

## Saratoga Tastes Italian with ITC! Interview with Aniello Musella

N. L. (September 17, 2012)



Italian Trade Commissioner Aniello Musella, shares his thoughts with i-Italy on the role of the Italian Trade Commission in the Saratoga Wine & Food and Fall Ferrari Festival. "This has been the meeting point for a great number of people who are attracted by the chance to taste a great selection of Italian wines and food specialties that already are available on the American market. . It is a practical way to deepen the general knowledge of a product that gets distributors, importers and consumers going. This is what the Italian Trade Commission does: not only do we educate, we also promote authentic Italian products."

**Tell us about the presence of the Italian Trade Commission at the Saratoga Wine & Food and Fall Ferrari Festival**

The Italian Trade Commission was introduced to the Saratoga Wine & Food and Fall Ferrari Festival



four years ago, by chance. We had heard about this special event and we came to check it out. There already were, back then, several Italian elements. As a consequence, we decided to participate officially as representatives of the Italian Government with a series of activities to make this event even more authentically Italian.

### **How did you make it more Italian?**

We accomplished that by bringing with us American food and wine experts chosen specifically to enrich the calendar with so called educational programs, informative seminars on specific niche and traditional products, known or unknown, such as cheeses and cold cuts, the ones that can be imported (like the less known speck and the much loved prosciutto) and of course, on wines. This educational aspect of the program has been developed further and further during the years and structured with great care.

In addition to the aforementioned aspect of the show, we have concentrated our efforts on the Italian Pavilion. This has been the meeting point for a great number of people who are attracted by the chance to taste a great selection of Italian wines and food specialties that already are available on the American market. It is a practical way to deepen the general knowledge of a product that gets distributors, importers and consumers going. This is what the Italian Trade Commission does: not only do we educate, we also promote authentic Italian products. We are really active in the fight against the dangerous phenomenon of Italian sounding. ("Italian sounding means to counterfeit Italian food products sold with almost-Italian names. These names, rather than reflecting a general food category, whitewash a lower-quality food and exploit the high reputation of the real Italian food").

### **What products are most affected by the Italian sounding phenomenon?**

The line of products that is most affected by the plague of Italian sounding is that of cheeses. Domestic cheeses are sold in packaging featuring Italian colors and images, or they have Italian sounding names so consumers are tricked into believing they are authentic. Education, once again is key. We have organized an Italian cheese tour in collaboration with Agriform. Agriform is one of Italy's leading companies specializing in the marketing and sales of traditional Italian dairy products, especially cheese. It works principally with Protected Designation of Origin (PDO) cheeses selected directly from its members. The concept of the Italian Cheese Road Tour presented by Agriform in collaboration with I-Gourmet, a leading online gourmet food retailer, was formulated with the aim of reaching consumers in a lifestyle event setting and educating them about PDO cheeses of Italy with emphasis on Asiago (fresh and aged), Valtellina Casera, Grana Padano, and Piave. Education is the strongest weapon against the plague of Italian sounding which, unfortunately, is an expression of market freedom.

### **The cheeses can be tasted in the Italian Pavilion, as many other products.**

Meeting at the Pavilion gives importers, distributors and producers the opportunity to strengthen



existing relationships. The Italian Trade Commission facilitates the possibility to meet and exchange information or improve business relationships. Let's not forget that the US are made up of many states, being in as many as possible is a goal for any producer. This specific event is based in the State of New York but there are visitors from nearby states such as Connecticut and Massachusetts and even from Canada, mostly from the Montreal area. So if your product is sold in a state after this show it could be sold in more!

### Any last thoughts?

Saratoga is an attractive destination: it is known for its thermal waters and spas, for horse races, the polo club and amazing artistic programs organized by our partner, SPAC. (The Saratoga Performing Arts Center is a complex consisting of a large amphitheater and a smaller indoor theater on the grounds of Saratoga Spa State Park. It presents summer performances of classical music, jazz, pop and rock, dance, opera, as well as this festival).

I also want to express my happiness in regards to the presence of the Consul General of Italy in New York, Natalia Quintavalle. This is the first time that we are honored with the presence of such an important representative of the Italian Government in the USA. This proves we have the official support of the Italian institutions and that we are doing great. Saratoga definitely tastes Italian!

After 4 years, I am proud to say that the festival speaks Italian.

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