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INTERVIEWS

Roberta Marini De Plano

Italy's gastronomy ready to shine at the summer Fancy Food Show

BY FRANCESCO CAROLI



A conversation with Roberta Marini-De Plano, Delegate of the Accademia Italiana della Cucina in New York, on authenticity, emerging food trends, and what really defines Italian cuisine abroad.

The Summer Fancy Food Show is one of the world's top showcases for the agri-food sector — a stage where identity plays a pivotal role, and where misunderstanding that identity can mean everything. We spoke with Roberta Marini-De Plano, Delegate of the Accademia Italiana della Cucina in New York, who has long been dedicated to promoting and protecting Italy's culinary heritage.

How important is a platform like the Fancy Food Show for Italian food culture?

It is important in that it offers a global stage to showcase our country's gastronomic diversity, regional specialties, cultural heritage, and health benefits. It's essential that we keep the focus on quality — something that defines our cuisine. Events like this are a chance to highlight the authenticity and excellence of Italian products, while also offering education through tastings, cooking demos, and curated presentations.

What is the Italian delegation's goal at Fancy Food, according to the

Academy's vision?

Our mission is always to safeguard the integrity, authenticity and cultural identity of Italian cuisine. Promote the social and cultural values embedded in Italian eating habits; such as conviviality, sustainability, quality traditions and the slow-food ethos. Lastly to support Italy's candidacy for UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage.

Let's talk about Italian Sounding. How hard is it to draw the line between authentic Italian cuisine and Italian-American cultural imitations?

As the Academy, we're committed to recognizing dishes that carry the weight of time and tradition — Italian dishes and recipes that have been handed down across generations with original ingredients. Italian-American cuisine is different. Originally it was born out of necessity: new immigrants tried to recreate the flavors of home with whatever ingredients they could find. Today this has become exploitative; there is marketing gimmickry and deception to obfuscate origin and affect pricing. The key distinction is intent, connection and respect. Cuisine must be rooted in heritage and authenticity. That's why proper labeling protection (ie: DOP, IGP, etc), must be enforced universally, thus defining the true meaning of "authentic" and "Italian". Turning over a bottle or a package and reading these seals and markings, provides that assurance and protection which is invaluable for all seasoned consumers and generations to come.