

SAN FRANCISCO, ITALY

A Culture Connector

Perspective from Italy's Consul General in San Francisco

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At Winter Fancy Food Italy dominates, showcases robust growth in F&B exports



(With the “Queen of Truffles” Olga Urbani and Sabrina Notarnicola of **URBANI TRUFFLES**)

This week I had a much-needed transfusion of optimism. News on how Italy's recession still drags on keeps on coming from my country. Yet Italian F&B exporters at the Winter Fancy Food fair in San Francisco were buoyant - relishing as they were in the figures of their sales to the US. According to the statistics of the Italian Trade Commission, **from January to November 2014, Italy's total export increased by 8.9%**. The food industry followed this trend with a 7% hike, which is becoming more and more significant now that the euro is losing value, the US economy roars ahead and the so-called “Mediterranean Diet” is scientifically confirmed to be good for your health. The West Coast, in particular, with its tech-driven boom and consumer sophistication, is giving Italian exporters great satisfactions. Just look at the expression of **OLGA URBANI**, the “Regina dei Tartufi” as we call her in Italy. In the photo above she was telling me that the present season is marking a historic record.

THE ITALIAN TRADE COMMISSION deserves my warm congratulations. They brought together an impressive range of exceptional products, all distinguished by their unique “**Made in Italy**” designation.



In my visit I managed to exchange views with several Italian exporters. I'd love to tell you all of their stories, but I'll have to select just a few. Take, for example, the winner of the **2014 sofi Awards**, **FELICETTI PASTA** from Trentino. Their pasta is unique because it is made at a high altitude using clear stream water from the Dolomites and it is then dried in unpolluted mountain air. They use special varieties of durum wheat harvested exclusively from select farms in

Puglia and Sicily. Needless to say, they have an exceptional aroma, taste, and an excellent nutritional quality.



(With Massimo Cannas of Felicetti Pasta)

Talking about excellence: I had the privilege to visit **GUFFANTI**, a winner of the World Cheeses Award and a reference point of conscious consumers in search of the **best typical artisanal cheeses**. It was comforting to find out that Californian consumers are becoming more and more aware of how important it is to buy products marked by **GEOGRAPHIC DENOMINATIONS OF ORIGIN**, both **DOP** (Protected Denomination of Origin) and **IGP** (Protected Geographic Indication). These guarantee that the products were made in that specific area of Italy and nowhere else. They realize that only those products can give you the real taste of Italy - and not just an Italian-sounding brand.



(With Davide Fiore of Guffanti)

As Trade Commissioner **Pier Paolo Celeste** puts it, *"Once you taste the purity of a panettone made with fresh eggs and butter, or the heartiness of the pasta drawn through bronze dies, or the cheeses made with the milk of cows grazing freely in the Italian Alps, there's no way you can go back to substitutes or imitations, even if they bear similar names. What was real in Old Italy is real today as well".*

With respect to authenticity, I was intrigued by an innovative product devised by the young entrepreneur from Turin, **Marco Masselli**, who is showing me his catalog in the picture below. Since it is not always easy to recognize a product made in Italy, or to distinguish it from fakes and copies, Marco offers Italian producers **ITALCHECK**, an international system that verifies, authenticates and safeguards the Italian identity of a product. With a smartphone, iPad, tablet or PC, the consumer can check if a product for sale is authentic and 100% Italian .



(With Marco Masselli at the Italcheck stand)

In an age in which entrepreneurship is increasingly in the hands of women it was great to meet the team of **MOGI CAFFE'** from Bergamo, entirely composed of women. As a rising number of West-Coast people mean "**espresso**" when they say "coffee", they took their first step into this promising market - I wish them all the best!



(With the team of Mogi, left to right, Chiara Valzania, Simona Bazzoni and Mircea Masserini)

For those of you who wish to get in touch with the Italian exporters at Winter Fancy Food, please write to Italy's Trade Promotion Office: NEWYORK@ICE.IT. (And don't forget to enjoy authentic Italian food - like I did with this supreme Parmacotto

mortadella).

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