



## **New Educational Program! Healthy Eating with Club EATalian**

Natasha Lardera (July 27, 2011)



At the Summer Fancy Food Show Trade Commissioner Aniello Musella introduced Club EATalian, an educational program presented by the Italian Ministry of Economic Development and the Italian Trade Commission meant to showcase healthy alternatives to highly processed food-based meals for American kids and their parents

“Eating a healthy meal is not a special occasion, it must be a habit.” Truer words could not be spoken and what better place than the Summer Fancy Food Show to introduce a new and inspiring program?

“Club EATalian is an educational program presented by the Italian Ministry of Economic Development and the Italian Trade Commission, meant to showcase healthy alternatives to highly processed food-based meals for American kids and their parents,” Trade Commissioner and Executive Director for



the United States Aniello Musella said at the presentation at Dartlington House in Washington DC, "From the country that created the healthy Mediterranean diet, the "Club EATalian" initiative is designed to promote healthier eating habits and fast, fresh kid-friendly meals to help combat a national epidemic of obesity and diabetes spreading across the globe. The focus is put on teaching elementary and middle school children about nutrition and food preparation consistent with the Italian Mediterranean diet."

Club EATalian was founded by Stacy Jolna and is an innovative initiative promoting healthier eating habits to help combat the epidemic of childhood obesity and diabetes in the United States that is now spreading to other developed nations as well. Club EATalian enlists educators, parents and chefs to teach kids nutritious and delicious eating and cooking based on the authentic Mediterranean diet from Italy, featuring fresh vegetables and fruits, virgin olive oil, lean meats and fish, and multi-grain pastas. The program with support from the Italian Trade Commission and the Italy Chamber of Commerce West, began in spring 2011 in Los Angeles, winning overwhelmingly positive responses from school administrators, teachers and parents.

"Elementary school children learned about growing food and make recipes, with the assistance of a chef, with what they have grown," Jolna said, "Then they had homework, go shopping with their parents for a great meal, prepare it together, sit at the table with no TV or phone to enjoy each other's company and the good food."

According to the material supplied at the presentation "the U.S. Centers for Disease Control affirm that one in three teenagers in America are obese and obesity has tripled in the past thirty years. These children will grow up to be diabetics and suffer all kinds of health problems - unless they learn the benefits of eating the kind of healthy diet that is so much a part of the authentic Italian lifestyle. No need to emphasize that nutritionally balanced meals are vital to children for proper growth, cognitive development, as well as maintaining a healthy weight that can lessen the incidence of diseases such as asthma and diabetes."

This program is really really close to First lady Michelle Obama's latest tool to fight America's obesity epidemic: [ChooseMyPlate.gov](http://ChooseMyPlate.gov) [2], the new food icon and website that Obama administration officials say is a lot easier to understand and follow than the old food pyramid from which we've learned for nearly two decades. The plate is a new, multicolored symbol designed for people to see visually how much room on a plate each of the food groups -- fruits, vegetables, grains, protein & dairy -- should occupy.

The First Lady has said at the MyPlate.gov unveiling at the US Department of Agriculture, which developed the MyPlate icon: "This is a quick, simple reminder for all of us to be more mindful of the foods that we're eating. Parents don't have the time to measure out exactly three ounces of chicken or to look up how much rice or broccoli is in a serving. I still don't know how much protein comes in X number of ounces. And we're all bombarded with so many dietary messages that it's hard to find time to sort through all this information. But we do have time to take a look at our kids' plates. We do it all the time. We usually are the ones fixing the plates. And as long as they're eating proper portions, as long as half of their meal is fruits and vegetables alongside their lean proteins, whole grains and low-fat dairy, then we're good. It's as simple as that. That's how easy this can be for parents. MyPlate is a simple tool that's simple enough for children to understand, even at the elementary school level. It's an image that can be reinforced and practiced at breakfast, lunch, and at dinner, no matter how old we are."

Obviously Club EATalian has a very similar mission and the plan is collaborate with the First Lady.

As things develop further, the Club's advice to get children to be more interested in healthy fresh food is to encourage a sense of discovery by visiting local farmer's markets and growing a few fresh vegetables or herbs at home. Touch, feel and explore the different colors, fun shapes and tastes of vegetables and food ingredients. Include kids in food preparation through simple tasks like scrubbing and cleaning potatoes or breaking and beating an egg that will go into a recipe. For foods that kids already like, introduce variations by baking instead of broiling, or cook a meal on the BBQ grill. Add new ingredients to a favorite food such as homemade pizza to vary colors and add nutrients. Review school lunch menus and vary food served at home to insure proper nutritional composition.



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**Links**

[1] <http://iitaly.org/files/clubeatalian-1024x7141311844652jpg>

[2] <http://www.choosemyplate.gov/>