling them properly. The secret is to spend quickly and to spend well. Funds frequently stay in the regions' coffers and do not attain the desired result.

### **How much time and effort does it take to create a promotion like this?**

At least four months. Often the programs are tailored to the region. It's more straightforward with standard exhibits like the Fancy Food Show; the Italian Trade Commission lets you know what needs to be done. Other individual and personalized initiatives must be planned and researched far in advance. I genuinely believe that this time, this campaign, more than any of the previous ones that promoted the region of Calabria, has been thoroughly and intelligently planned and organized. I am optimistic about the prospects and the returns, and I am proud to be one of the promoters here along with the staff of the Region of Calabria.



Please [click here](#) [3] for more details about the Region of Calabria. Are you read to discover it?

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