

Don't Fake It!

Giulia Madron (June 10, 2014)



Marco De Ceglie, CEO at De Cecco USA, Leonardo Auricchio, CEO at Barabino & Partners USA and Dino Borri, Manager at Eataly USA, share their perspectives on the Italian Sounding phenomenon: give an “Italian image” to a product that is not Italian at all.

Italian Lifestyle is still considered synonymous of style, quality and, to use one word, excellence. Indeed, despite the economic crisis affecting the country, if you ask someone what is the “Mecca” of good taste, with no doubt he or she will answer: Italy.

In other words, everything that has to do with Italy is appreciated all around the world and people consider Italian products among the very best in terms of quality. It is because of this, that throughout the years, there has been an increase of businesses thriving on falsification of “Made in



Italy” products.

Taking advantage of the uniqueness of Italy’s reputation, especially when it comes to gastronomy, many foreign producers fake their products using names, labels or pictures that induce the consumer to think these products are Italian.

And this “little trick” generates huge amounts of profits which of course negatively affects also the Italian market abroad.

At Zio Ristorante, in the heart of Midtown Manhattan, Professionisti Italiani a New York City, in collaboration with [De Cecco Usa](#) [2], organized an interesting panel discussion with Marco De Ceglie, CEO at [De Cecco USA](#) [2], Leonardo Auricchio, CEO at [Barabino & Partners USA](#) [3] and Dino Borri, Manager at [Eatally USA](#) [4], who shared their perspectives on the “Italian Sounding” phenomenon, analyzing the risks and the opportunities from the point of view of the Stakeholders involved in the chain of value of the authentic Italian quality food.

“Tonight I want to be very provocative, because if we don’t discuss the subject properly, we won’t find answers for this phenomenon,” said Marco De Ceglie, CEO at [De Cecco USA](#) [2].

De Ceglie focused on the quality of Italian products versus the quality of non Italian products. The main difference is the link to the territory. US producers, said De Ceglie, can use the exact same raw materials they found in their country, the same manufacturing processes, but they still won’t have the quality of the Italian products since what makes Italian products so unique is the link to a specific geographical area which cannot be reproduced.

“As Italians addressing the problem of the Italian Sounding products in the US we have to think about what is the real quality of these products. If we talk about a decent quality of a product made in the US, as Italians, we have to demonstrate that our product is better, that we use better raw materials and better manufacturing processes, otherwise there is no reason to stay in the market.”

“We have to sustain our premium through our quality, we have to win the consumers with a superior product and communicate with the consumer and convincing him that the characteristics of the product that they appreciate are found only in Italian products,” concluded De Ceglie.

In addressing the topic, Leonardo Auricchio, CEO at [Barabino and Partners USA](#) [3], shared his personal experience as a member of a family which owned a business (Auricchio Cheeses) in Italy and then, one of the members who moved away from the business, launched a similar business in the USA (Belgioioso Cheeses).

“I think what my uncle did, rather than a threat it has been an opportunity to promote the Italian food culture all over the US,” affirmed Auricchio.

“Fighting the Italian Sounding phenomenon as a fraud is a key issue. But instead of complaining about it or trying to stop things that are unstoppable - it’s a free market, we have to be realistic, we can’t put barriers, more regulations etc...-, we should understand that now there is a huge opportunity for the Made in Italy and we should take advantage of this moment knowing that the consumer is willing to spend more for Italian products. People recognize the premium quality and because of this, we should put our forces together and support the superior quality of the Made in Italy products,” he concluded.

Dino Borri, Manager at [Eatally](#) [4] originally introduced his speech saying that he “agreed, but he disagreed.”

“I agree that there are some products that can only be produced in Italy. Not because Italians invented them (pasta came from Asia for instance) but because in the past we found the right place to produce them,” affirmed Borri.

“Our industry is the best in the world,” he continued, “but it is our lifestyle. The world wants to eat, dress and have our house furniture. That is our gold. However, we don’t have the structure to come together and promote it. [Eatally](#) [4], as a worldwide food distributor, is trying to do this. To bring



together producers and promote the right food.”

And about the Italian sounding phenomenon, he said that we must educate people as to what is Italian and non Italian food, something that Eataly is trying to do.

“In the US, concluded Borri, “there are a lot of good products, the problem arises when some producers use fake Italian labels just to achieve a higher the price. We have to teach people about the origin of the food. The customer has the right to know what and from whom they are buying.”

After the discussion, the guests enjoyed a delicious "Pasta al Ragu" offered by [De Cecco USA](#) [2].

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[1] <http://ftp.ility.org/files/versioni-contraffatte-del-parmigiano-reggiano1402511342jpg>

[2] <http://www.dececcousa.com/>

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