

## Sips of Fancy Food. Tasting Italian Coffee to the Top

Susannah Gold (July 13, 2010)



Italian coffee producers who were present at the Fancy Food show are optimistic about growing US market for their products. Americans, in fact, happen to love Italian coffee, be it cappuccino, espresso or a Latte Macchiato...

Italian coffee producers who were present at the [Fancy Food](#) [2]show in Manhattan June 27 to June 29, 2010 were optimistic about the U.S. market for coffee. Despite increased competition and a host of local and foreign competitors, Italian producers saw room for their coffee products thanks to an expanded product range as well as a new found love for Italian coffee, be it cappuccino, espresso or a Latte Macchiato.

Coffee beans are not produced in Italy but Italian torrefazioni are among the most famous in the world for their coffee blends. The two main types of coffee are Arabica and Robusto. Arabica coffee from *Coffea Arabica* is more prestigious than the Robusto from which comes from *Coffea Canephora*.



Coffee generally comes from Latin America, Southeast Asia and Africa.

Robusta coffee beans are generally stronger than Arabica and are used more often in Espresso blends. Each producer makes their own blend either using different combinations of coffee beans in terms of the two types as well as coffee beans from a variety of countries. Brazil is the world's leading producer of coffee beans, followed by Vietnam, Indonesia, and Columbia.

Andrea Bernini of [Mokaflor](#) [3], a coffee firm from Florence was excited to participate at the Fancy Food Show saying that there was an important increase in American coffee drinking of espresso coffee. "We are pretty pleased with the fair. We need to find the right importer for our mid-sized company. It's a challenge for us."

Mokaflor was bought by a family in 1950 and has been run by that same family for generations. It saw its first growth after World War II during the economic boom years. Mokaflor is very well represented in Central Italy in bars and restaurants.

"We make our blends from coffees from eight coffee producing nations. Some of our products are blends while others are from a single cru producer. We have two lines, an Arabica and a Robusto. We also have a new product called Chiaroscuro targeted specifically for specialty shops and coffee houses," Bernini added. "The particularity of our coffee line is that we have a wide range, with 10 blends and a single producer coffee."

Most of the coffee firms who were present at the fair agreed that the world of coffee is undergoing an evolution. Large firms such as [Lavazza](#) [4], [Illy](#) [5] and [Danesi](#) [6] have dominated the American market for Italian coffee. New smaller firms have had a harder time getting a footing in this market but as the market grows, there may be room for everyone. At least that's what these producers are hoping.

Another firm that was showcasing its products at the Fancy Food show was [Caffè Trombetta](#) [7], a firm from Lazio that was founded in 1890. Trombetta is sold throughout Central and Southern Italy both in bars and restaurants as well as Supermarkets. Their representative pointed to the capsules and coffee pods that have become so ubiquitous as a revolution in coffee. Coffee is a mature market in terms of packaging but these delivery systems are innovative and bring quality coffee into your home and into the office.

[Paranà Caffè](#) [8] also from Roma agreed with the importance of the new pods and capsules as a growth area. Parana' is also making an organic coffee line to meet consumer demands.

Emilio Giannelli from Paranà said that what is missing currently is a coffee culture. "People drink coffee without really knowing anything about the product, such as how it is made or how to taste it. Coffee is like wine and needs to be studied and smelled and sipped for its organoleptic characteristics."

Paranà Caffè offers coffee tasting classes and is a firm supported of the International Institute of Coffee Tasters which offers classes and workshops to learn how to taste and assess coffee, create blends and learn about coffee roasting.

"People need guidelines in order to be able to divide good from bad coffee. They need to be able to differentiate between Arabica and Robusto," Giannelli said. "We're a family run company and have been for 50 years. We buy coffee beans from many countries and have now created a line of single country coffees as opposed to blending the beans. We offer coffees in capsules and pods as well."

Like the other two producers, Paranà also has a specific distribution, Central and Southern Italy (Lazio, Abruzzo, Tuscany and Molise). Some 50% of their production is exported to China, the EU, Australia and the United States.

No article on coffee could be complete without mentioning coffee from Naples, a true Italian specialty. Naples has a long coffee tradition and representing that was **Caffen Il Don Caffè Aroma di Napoli**. Founded in 1955, Caffen has five lines of coffee products for bars and restaurants as well



as consumers.

"This is a family run firm. We buy are Robusto line beans from India and our Arabica line from South Africa. The Indian Robusto makes for a sweeter coffee, less bitter. It doesn't taste like wood like some of the other ones do," said Vincenzo Bianco, Export Manager for Caffè, as he made me an Espresso at the fair.

"We've been selling our coffee here for eight years through Caffè Dante in the Village," Bianco added. "For the American market we make a somewhat sweeter coffee than that for Italy. The roasting is a little different."

Another group of coffee firms were also present at the show, even smaller producers just looking to get their feet wet. One such firm is [Italvi](#) [9] from Latina.

Italvi brought their O'CCaffè line. Italiavi is run by two cousins whose parents started an import company in Germany and have been very successful in that market. Under the name Vivencio Import, the family has locked up the German supermarket distribution for Italian coffee and is the third largest supplier after Illy and Lavazza. Italvi, the new company, is looking to export to the US as well and came as part of a delegation from Latina.

The cousins were aware that there is a lot of competition in this market and said that they realized that they needed to spruce up their packaging if they were going to sell to this market. They were thinking of looking at other markets in the US because New York is so crowded. They weren't discouraged though and were pleased with the fair and their contacts.

Another small producer at the fair was [Mokasol](#) [10] from Brescia. They too came as part of a larger delegation and were just getting their feet wet in the US market, offering their organic, pods and more traditional blends.

It seemed after many a coffee at the fair, that the reigning feeling was one of cautious optimism. What everyone is counting on is that the US continues to drink Italian coffees. This seems like an almost certainty. Of course there are homegrown roasters from Seattle and coffee companies from other nations but there is something about Italian coffee that is just unique. If the proliferation of coffee bars serving Italian coffee around the nation is any indication of the success of coffee, these coffee firms have little or nothing to worry about it seems.

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[1] <http://www.iitaly.org/files/coffeecupfq41279068785.jpg>

[2] <http://specialtyfood.com/fancy-food-show>

[3] <http://www.mokaflor.it/>

[4] <http://www.lavazza.com>

[5] <http://www.illyusa.com>

[6] <http://www.danesi-caffe.com/>

[7] <http://www.caffetrombetta.com>

[8] <http://www.caffeparana.it/>

[9] <http://www.italvi.com>

[10] <http://www.mokasol.com>