



Launches an Award for the Mediterranean Diet

Natasha Lardera (July 07, 2015)



Presented by the fascinating Manuela Rana, a Molfettese transplanted from time in the Big Apple, the Casillo Award for the Mediterranean Diet is seeking to establish a strong identity of the Group with the values of the Mediterranean Diet, where flour is of course the most important component.

Like hundreds of Italian manufacturers, the [Casillo Group](#) [2] (Corato, Bari), a leading Italian company in the production of wheat, semolina, flour and typical products, participated in the big [Fancy Food](#) [3], where everything (and the opposite of everything...) gathered for three days, involving over 180,000 between visitors, exhibitors and professionals.

Casillo's approach, despite a juicy turnover of one billion Euros per year, was simple and elegant. At their booth, Apulian flavors and traditions were showcased live by showgirl Rossella Rago, young Italian American lover of good food and host of "Cooking with Nonna" (coming with a baggage of true grandmother to knead orecchiette) and a superb chef, Mauro Pansini, appreciated around the world for his sexy interpretations of Apulian cuisine.



"I had the great pleasure to do cooking demos in the Selezione Casillo booth at the Summer Fancy Food Show. Together with Nonna Romana and Nonna Rosa, we were able to create some authentic pasta and desserts which were made all better by using the fine flours and semolina flours crafted by Selezione Casillo. They are indeed masters at creating traditional products so that we can all maintain our old school traditions," Rossella told i-Italy.

In the three days it was a feast of salty specialties and sweets treats, including Homemade Orecchiette with Cime di Rape and Bocconcini di [Nutella](#) [3] on Day 1 and Maccheroncini ai Ferri with Fave e Cicorie and Almond Semolina Cookies on Day 2, spotlighting old and new products, including "Stone Father Mother Grain," a line of stone ground wheat, and a "pin up" girl collection, with eye-catching retro packaging.

But the real news, was the launch of the first "Casillo Award for the Mediterranean Diet," which took place outside the context of the trade fair in a breathtaking location for a "Fuori Fancy" experience. Presented by the fascinating Manuela Rana, a Molfettese transplanted from time in the Big Apple, the initiative is seeking to establish a strong identity of the Group with the values of the Mediterranean Diet, where flour is of course the most important component.

"The award is meant to establish a strong tie between the Casillo Group and the Mediterranean Diet values and traditions, which heavily capitalizes on the presence of wheat-based products, a hallmark of Casillo's portfolio. We wanted to recognize the dedication of some individuals and organizations that, with passion, commitment and determination, bring luster to Italy, Apulia and promote the Mediterranean diet, of which our products are epitome," Mimmo Casillo, president and CEO of the Group, told i-Italy and then added, "It is thanks to them that the Group and the family Casillo will soon be at home in America."

The prize, a symbolic ceramic plate hand-decorated by master Agostino Branca, is intended to recognize in a simple but significant ones that are real "ambassadors" of Italian cuisine (and of Apulia in particular), who have distinguished themselves for their excellent contribution in the spreading of the Mediterranean Diet. The 2015 winners were: Sara Baer Sinnott, president of the non-profit Oldways, an organization promoting in the U.S. the appreciation and diffusion of the Mediterranean Diet for over 20 years; Pino Coladonato, renown chef and restaurateur (La Masseria, both in NYC and in Rhode Island); Dino Clemente, the owner of an industrial bakery renown (Clemente Bakery, in New Jersey); John Mustaro, beloved president of the important United Pugliesi Federation; Rossella Rago, gracious host of the program "Cooking with Nonna"; John Sciancalepore, distributor and passionate organizer of the Feast of Our Lady of Martyrs to Hoboken; and Mauro Pansini, renowned Chef de Cuisine from international experience, who gave guests the delicious tastings of the evening.

"Apulian cuisine is quintessential of the Mediterranean: durum wheat, vegetables, extra virgin olive oil, rich in polyphenols, fish, legumes and almonds," Mimmo Casillo continued, "Durum wheat is at the base of this diet, it has a higher protein content than soft wheat. Our region is known for its durum wheat which we use in the preparation of several dishes: orecchiette pasta, pane di Altamura Dop, Focaccia Barese, Taralli, Frise, Puccia and Pizzi (bread dough knead with black olives, tomatoes and onions then baked in a stone oven.)"

At the event, a poetic video by director Carlos Solito was shown "Light, Wind, Tradition": colors and atmospheres of Apulia, between sea, olive trees and wheat fields up to the Alta Murgia National Park, proud home of the Casillo Group. An annual event, therefore, that will contribute, strategically, to the Made in Italy on American tables.

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