

Find the Fake: the Italian trade Commission and UNAPROL Against Imitations

N.L. (June 13, 2013)



The Italian Trade Commission of New York and UNAPROL, a consortium of olive growers established in 1966, have enlisted the American public to Find the Fake. Four olive oils were presented to the guests' discerning noses and palates. One of them was a NOT 100% Italian, and their task was to identify it.

The [Italian Trade Commission of New York](#) [2] and [UNAPROL](#) [3], a consortium of olive growers established in 1966, have enlisted the American public to Find the Fake. The investigation was conducted on June 2nd at the offices of the Italian Trade Commission as part of the celebrations of Italy's Festa della Repubblica. There was a preview for journalists back in April at the offices of the Specialty Food Association in New York.

Unfortunately, Andrea Camilleri's Inspector Salvo Montalbano and Donna Leon's Commissario Guido Brunetti were too busy with other assignments in Venice and Sicily. That means solving this case



was up to the general public. Four olive oils were presented to the guests' discerning noses and palates. One of them was a fake, and their task was to identify it. Fortunately, they were not alone.

All jokes aside, this lighthearted presentation had a serious aim, which was to demonstrate that sensitive noses and experienced taste buds can be trained to distinguish between genuine Italian extra virgin olive oil and something that is rather less exalted.

Olive oil basics were introduced by real experts: Michele Bungaro, the president and spokesman for UNAPROL, Fulvio Genovese, a UNAPROL special agent and Fred Plotkin, the award winning expert and lecturer on all things Italian.

"Believe it or not, some manufacturers intentionally mislead consumers into believing that the oil within the bottle is 100% Italian when it actually contains a blend of olives from different countries. Blended oils are perfectly good (most of the time) but not if they are being misrepresented as 100% Italian. Many countries, including the USA, produce excellent olive oil, but many consumers veer towards Italian olive oil because it has a world-wide reputation for excellence."

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This reputation is often undermined by all the fakes out there are plenty of olive oils for sale at ridiculously low prices. They have an Italian sounding name but more often than not, the oil is a blend that doesn't even have a single drop of juice from an Italian olive!

Both the Italian Trade Commission and UNAPROL are very active in fighting this phenomenon.

What makes Italian extra virgin olive oil a worldwide success? There are three main reasons: care, quality and variety. From each country, a different oil, because the olive responds to terroir just as the grape does. The very shape of the Italian boot, a peninsula stretching from the Alps to the heart of the Mediterranean Sea, provides a vast variety of terroirs. Then there are cultivars or varieties of olive: more than 350 of them, each with its own qualities.

To speak of just a few, there are taggiasca and lavagnina in Liguria, frantoio in Tuscany, casali of Lake Garda, moraiolo in Umbria, carboncella around the Sabina Hills near Rome, gentile in the Abruzzi, rotondella in Campania, ogliarola, coratina, cina and cellina in Apulia, carolea in Calabria, nocellara del belice and bosana in Sicily and in Sardinia, respectively.

From north to south, Italy's terroirs and varieties produce a dazzling range of organoleptic or sensory properties. The color may be golden yellow, intensely shaded, veiled or with green and orange high lights. All these sunny colors hold the thousand flavors and fragrances of 100% made in Italy extra virgin olive oils. Even locally, within a given region, blended oils – those made from more than one variety of olive – have their own distinctive scents, bouquets and flavors. The growers, many of whom have olive trees that are decades and even hundreds years old, take extraordinary care of them, their fruit and the oil they press to create 100% made in Italy product.

"There is not one oil that is better than the other," Bungaro explained, "there is one for every taste, the difference is in the palate and a person's personal preferences. Yet there is competition against high quality."

In order to guarantee high quality, UNAPROL has introduced 100% Qualità Italiana, a new grade of extra virgin olive oil.

Produced in Italy from Italian olives and subject to UNAPROL's traceability system, which allows for analysis of every step of the production process, 100% Qualità Italiana is a level of extra virgin olive oil that goes above and beyond the already strict standards required by law. Extra virgin olive oil holding this certification is produced with the utmost respect for the environment and according to procedures of production, transformation and conservation as described and in compliance with I.O.O.% regulations. The traceability of the production process is an instrument which safeguards the quality of food products, as it allows us to trace the movement of the product throughout the production process. "Alta Qualità" extra virgin olive oil can be traced according to the voluntary ISO 22005:08 normative and is controlled by a certifying body.



New regulations requiring the designation of origin of the product to be shown on the label allow consumers to easily recognize Made in Italy extra virgin olive oil. The “Alta Qualità” consortium includes growers, producer cooperatives and associations, oil mills and packing companies. It was founded in order to: promote and add value to high quality extra virgin olive oil in Italy and also abroad; grant the I.O.O.% certificate to the various participants in a production process based on production regulations and testing; carry out educational campaigns in behalf of “Alta Qualità” extra virgin olive oil.

UNAPROL, the National Union of Olive Producers, is an organization that brings several millennia of Italian olive culture, some 550,000 olive groves and more than 300 individual olive cultivars under the shelter of a single umbrella organization whose aim is to protect the quality and authenticity of Italian Olive Oil, and the livelihoods of its producers.

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