



## The Many Roads of Mozzarella

Tommaso Cartia (May 26, 2016)



On May 17th and 18th the “LSDM”- Le Strade della Mozzarella or The Many Roads of Mozzarella Conference traveled all the way from the region of Campania to the Big Apple for a two-day showcase of the best Italian chefs and high quality Italian products.

In this conference, food and wine professionals including critics and journalists were able to meet some of Italy's best chefs and sample many of Italy's high quality products, as top New York Italian restaurants were able to showcase some of the most interesting developments in today's Southern Italian gastronomy. In its prestigious showroom in the Flatiron district, Agnelli USA, a division of Pentole Agnelli, a world leader in professional cookware, hosted the first day of the event in collaboration with the Association of Italian Chefs in New York and its president, Massimo Carbone, and the well known food studies scholar, Fabio Parasecoli. Participating in the weekend's events were New York chefs such as Massimo Bebber of Le Cirque and Pasquale Cozzolino of Ribalta from Italy came Gaetano Torrente of Burro e Alici in Erbusco and Alfonso Pepe of Pasticceria Pepe, in Sant'Egidio del Monte Albino.

These culinary leaders showcased their artistry preparing pasta and pastry delicacies. The chefs featured the famous buffalo Mozzarella in all their dishes, from pasta recipes to a special, cheese-filled version of babà (the traditional Neapolitan dessert).



The delicious mozzarella was provided by Mandara S.p.A., a family-run company based in Mondragone (Campania), and an internationally acclaimed leader in mozzarella production. The company presented their products and explained the details of their unique technique of fermentation.

Each of the ingredients used in the dishes were introduced by producers' representatives who told stories of their family-run businesses and explained the special qualities that make their products so competitive. Stands offering wine, food, and coffee tastings made the day particularly festive and interactive.

Rosario Procino, the Neapolitan restaurateur and co-founder of New York pizzeria Ribalta, talked about Neapolitan coffee and its tradition. He noted that even if the coffee itself is not Italian, the art of brewing the perfect cup was developed in Naples, where different coffee blends were used to create brand new aromas.

And a great coffee depends not just on the bean, Procino said, but on the way it's made. The traditional Neapolitan coffee maker, or cuccuma, is the one to use to prepare real Italian espresso. In this familiar two-section caffetteria, boiling water passes slowly through freshly ground coffee, retaining flavor and aroma. Neapolitans also recommend covering the spout with a paper cone, or coppetiello, to preserve that classic aroma.

Olive oil was the next topic. Savino Muraglia, the fashionable spokesperson of Antico Frantoiò Muraglia, his family's five-generation-old firm based in Andria, Puglia, explored the nuances of extra virgin olive oil, and shared the story of his firm's elegant and unique ceramic bottlings-- Savino asked Puglia's master ceramists to decorate these handmade pieces that serve not only as perfect containers that protect the oil's properties but which are also collectable works of art.

Another key presentation was made by Pastificio Di Martino, whose artisanal pasta from Gragnano has become one of the most recognizable brands in the marketplace. In his talk on pasta, Fabio Parasecoli of the New School set the record straight on a controversial topic: was pasta invented in Italy or in China?

"The legend is that when Marco Polo came back from China he brought- pasta with him," Parasecoli noted, "but actually that's not true. Pasta was already in Italy by the time that Marco Polo traveled to China there were already some centers in Italy famous for pasta making, one of them in Gragnano, near Naples, and others, around Florence, Sicily and Genoa."

While the first day of the conference was mainly focused on pasta, oil, cheese, and other products, the second day was dedicated entirely to pizza, in collaboration with Antico Molino Caputo, the well-known flour miller still using a Naples mill built in 1924; and Orlando Food Sales, a marketing and distribution company of Italian food specialties throughout the US. Moderator for the day was the famous Neapolitan food journalist and blogger Luciano Pignataro.

Master pizzaioli cooked their signature pizzas in the fascinating space of Neapolitan Express, both a restaurant and an eco-friendly food truck company powered by Clean Energy Fuels that's committed to the idea of fast food as quality food. Their unique open mouth electric oven, hand build in Italy, reaches 900 degrees with zero emissions.

It's the secret for authentic Neapolitan pizza. Working in front of that oven Giulio Adriani of Neapolitan Express, New York; Michele d'Amelio of A mano, New York; Giorgia Caporuscio of Kestè, New York; Francesco and Salvatore Salvo of Pizzeria Salvo in Naples; Franco Pepe of Pepe in Grani, Caiazzo, Caserta; and John Arena of Metro Pizzain Las Vegas, made their personal interpretations of pizza, from the classic Margherita in all its variations, to a classic American pie.

The event ended on a sweet note with the serving of zeppole powdered with sugar. Meeting at the crossroads of "LSDM," a new generation chefs are ready to offer the historical masterpieces of Italian gastronomy to a new, international generation of Italian food lovers, adapting tradition to modern standards of luxury food service.

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"My brother and I are two generations who were raised with our father's technique of making pizza and paying attention to territory, values that are somehow forgotten in the Neapolitan pizza world nowadays," says Salvatore Salvo from Pizzeria Salvo in Naples, a rising pizzaiolo star.

"We now work on all aspects of pizza. A good pizza is of course needed to make a great pizzeria, but that's not enough anymore. The attention to high quality service is crucial," Salvo said. "LSDM, celebrating Campania's 'white gold' (mozzarella), is the most important event for Italian gastronomy and gives value to our territory".

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