

# Conference on Sicily, its culture and traditions at York University

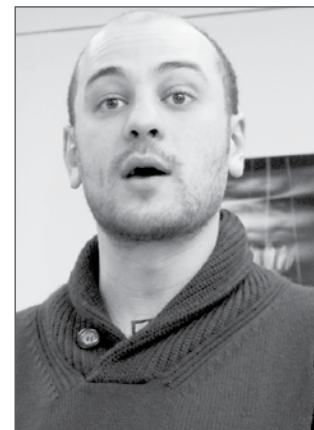
Professors from Italy and Canada discuss the medieval context associated with the island

By Mattia Bello

“The multicultural society model originated during the Mediterranean Middle Ages, where Sicily played a very important role – though it wasn’t realized (attained) in Europe but rather in North America.”

With this fascinating thought, Alessandro Musco launched the conference *Sicilia: continente di cultura, di tradizioni e di saperi. Identità di un popolo* (Sicily, land of culture, traditions, and know-how. Identity of a people), held February 29 at York University’s Founders College. The history instructor of Medieval history at Università di Palermo, as well as president of the *Officina di Studi Medievali* (Medieval studies workshop) in the island’s capital, discussed the centrality of Sicily in the Medieval context, its history, and its models – important multicultural models, given its Gothic and Byzantine, Islamic, Norman, and Spanish domination for almost 600 years.

“The famous Sicilian *cannolo* has Arabic origins, just as the renowned *cassata* (Sicilian-style cake) is Arabic, having 1,020 years of history,” Musco comments. A democratic idea that however was gradually lost over the centuries in Europe, and that instead found application in the land of the maple leaf. “Cana-



Above clockwise: Alessandro Musco, Mauro Buccheri, Roberta Iannacito-Provenzano, Tommaso India; on right: Vittorio Anastasi, Ralph Chiodo and wife, Roberto Bandiera (Photo Corriere/Tandem - Renzo Carnevale)



da’s organizational system is the best in the world for the safeguarding of multicultural society,” the instructor adds.

The lesson, moderated by Professor Roberta Iannacito-Provenzano, was attended by about 50 people. Among those present was Mauro Buccheri,

principal of Founders College, Michael Tibollo, head of the National Congress of Italian Canadians, Ralph Chiodo, CEO of Active Green&Ross and head of Peel Chrysler Fiat, Francesco Riondino of IC Savings, and Gabriella Colussi, York University instructor.

This event is part of *Settimana Culturale Siciliana* (Sicilian cultural week), that also brought to Toronto Vittorio Anastasi, president of *Associazione Siracusani nel Mondo* (association of Syracusians in the world), Liddo Schiavo, head of *Associazione nazionale cul-*

*tura e sport* (national culture and sports association), and researcher Tommaso India, who integrated Musco’s conference with a lesson on 18<sup>th</sup> century operas composed for Sicilian marionettes (works of art handmade from wood, considered).

A gift exchange took place at

the end of the evening. Musco, who donated an entire series of books on the poetic works of Ignazio Buttitta, received books on behalf of York University. And Anastasi consigned a small statue depicting Archimedes to Buccheri – he too is of Sicilian origins.

“Over the past few days, we also had the opportunity to improve our already excellent relationship with Toronto’s Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies,” Musco says. On Tuesday in fact, a meeting was held with instructor Greti Dinikova Bruun, with whom an accord was reached for a student and researcher exchange between Palermo and the city on the shores of Lake Ontario. The kermesse, thanks to the contribution by Roberto Bandiera’s and Enzo Di Mauro’s *Italcandafest*, stopped in Vaughan yesterday with the conference *L’opera dei Pupi: metafora della Sicilia* (Marionettes’ operas: Sicily’s metaphor).

