

## A working day in the life of...

Salvatore and Giuseppe Salzarulo, owners and founders of Lioni Latticini cheesemakers, New York



Named after a small town in the hills of the Italian Avellino region, the Lioni Latticini Mozzarella company in New York has been headed by the Salzarulo family for the past 23 years. The two founders of the quality all natural whole milk Mozzarella and smoked Mozzarella business, Salvatore and Giuseppe Salzarulo, have seen business grow to ship to over 35 cities across the US each week. "Our business has expanded at national level as the American population has become more familiar with the Mozzarella product. The increased consumer knowledge of fresh Mozzarella has propelled the demand to produce a better and more consistent product," they say.

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"A typical day consists of walking into the factory every morning and facing our everyday production issues. For example, I ensure that all equipment is working properly and that all production lines are occupied," says Salvatore.

He adds: "Problems can be as complicated as a mechanical delay, or reprogramming the computer, or just your everyday equipment

maintenance, production scheduling and factory personnel shortages."

The product range has expanded over the years and now includes fresh hand-wrapped and smoked Mozzarella, Ricotta and Mozzarella with prosciutto or pepperoni for a blend of meat and cheese. "Our product range has grown from the standard fresh one pound Mozzarella, to various sizes - from a pearl size Mozzarella to an egg size," notes Salvatore.

The company is also the largest importer of Mozzarella di Bufala (buffalo milk Mozzarella), delivered from the Campania Region of Italy every Monday. Quickly transported to Rome, it is in the US facility that Tuesday evening as it is a delicacy item best consumed fresh. "We are one of the largest importers of the Mozzarella di Bufala. Currently, we distribute approximately seven different brands of Mozzarella di Bufala because of how well the market has grown within the last few years," says Giuseppe.

Salvatore adds: "The evolution of our products is based on the increase in usage of Mozzarella in American Italian cooking. Mozzarella is no longer a luxury product that is difficult to prepare. It has become a more domestic dish that is easy to serve, as for example, a plate of Mozzarella and tomato."

"Competition has changed the cheese market in the US and it is

important to maintain the quality of the product," says Giuseppe. Both consider delivering consistency of product and service their biggest challenge and the reason for maintaining their large customer base.

Part of the success of the business also appears to come from the dedication to a limited range of products rather than expanding in many directions and seeing the quality deteriorate. The future for the Salzarulos lies in expanding the extent of their reach rather than achieving a larger product portfolio. "With ever expanding sales, the future of Lioni seems to be headed towards a greater expansion on the West Coast," says Giuseppe.

Dedication to quality, appreciation of innovative production and attention to customer relations has made a small Brooklyn neighbourhood manufacturer a nationally renowned manufacturer and distributor of Mozzarella cheese. "We introduced our family style operations from our home town in Southern Italy. Our most important quality at Lioni is that we strive to maintain the traditional cheese making as we have done for five generations." ■

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