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Caviar Made in Italy

MARIO GATE (August 31, 2011)



Not many people know that Italian farmed caviar has made it to the top places of the worldwide caviar league. When you think of caviar you think of the Caspian Sea and of other lands, Russia being the first. Well, Italy is definitely fighting these countries for supremacy in caviar land.



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When you google "Italian food products" you get a series of web sites selling a wide range of pastas, cookies, crackers, oils, condiments, sauces... the more the merrier. Italian cuisine, and the products that it features, definitely are among the most cherished in the world. An Italian meal can be anything you want: from rustic to sophisticated, traditional and innovative, minimalistic or even ground-breaking. It is so multifaceted that it is impossible to categorize. Still, when talking about Italian cuisine certain dishes or ingredients are the ones that first come to mind but definitely one that does not come to mind is caviar.

The world's largest caviar farm (producing 20 tons a year) is indeed in Italy. Its name is Agroittica Lombarda, and it is located in Calvisano, in the province of Brescia (northern Italy). At the moment Agroittica Lombarda is the one and only business in Europe to farm white sturgeons and this places the company at the top of worldwide caviar production.

The company first opened its doors in the mid-seventies raising eel and its caviar adventure started in 1981 when sturgeon farming was introduced with the idea of producing and selling

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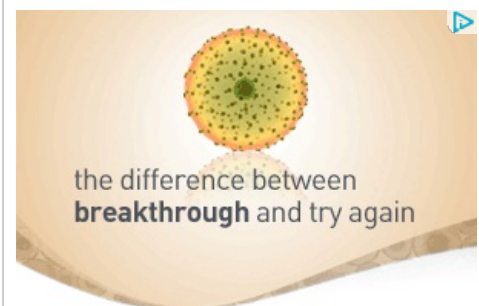


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the meat only; but as more females were increasing in number the possibility of caviar production started to take shape. At first white sturgeons were imported from the USA through a deal with the University of California Davis and as time went by the company became totally independent.

As wild sturgeons seriously risk extinction, sturgeons at **Agroittica Lombarda** are born in captivity and the breeding of several species (White sturgeons, Siberian sturgeons and Russian sturgeons) is carefully managed to ensure genuineness and safety by following the product from the very beginning through packing. The quality is indeed high as everything is monitored even in the smallest detail. Waters are in their purest form, feed is carefully selected and hygiene is essential. The processing room, for example, is pressurized to reduce bacterial contamination so that no outside air can enter while the eggs are being treated. The room looks and feels like a hospital OR where workers in lab coats are busy in the cleaning, weighing and salting of the eggs. This process extends shelf life and improves flavor since less salt is used in order to improve preservation.



The company produces Calvisius and Calvisius Elite, malossol (from the Russian that means “with low salt”) types of caviar that are always fresh and of high quality. Differently from what happens with wild sturgeons that caviar can be extracted only twice a year so it needs to be heavily salted to be preserved, farm raised caviar can be basically extracted all year round thus it only needs a little salt and this lets people enjoy the most natural taste of the caviar itself.

White Sturgeon caviar is smooth and slightly nutty, with a firm texture. With an intense aroma and an unmistakable flavor, this exquisite caviar is large sized. Caviar experts will particularly love the translucent color of the eggs, which can vary from warm brown to charcoal-gray or jet black.

The Oscietra Classic Russian Sturgeon Caviar is characterized by a firm, large-grain egg, a dark brown color with a golden hue and a rich, nutty, creamy flavor. It is cultivated from the *Acipenser gueldenstaedti*, an ancient species now flourishing due to successful conservation efforts in Italy.

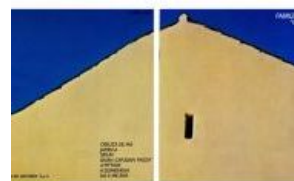
The Caviar de Venise®, Adriatic Siberian Sturgeon Caviar is slightly smaller in size than the White Sturgeon and Oscietra, and it exhibits a well-rounded flavor that lingers on the palate. This new addition to the caviar family is a recent Italian discovery.

There is plenty of low quality caviar of dubious origins on the market, but in the end quality always wins; Calvisius caviar is available in the best locations, in NYC at Citarella, Zabar’s and Salumeria Rosi among others, although there is one place where it reigns supreme.

Located in the Four Seasons Hotel in New York (58 East 58 Street, near Park Avenue), the **Calvisius Caviar Lounge** is a sophisticated, it only seats eight people, and unique lounge that means heaven for caviar connoisseurs. Here they can enjoy the exquisite taste of Italian Calvisius Malossol served in one of a kind dishes. If you order *The Italian way* you will get ten grams of white sturgeon or oscietra depending of what you feel like, served in a Martini glass on top of warmed potato puree, and if you order a *Solamente* you will get seven grams of caviar served with blinis or toasted bread. These dishes are complemented with a selection of fine French champagnes, Italian sparkling wines and high-quality vodkas. Elegant tins, all featuring the coveted “Made in Italy” label are available for purchase so that bliss can also be taken home.

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