

As Seen In the November 14, 2014 Issue of

# CHEESE MARKET NEWS® Retail WATCH

## ITALIAN HERITAGE & FAMILY TRADITIONS SET LIONI APART

Lioni's fresh mozzarella products are made from the heart, in the Salzarulo family's long cheesemaking tradition. Lioni takes pride in perfecting and delivering what they know to be true authentic fresh mozzarella.

**RETAILING PERSPECTIVES**

**LIONI**  
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cheese is now shipped to more than 15 states around the nation via refrigerated trucking.

The company's products have a shelf life of 3 weeks, which means getting the cheese into the mouths of consumers in a timely fashion is of the utmost importance.

**"We work with distributors to determine their needs, with a strong emphasis on pre-ordering and pre-selling."**

Lori Church  
LIONI LATTICINI

works closely with all of its customers, making cheese fresh to order.

"We work with distributors to determine their needs, with a strong emphasis placed on pre-ordering and pre-selling," Church says.

In addition, each year the company evaluates those needs to ensure that they are supporting their customers effectively.

"We evaluate the key issues and how we can help them grow," Church says, "and the company also works with retailers and distributors on offering demos and product specials."

"My uncle and father embrace every relationship," Conforte adds. "These are the relationships that sustain our business. We don't compromise on quality. We want to know where our product is sold and how it is being used."

Sixty percent of the company's cheese is sold at retail — with a small portion of that being private label — and the other 40 percent is sold for foodservice.

As a non-family member working for the company, Church says it is very clear what Giuseppe and Salvatore Salzarulo put into the company.

"As a family business, they are always hands on," she says.

Conforte says that her uncle, father and mother, Michela, who manages the distribution business in Brooklyn, N.Y., are teaching the younger generation, which includes her cousin Andrius and Salvatore and her brother Giovanni.

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**AWARD-WINNING BURRATA** — Three years ago, Lioni Latticini added its own handmade Burrata Con Panna, a cheese that has an outer shell of solid Mozzarella while the inside contains both Mozzarella and cream, to its line up. The cheese won a gold medal in the 2012 World Cheese Awards.

Photo courtesy of Lioni Latticini

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**CHEESE MARKET NEWS®**

# Retail WATCH

NEWS & MARKETING IDEAS TO HELP SELL MORE CHEESE



## Italian heritage, focus on quality products set Lioni Latticini apart

By Kate Sander

UNION, N.J. — Making traditional fresh Mozzarella isn't about profit margins at Lioni Latticini. "It's about making products that are true to tradition and quality-focused."

Operated by the Salzarulo family, Lioni Latticini is the offspring of tradition that began in the town of Lioni, Italy, many decades ago. In 1980, the family brought its art of cheesemaking to Brooklyn, N.Y., when Giuseppe Salzarulo, who had lived in the United States for a few years, joined forces with his nephew, Salvatore Salzarulo, who had recently immigrated, to make the fresh, whole milk Mozzarella they knew so well.

**"My uncle and my father breathe and embrace their Italian tradition."**

Teresa Salzarulo Conforte  
LIONI LATTICINI INC.

"My uncle and my father breathe and embrace their Italian tradition," says Teresa Salzarulo Conforte, director of operations and Salvatore Salzarulo's daughter. "In so doing, they have passed their beliefs and cheesemaking practices to the next generation. They take pride in perfecting and delivering that simple food ingredient that they know as the Mozzarella."

"Everything is done from the heart," Conforte adds. "It's a lifestyle for them. They want customers to experience what we have in our own homes."

"They want to maintain quality and freshness and bring the richness of Italian cooking they have always known to the consumer — always striving for product excellence," she says.

Lioni Latticini offers more than 40 styles and sizes of fresh Mozzarella and other fresh Italian cheeses, including their classic fresh Mozzarella hand-wrapped in logs and braids, fresh Mozzarella in water and fresh Mozzarella

In retail cups. Product sizes include perline (1 gram), perle (4 grams), noccioline (9 grams), ciliegine (13 grams), bocconcini (1.5 ounces) and ovoline (4 ounces). The company's products also include smoked Mozzarella, Mozzarella medallions and handmade rolls of fresh Mozzarella that blend fine Italian prosciutto. In addition, the company makes fresh Ricotta and imports Mozzarella di Bufala and other Italian items including fresh pasta, olive oil and tomatoes directly from Italy.

Most recently, the company has added its own handmade Burrata Con Panna, a cheese that has an outer shell of solid Mozzarella while the inside contains both Mozzarella and cream. (Originally the product was imported by Lioni Latticini from Italy, but consumer interest and a desire to try something new led the company to begin making its own handcrafted product.)

The cheese, introduced about three years ago, has been a success, starting with a gold medal in the 2012 World Cheese Awards.

"Much has resulted from that," says Lori Church, director of sales and marketing, Lioni Latticini.

Following the win, the company steadily converted all of its customers from the imported Burrata to the domestically-produced cheese, she says.

Entering competitors is a newer kind of experience for Lioni Latticini. When Church joined the company several years ago, she and Conforte, alongside Conforte's cousin, Andrius, began working as a team on developing a marketing plan that would bring a little more awareness of the company to potential customers.

"They have operated under the radar," Church says of the company. "They do business from the heart, not to bring attention to themselves, but for the product to stand out to consumers."

Ultimately, the company decided to enter a contest to see what would happen. Since then, they have entered others, and 2014 has proved to be a particularly successful year, with Lioni Latticini's traditional Fresh Mozzarella (Ciliegine in Water) receiving first place in the Fresh Mozzarella category at the World Dairy Expo Championship Dairy Product Contest this summer.

and artwork on the website. However, what they do best is — and enjoy it — they did and want

at the competitors. They admire them, but they say, "That's not who we are," Conforte says. "They don't see them as competitors; there's room in the market for multiple companies. Instead, they compete with themselves."

That business model appears to have served them well. Within the past three decades, the Salzarulos have transformed their small neighborhood, family business into a nationally renowned manufacturer and distributor of fresh Mozzarella in the United States.

The company outgrew its Brooklyn, N.Y., facility in the early part of the century, ultimately necessitating a move to its current plant in Union, N.J., in 2001. The site, which is 100,000 square feet, allows room for the company to maintain steady annual growth. The company also continues to operate a wholesale warehouse in Brooklyn, N.Y.

While maintaining its old Italian values and traditions, the company utilizes modern technology and computer-monitored equipment from Italy to plant

Earlier this year, the company's Ovoline Fresh Mozzarella won second in the Fresh Mozzarella class in the World Championship Cheese Contest.

"It is an overwhelming satisfaction to produce a product which is notably accepted and recognized in the American culture as well as in the dairy industry," Conforte says.

"It's a healthy thing, and it is validating for the company, but more importantly our motivation is to stay true to our roots," Church says of the decision to enter competitions.

During the last few years, the company also has updated its packaging

**"Our Mozzarella is meant to be eaten fresh as in the days of old, sharing in my family's beliefs of delivering a traditional fresh product as we know it to be."**

Teresa Salzarulo Conforte  
LIONI LATTICINI INC.

Also in Retail WATCH: "What's In Store" looks at

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to Kraft Hockeyville, the agreement makes Kraft Hockeyville the NHL and the America and an Official NHL Winter Classic, NHL NHL All-Star Game, NHL NHL Face-Off and the NHL.

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