

Flavors of Lombardy. Cuisine & Wines, Culture, Natural Beauty and More...

Marcello De Marco and Letizia Airos (October 22, 2010)



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The goal of the “[Flavors of Lombardy](#) [2]” initiative was to discover, or re-discover, this fascinating Region of the North of Italy under many different points of view: wine&food, culture, natural beauty and diversity.

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It has been a full immersion for trade operators and the press, aimed at consolidating a project that began 3 years ago.

For those who are not familiar with this wonderful region, Lombardy is located in the central part of Northern Italy and is defined by three distinct natural zones: mountains, hills and plains.

Milan, the capital of Lombardy, is internationally renowned as the economical engine of Italy. The Fashion and Design Week, technologies, publishing, television networks, communications and the world of finance are the most important economic sources for this city, though not the only ones.

Lombardy, in fact, has much more to offer: beautiful landscapes, mountains, lakes, rivers, artistic, architectural and engineering masterpieces, entertainment and cultural events, sports, spas and of course, its cuisine.

Pavia, picturesque Mantua, the medieval high city of the town Bergamo, the Italian lakes (their beauty is so striking that many famous Americans have chosen their shores for their summer retreats), or the rolling hills around the Po river, are all worth a trip. Cities of Art also abound, with villas, castles, ancient monasteries, and the green shores of the close-by lakes dotted with magnificent ancient palazzi.

This is why all those who choose to visit Italy shouldn't miss a trip to this region. The numbers indeed confirm the enthusiasm of American tourists for Lombardy. In 2008, 300,000 Americans visited the region. An impressive number, even more so considering the recession.

But let's get back to what has been going on in New York City. Among the various events: cooking sessions with Fabio Zago, dean of the Cooking School of La Cucina Italiana in Milan, tastings of regional specialties featured in four of New York City's most authentic Italian restaurants, and private business-to-business meetings.

i-Italy attended the event at [Tony and Marisa May's SD26](#) [4] and had a taste of one of the main strengths of Lombardy: its cuisine. Local chefs showcased their best creations, together with some extraordinary wines.

To have an idea of the richness of Lombardy's cuisine, consider that the region has more than 250 traditional food specialties. Among them: cheeses, vegetables, cured meats, cakes and biscuits, and of course its wonderful DOC wines, paired perfectly to its rich specialties.

Despite its reputation for being an industrial area with a fast-expanding service sector, Lombardy has many traditions that stem from its rural and mountain culture, including notable culinary ones.

Some of Lombardy's native dishes are famous worldwide, including "cotoletta alla milanese" (veal cutlets in breadcrumbs), saffron risotto, "pizzoccheri della Valtellina" (buckwheat pasta with cheese and vegetables), "mostarda di frutta cremonese" (pickled fruit preserve from Cremona), Mantua's famous pumpkin tortelli, "casonsèi bergamaschi" (meat-stuffed ravioli), and sweets and desserts such as the "torrone cremonese" (Cremonese nougat) to "torta sbrisolona" (a crumbly cake) from Mantua.

At SD26, Riccardo Strano, Director of the Italian Government Tourist Board in North America, introduced this amazing region together with personalities such as Gianni Boselli, President of the "Roads of Wines" Federation; Enzo Galbiati, representing the Lombardy Region Tourism Association; Fabio Paloschi, Vice President of the Mantua Chamber of Commerce; and, for Promos agency, Patrizio Piombo.

Data about tourism in the region are comforting but Mr.Strano, after introducing this land with the usual enthusiasm, underlined that "it is important to promote the best of our country and to forge tourism infrastructures of outstanding quality. It is the only way to keep American tourists



interested in coming to visit our territories”.

“This initiative is part of a program we started three years ago,” said Boselli. “We went to New York, Boston, Chicago and Miami and then we brought American journalists to Lombardy, so that they could get a first hand impression of the region. We then produced a short video clip and distributed it through both specialized and general media to show the public the qualities of our products and companies, such as the long historic heritage and regional characterization. This way we managed to merge eno-gastronomical tradition and tourism.

“We spent roughly 12 million Euros on promotion throughout Italy and the world,” said Mr. Galbiati. “This project in particular is based on an agreement between the Region and the system of the Chambers of Commerce of Lombardy. We planned a series of promotional activities and we managed to succeed in merging tourism and agriculture. Our regional products show the world that Lombardy is a region with a deeply rooted gastronomical heritage that is a reason in itself for visiting this land. The pull of gastronomical tourism is especially strong in the United States, where there is a deep knowledge of the quality of Italian food. We hope that “gastronomical” tourists, once arrived in Lombardy, realize how many beautiful things this region has to offer, even outside the kitchen”.

The following step has been to bring Italian trade operators (from the F&B and tourism sectors) to the States in order for them to meet American buyers. This was the natural development of what we did last year, when we invited those same American buyers to Lombardy so that they could discover the locations, the food, and the wines of the area,” he continued.

As it turns out, there is already feedback regarding to this operation: “We are going to end this initiative in Vancouver, the same city where we begun the tour during the winter Olympics. We targeted the North American market, with visits to Chicago, Boston, New York, Toronto and Montreal. And we already had a 6% increase of North American tourists.”

When we asked if they are targeting a specific kind of tourist, he answered: “No, there is not a specific kind of tourist. Lombardy offers many different opportunities: business tourism is very well developed and the same is true for the shopping tourism. However the region has a lot to offer also for those who love golf: we have 36 golf courses, all of them exquisite and in locations easy to access, mainly the lake zone that is very close to many airports. Another option is bike tourism: whether you are looking for an easy ride through our green and golden countryside or a harder trek on small mountain roads, you won’t be disappointed. Last but not least, of course, the art tourism. We truly have options for all tastes and pockets!”

For more information about “Flavors of Lombardy in NYC”, visit: www.flavorsoflombardy.com [2]

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