Tradition and Innovation: Two Aides of the Made in Italy Coin

New York - The 100per100 Italian Talks event dedicated to the North American market was held on July 6, with six exceptional speakers who shared their vision of the new dynamics of Made in Italy exports to the United States.

A hybrid edition of the Talks, after more than a year of digital activity, held in the Big Apple, thanks to the collaboration with Urbani Truffle Lab, which hosted the format signed by **I Love Italian Food** in its Manhattan headquarters.

"We are very happy to have been able to realize this edition of the Talks in New York, after more than a year of online initiatives. A year of intense work to bring our Talks all over the world. Our goal is to transform this project into a sort of ecosystem where new ideas can emerge to increasingly improve the export of Made in Italy." declares **Alessandro Schiatti**, CEO of I Love Italian Food, who attended in connection from Italy, in the Reggio Emilia office.

Moderated by **Francine Segan**, writer and food historian, together with **Michele Casadei Massari,** advisor of the Cultural Association of I Love Italian Food, as well as entrepreneur and well-known chef in NY with his Lucciola, the conference was the stage for the launch of new possible strategies for the diffusion of Made in Italy in the United States.

The first to take the stage was **Eugenio Perrier**, expert marketing consultant for Made in Italy companies in the USA and partner of the consulting firm Sevendots. With his speech, Perrier immediately projects the listeners into a hypothetical future, which corresponds to the new post-pandemic reality we are living. In this new context, the opportunities for Made in Italy and its excellences are many, but in a risky and competitive market like the North American one, it is essential for Italian producers to have precise strategies, as well as "It is really important to adopt storytelling, it is not only about talking about the products, but about the secrets behind those products, the stories that make them so unique and extraordinary. Only if we can put these principles into practice can we make a new renaissance happen." An approach, the one advocated by Eugenio Perrier, based on the 4Cs: content, community, convenient and commerce.

The conference continues with the intervention of Dr. **Antonino Laspina**, Executive Director of the Italian Trade Agency for the US market. Relevant numbers those shared by Director Laspina, with a value of over 5 billion dollars for the Italian food&wine sector in the United States at the end of 2019. Numbers that have surprisingly increased during the pandemic, confirming the strong link between Americans and Made in Italy. "In the new normal, the F&B sector continues to grow in view of the new values and trends that are emerging among U.S. consumers, who prioritize and give importance to the values of sustainability, ecological approach, circular economy, food safety. These are all factors that have been considered by Italian companies in their product positioning strategy on the market" said Laspina, emphasizing the great commitment of the Italian Trade Agency to support Italian companies, preparing them to be competitive in the complex American market; offering educational programs, aimed at both operators and end consumers, to protect original Italian products from Italian Sounding products; increasing promotion even in the inner urban areas, where there is a strong growth potential for Italian products.

Diego Meraviglia, President and founder of the North American Sommelier Association, then spoke on behalf of the wine world. He presented a picture of the world of beverages deeply affected by the consequences of the pandemic. The last months have been of careful analysis and study of the new strategies needed to reach the target audience for the world of wine, the generation of millennials. In a rapidly evolving market like the American one, Diego Meraviglia identifies five key points to help Italian producers improve their presence in the United States: "quality of products, transparency of the production chain, authenticity of products, sustainability and connection with consumers", these are the factors suggested for success.

This was followed by **Vittorio Giordano**, Vice President of Urbani Truffle, an Italian company with strong roots in the US market. Giordano's speech revolves around the concept of pandemic as an accelerator of innovation, and he reflects on how the situation related to covid-19 has forced us to leave our comfort zone and how we can make a difference in the future.

"This situation is giving Italian companies the opportunity to approach a new and exciting market like the U.S., but also a market where consumers are very sensitive and pay a lot of attention to what they buy and how they buy. It's not just a question of price, but of the different opportunities that products can really offer suppliers," says Vittorio Giordano. Despite all the negative aspects of the pandemic, therefore, Urbani Truffle's Vice President wants to send a positive message, suggesting that we should ride the wave of innovation and acceleration now initiated by the pandemic.

On the Talks stage is then the turn of **Gianfranco Sorrentino**, President of Gruppo Italiano, a US-based organization dedicated to the promotion of authentic Italian culinary culture. Sorrentino presented very interesting data that testify to the importance of the hospitality sector in the United States, of which Italian restaurants represent a good eighth of the over 800,000 present in the

territory. Sorrentino's vision is positive and he tells how the numbers have not worsened even after the pandemic: 25% of Italian wine is exported to the United States, in the last year sales have increased by 57% and online trade by 230%. He then brings attention to two crucial aspects. The first is the importance of restaurants as a vehicle for promoting authentic Italian products. "It took 10 years for Italian restaurants to educate American consumers about mozzarella di bufala, and now you find it not only in the best Italian restaurants, but also in the best French and American restaurants." So it is precisely on restaurants that we must focus to spread those Italian excellences still little known. The second aspect, on the other hand, concerns the importance of training: it is necessary to invest in the education of end consumers, certainly, but also in the training of tomorrow's chefs, to ensure that they are passionate about Italian cuisine, that they carry on our traditions and our heritage. "If we want to maintain our strong position in the U.S. market, now and in the future, we simply have to invest in people, who will not only use Italian products, but also promote them with enthusiasm." concludes Sorrentino.

Closing the Talks was the speech by **Alfredo Muccino**, founder and Executive Director of Solid Branding. Muccino's speech revolves around the importance of communicating the brand. The brand and everything around it, the product and the customers on one hand, but also the rational and emotional components on the other, which intervene at the moment of choice.

"The Made in Italy brand is inextricably linked to the ideas we have about Italy: quality, craftsmanship, style and beauty, design. American consumers come in all sizes and shapes. They have different needs, different cultural backgrounds, they speak different languages," says Muccino. To try to influence these users, it is therefore absolutely necessary to modulate the message and the tone of voice used to communicate the brand. The example of Parmigiano Reggiano and the difficulty for Americans to correctly pronounce the name of the product, simplifying it to "Parmesan", is useful. This can only have repercussions on the act of buying an Italian Sounding product. For a winning communication, Muccino suggests to transmit in a more direct way the concepts that link the product to Italy and its cultural heritage.

This U.S. edition of the 100per100 Italian Talks has reported a complex picture with heterogeneous and optimistic views on strategies to improve Made in Italy exports to the USA. The picture was made up not only by the speeches of the speakers, but also by the messages of the six Consorzi di Tutela that supported the initiative of I Love Italian Food: Prosecco DOC, Lambrusco, Asiago, Gorgonzola, Pecorino Sardo and Taleggio. All realities that not even Covid-19 was able to stop and that have decided to look beyond the pandemic and invest in exports.

The full video of 100per100 Italian Talks is available at this link [2].

100per100 Italian Talks are a project of I Love Italian Food, realized thanks to the support of: **Consorzio di tutela della DOC Prosecco, Consorzio Tutela Lambrusco, Consorzio per la Tutela Formaggio Asiago, Consorzio per la Tutela del Formaggio Gorgonzola DOP, Consorzio per la Tutela del Formaggio Pecorino Sardo, Consorzio Per La Tutela Del Formaggio Taleggio.**

In collaboration with **Urbani Truffle Lab** and **i-Italy.**

I Love Italian Food [3]is the international network that promotes and defends the true Italian food

and wine culture. A community that since 2015 has reached more than three billion digital contacts worldwide. With its network of professionals, it produces content for the narration of Italian food, organizes international events to create dialogue with professionals and supports research and training initiatives, to teach Italian products and cuisine to international professionals.

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