Before the Marathon, Dine with Barilla!

Marina Melchionda (November 05, 2008)



The evening before the ING New York City Marathon Barilla organized a huge party at Tavern on the Green, Central Park. Many athletes joined the hundreds of people participating. They all sat at the table enjoying some delicious pasta, just like an average Italian family would do!

One of the major sponsors of this year's ING New York City Marathon [2] was Barilla, the leading

Italian brand of pasta. For the occasion the company organized a huge pasta party at Tavern on the Green [3], the famous restaurant located in New York's Central Park. There participants could have a forchettata, a forkful, of their favorite pasta accompanied by the most traditional Italian sauces.

Chef Lorenzo Boni cooked about 6,840 pounds of pasta so that everybody's appetite would be satisfied!

Barilla took care of every detail. Foodies could enjoy an entire meal at one of the 38 buffet stations. Cooks prepared a side dish of grilled veggie salad with 1,800 pounds of fresh vegetables; diners could pick the apple they liked best from the 15,000 available; and last but not least, everyone's sweet tooth was satisfied with a bar of Lindt [4]chocolate. Finally, 18,000 cans of beer helped to enliven the atmosphere!

Entire families, groups of friends, and couples all sat at tables decorated with Barilla pasta packages and white and blue balloons, Barilla's signature colors.

While enjoying the evening, we also chatted with some of those present.

Luke from France told us that his favorite kind of pasta is "rigatoni." He loves them with carbonara sauce, which he described as an "extremely savory mixture of eggs, bacon and butter. A true Italian hit!"

We asked Ed, a young Englishman visiting New York for the marathon, how often he eats pasta. While he tasted a bite of his elbows with parmigiano cheese, green peas, and Italian sausage he answered: "I go to my favorite supermarket once a week and I always make sure to buy enough pasta so that my family and I can have some at least twice a week. When I think of an Italian dinner I just can't help imagining the whole family gathered around a big bowl full of hot, delicious spaghettiwith meat sauce."

There were also a lot of Americans coming from all over the country. Matthew, a 60-year-old from Chicago, confessed that he is not really in love with pasta. He was there to meet some friends, but he did not regret it at all! In front of a plate of gemelli with mushrooms and garden vegetable sauce, he said that he will surely tell his wife to make pasta more often, but "al dente, just how Italians do!"

Finally, Margaret from Florida really impressed us. She came all the way to New York to run in the marathon and represent the NGO of which she is member. Her organization helps homeless children in America find their way in life, offering them nourishment, health care, and basic education. We found her sitting in front of a huge plate of farfalle all'insalata (chilled farfalle pasta with roasted peppers, ricotta cheese, basil and cherry tomatoes). She admitted that she could never refuse her favorite dish, even the day before the marathon. As an athlete, she knows better than anyone what is or isn't healthy.

She confirmed one of Italy's oldest beliefs: the Mediterranean diet [5], in which pasta plays a leading role, is the healthiest of all.

This is also what Kirk Trofholz, President of Barilla America, states: "Complex carbohydrates, like pasta, are essential to athletes' diet and training, helping them to achieve peak performance. We're looking forward to hosting thousands of runners from around the world and fueling them with nutritious and delicious pasta dishes that will help them cross the finish line on race day."

Alex Zanardi [6] echoes this sentiment. We met him with his friends at a table near the stage where the DJ, surrounded by cute dancers, was entertaining the audience. This year the Formula 1 champion did not participate in the marathon. But he did confess that when he ran in past years he always had a helping of pasta beforehand. Once, as he told us, he had some penne pasta with fresh tomatoes for breakfast since he thought that it was a better choice than the vitamins his co-runners were taking.

Finally the Consul General of Italy Francesco Maria Talò joined us for the party. He declared the event to be a great tribute to Italian cuisine and the Italian lifestyle, and like everyone else present he helped himself to a plate of his favorite Barilla pasta!

The Barilla Group was founded 130 years ago by the Barilla family. Today, with 26 factories (13 in Italy and 13 abroad), it is the leading Italian food company with 35% of volume sales in more than 125 countries.

(Edited by Giulia Prestia)

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