



## **Food World Ablaze: Will American Demand for Italian Goods Soar?**

Gabrielle Pati (July 17, 2009)



On Thursday, July 9th , three Italian food producing companies presented themselves with poise and confidence at the Calandra Italian American Institute. Quality products often speak for themselves, and the American public may be offered new choices in rice, tomato products and sweets in the future

Ever eaten a slice of panettone cake in the middle of July? What about waltzing into the grocery shop to pick up an Italian produced box of sushi rice? Some Italian food producing companies are breaking the mold—by attempting to sway even the most demanding consumers with quality Italian goods supplied to the local and international spheres.



On July 9th, 2009 the Calandra Italian American Institute in Manhattan had visitors: important CEOs and principal businessmen and women of the food trade. Three companies were presented to the public by Professor Vincenzo Pascale: Annalisa, a tomato-bean-fruit etc. distributor from the Province of Salerno; Battistero, a panettone and dolci provider from Parma; and Riso Vignola, the Piedmont based giant of Europe's rice trade.

The food world is currently ablaze with the Fancy Food 2009 show having just occurred in late June. Now these companies are propping themselves above the rush to make contact and alliances with big time importers and distributors in the United States, with the initial aim of communicating their presences to prospective American consumers and food distributors.

The Annalisa food company has a plethora of products to stand behind, especially the notable

DOP San Marzano tomato. Its product-line ranges from Neapolitan style sauces to apricot preserves and tri color bean dishes. On the local level Annalisa is well-known and respected for its production in the Campania region. Italian consumers recognize Annalisa products, but will Americans?

Due to the minimal processing, Annalisa could draw much attraction from those who seek simple, whole foods. Plus the rich soil of Campania boasts flavor and abundance. For the tomato connoisseur in America, the guarantee of quality tomatoes gives Annalisa a running start and the potential to become a top contender in the supermarket. With over twenty organic products, the kosher certification and non-GMO promise, Annalisa is opting to join the American market with diversity and quality signified by its label.

Battistero has steep hurdles to jump over. Offering quality and fresh cakes and deserts, from pandoro to classic panettone filled with chocolate, is this company's specialization. Yet the sweet bread masterpiece panettone is generally bought and consumed exclusively during the December holidays, and hardly deviates from this trend.

The company Battistero wants to launch a campaign to promote panettone eating throughout the year, but one obstacle the company encounters is the affixed association between panettone and the idea of sharing a cake between family members on special occasions. It is an uncommon practice to chow down on panettone and other sumptuous Battistero products outside the realm of winter wonderland. Although the holiday enterprise plays matchmaker between panettone and consumers, Battistero's smaller packaging targets quotidian meals and snacks, urging the sweets into people's lives without the sleigh and reindeer.

Riso Vignola took the stage at Calandra with its dynamic digital presentation and told the small audience last Thursday about its successful past and ambitious future. One thing that differentiates Riso Vignola from other companies is its serious dedication to innovative technology, including powering its plants with fifty percent solar energy. Vignola steps up to the plate with the press for quality, organic and ethnic rice products. The CEO and latest heir to Vignola, Giovanni Vignola, has formed bonds with Japan and South America for exporting his Piedmont rice grains; and has all but dominated the European rice market. The future of Vignola lies in its ability to adapt to the demands of consumers and vie with companies that supply America with staple grain rice. For five generations the Vignola family has utilized the plains in the Province of Alessandria and has succeeded in a great agricultural feat. If Riso Vignola appears on the American market, other companies may have stern competition to grapple with, and a resurgence of risotto on dinner tables could transpire across the country.

It takes a rigorous boss and a diligent team of farmers and employees to make a successful food product company. What it takes to market and sell Italian products in America is the assurance of quality and simplicity—two aspects of food not to be overlooked by the perusing shopper. Annalisa, Battistero and Riso Vignola are launching forward and possibly into our community and homes in the



future. That of course is their goal.

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