



American Consumers Expect High Quality Products from Italy

Letizia Airos Soria (January 20, 2020)



In the run-up to the Italian Export Forum due to open on January 27 at the SVA Theatre in New York, we interviewed Giovanni Colavita, CEO of Colavita USA, who will participate in the Forum's panel entitled "Italy: Exporting Beauty".

In addition to being a leading brand in the field of Italian gastronomy products, Colavita is also an importer and distributor of many Italian brands, large and small. How do you work with the companies you introduce on the US market? What are the criteria by which they are chosen and what services and support do you offer?

Twelve years ago we decided to open our US distribution organization to other top Italian brands looking to approach the US market, and today we represent many leading Italian brands and niche producers of unique products. We promote product lines of small manufacturers via e-commerce and larger brands in brick and mortar retail, so we have a differentiated offering in the two channels. E-commerce is a powerful tool for giving niche producers an opportunity get their products in front of a broad audience, while brick and mortar retail is better suited for large scale manufacturers who have



the resources available for the investments in slotting and advertising that are required to compete in that channel.

In your experience, what do Americans expect from Italian products? How would you assess the situation of the 'Made in Italy' brand in the US food and beverages market today?

The American consumer is expecting high quality products and long standing family tradition behind Italian food products. Our most difficult challenge on the market is not the Italian sounding brands, but those Italian companies that do not deliver on the quality and standards demanded by American consumers. The market has changed dramatically in the 40 years that Colavita has been distributing Italian products. Today, the consumer values quality and experience before considering a product's country of origin.

Italy's success depends largely on the creativity and entrepreneurship of small and medium businesses. How can they be helped to enter the American market and successfully manage their presence here?

The American market has become more and more competitive over the last 12 years that I have been living here. For a new company approaching the US market, the first and most important step is the selection of the right partner to ensure a shared vision between both companies. Typically, the first measurable success will come via e-commerce and the food service channel, followed by traditional retail. An essential resource, which can be shared between the two companies, is to have a brand ambassador living in the US to support the sales force of the importer, to promote the product, to educate the sales team and the buyers on the brand's history and message.

As one of the co-founders of Italian Hub Corporation, what's your take on how the country and its products are communicated in the US? What are some the most common mistakes that companies can make in this regard?

We decided to create the Your Italian Hub partnership between Colavita and i-Italy because we recognized the need for this in the US market. We saw that the Italian agencies working on strategy and communications for the Italian brands we represent in the US market lack a real knowledge of the US market and consumers. At the same time we also observed a lack of understanding by American agencies of the culture, traditions, and values of Italy and their brands and products.

Attendance to the "Italian Export Forum" is free-of-charge

January 27th 2020
from 4.00 pm to 6.15 pm

Please RSVP team@youritalianhub [2]

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SVA - School of Visual Art - SVA - Theatre
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