

Italy Shines at the 58th Edition of the Summer Fancy Food Show

Natasha Lardera (June 22, 2012)



Despite the economic crisis and destructive earthquakes, Italy is still leader in quality and variety of food presented at North America's most important culinary showcase. Italian Trade Commissioner Aniello Musella talks sums things up for i-italy

Summer's grandest culinary event, [the Summer Fancy Food Show](#) [2], has come to an end. The 58th edition closed after three days of the industry's top buyers and foodservice professionals walking the aisles in search of the best selections of specialty foods and beverages.

Among 2,250 exhibitors, out of all international expositors, the Italian pavilion was, yet again, the vastest, with a total of almost 300 exhibitors, amongst them producers, consortia, associations, regional offices and chambers of commerce.

But what is even more striking than the number of producers participating is the variety of products



presented. Italy showcased the best of its olive oils and balsamic vinegars, pasta, hams, preserved vegetables, confectionery and bakery products, cheeses, tomatoes and fine wines. Quality is still top notch and the international market recognizes that by purchasing in great quantities, despite of the continuous threat of Italian sounding things.

“Based on what the producers who attended the 58th edition of the Fancy Food Show said, I can say that things are going better and better,” Italian Trade Commissioner [Aniello Musella](#) [3] said, “Business is growing and moving towards the end of the economic crisis. This year there was a larger number of buyers and orders placed and that helped not only economically but it really lifted spirits up.”

Particular attention was paid to the producers coming from Emilia-Romagna, the region that was mostly damaged by recent earthquakes. “The spirit amongst the producers couldn't have been higher. In a way the destruction brought by nature has brought on a sort of resurrection. The Consortia of [Grana Padano](#) [4] and [Parmigiano Reggiano](#) [5] were really aggressive and motivated to continue to reign supreme in the international market. Producers from the area presented high quality, prestigious balsamic vinegars, products of great value that are greatly appreciated by American buyers,” Mr. Musella added.

The American market plays a strategic role for the Italian wine and food production. In 2011 the USA imported from Italy food and wine for a value of 3.63 billion dollars thus registering an increment of 13% compared to the previous year. In the hierarchy of foreign suppliers, Italy occupies the seventh position, preceded, among others, by Canada, Mexico and China.

Still, for some products, Italy maintains total leadership: olive oil holds a market share of 56%, pasta of 30.4%, prosciutto of 67%, mineral water of 32% and cheese of 28.9%. The Italian wine market continued to show positive trends, with a market share of 31.05% and a value of about \$ 1.5 billion and an increase of 19% over 2010.

“The first trimester of 2012 is showing some contrasting information,” Mr Musella explained, “There is a decrease of 2,6% for wine and an increase of 1,4 for food products. But this is not totally reliable, as the results of the first three months, often affected by the climate, are not that influential on the overall progress.”

Italian producers pay the price of creating such delicious products, thus the plague of Italian sounding, local products that trick the consumer in believing that were “[Italian Made](#)” [6] (they use packaging, names, images and colors that evoke the authentic Italian products). [The Italian Trade Commission](#) [7] is leading a constant battle against this process of imitation. For years now they have been organizing information seminars, tastings of authentic products, information campaigns in the press, in order to make known the authentic Italian product to the American consumer.

There is a constant growth in support for Italian food, that is also due by the work of America's First Lady, [Michelle Obama](#) [8] and her campaign for healthy eating.

[The region of Apulia](#) [9], for example, dedicated to her a 1,400 year old olive tree known as “the Queen” for her efforts in promoting the values of the Mediterranean diet. “The ancient olive tree in the southeastern Italian city of Lecce produces 600 kilograms of olives a year and has a diameter of 14 meters (46 feet). The estimated 100 liters (60 gallons) of olive oil produced from the tree will be delivered to the White House beginning this fall,” www.finedininglovers.com [10] reports.



"The Mediterranean diet is seen by scientists worldwide as the best antidote against obesity and cardiovascular diseases," [Luca Franchetti Pardo](#) [11], Italian Embassy Deputy Chief of Mission Minister who attended the show, said.

What else can be said about the greatness of Italian production? There is a continuous industrial research related to growing consumer segments, such as gluten free, kosher, vegetarian, organic.

"The Italian producers have understood the importance of the US market trends and rush in great numbers to the annual Summer Fancy Food," Mr. Musella concluded. "There is great excitement amongst them regarding the return to New York City next year. Although the show has been great in the capital, New York is still seen as the best place to attract more producers, mostly because only buyers from the largest companies attended the show in Washington while in NY there is more access to small and niche companies thus giving a broader possibility to Italian producers to get on the market."

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