On March 2 the Italian delegation was present at TIFF Bell Lightbox for the screening of the film *La prima cosa bella* (*The First Beautiful Thing*) directed by Paolo Virzì, and on March 3 the delegation participated at the charity event by Caritas, The Harmony Ball, organized in collaboration with the National Congress of Italian Canadians. ♦



## Hand-picked, produced and packaged with passion

New brand of extra virgin olive oil-CasaSana is as authentic as can get and includes a rich history

By Rosanna Bonura

Often times, passion is the key to any successful endeavour. If there is one person that knows this well it is Luciano Volpe. As Managing Partner of SLV International, the Vaughan entrepreneur didn’t think twice when he decided to create his own extra virgin olive oil brand. His curiosity about olive oil was simply a hobby at first, but the more he learned about its history, the more intrigued he became. “It was one of those exploratory projects. I started researching just out of interest and I found that there were huge disparities between oils depending on several factors,” says Luciano. Soon this curiosity led to a full-out passion and after five years, *CasaSana DOP Extra Virgin Olive Oil* was born. The name *CasaSana* means ‘healthy home’ in Italian and this is exactly what Luciano says the certified DOP (Protected Designation of Origin) olive oil offers customers. This guarantees the highest quality and verification of the final product. “It’s one of the most healthy products you can buy, it comes directly from a tree and it is not treated, it’s DOP oil so that is why we defined it as something that’s healthy for your home,” says Luciano.

Naturally, this “passion project” as Luciano refers to it, took him to Italy, where he has studied and worked before. After tasting olive oil from various regions of the country, he decided to stick to the Puglia region. The decision to base the *CasaSana* brand of olive oil from this region of Southern Italy was primarily the fact that the area is famous for producing very good olive oils and

holds a certain expertise in the field. “We tasted oils from other regions in Italy, but this region seemed more consistent in its quality and there’s an actual artistry that exists in a larger form in Puglia so we zeroed in on Bari,” says Luciano. The olive oil is made with *Coratina* olives and is produced near Bari, which is considered as one of the most important agricultural centres in Southern Europe, mainly because of its large network of family-owned, artisanal growers and producers who contribute to the region’s economy. The *CasaSana* brand is exclusively produced by *Villa Cappelli* ([www.villacappelli.com](http://www.villacappelli.com)). The estate DOP extra virgin olive oil-picked and marketed specifically as high quality olive oil, is selected from surrounding groves on the Villa. The trees in which they grow on are short, ensuring the olives don’t fall to the ground and bruise, and the olives are hand-picked and collected in nets. No heat or machines are used in the process, instead the oil is extracted using a traditional stone mill then poured directly into different sized tins. This process is as authentic as an olive oil can be produced, done as Luciano says, “all’antica” (the antique way). “It is produced as was done 2000-3000 years ago so it’s as naturally harvested and produced as possible,” he says. The quality of *CasaSana*’s taste is already speaking for itself as a product that is rich, natural, authentic, and one with a nice aftertaste. Several of Toronto’s top Chefs, cooking schools, restaurateurs, and foreign diplomats are customers. Depending on the harvest, *CasaSana* produces about 30-35,000 litres of its olive oil per year.



Luciano Volpe (Photo: Giulio Muratori)

What makes *CasaSana*’s olive oil even more exclusive is the history and story behind where it is made-one that combines Luciano’s other passion and interest, Roman history. The olive groves from this particular olive oil is on the same path as the Via Appia, the Appian Way which was built by the Romans 2000 years ago to transport soldiers from Bari to Rome. It also drove the

rest of the Italian peninsula, becoming a trade route as well. “The road is 30 metres wide and this oil is harvested from olives that are growing literally on top of that Via Appia and it is the only stretch of the Appia (2-3km) that has never been paved- all you see is gravel and dirt when you travel on it. They just excavated it this summer and what they found below that was a Greek road. The trees are growing right one top of this road that was the main route for trade and military mobility so it just fits with all my passions,” explains Luciano. It was this rich history combined with his

interest in olive oil that completely won Luciano over.

Understanding extra virgin olive oil involves several factors, similar to that of selecting a great wine. The attributes that make a good quality olive oil include where it is grown, when it is picked, and how it is picked. “The first thing you should do when you buy olive oil is to smell it because if it doesn’t smell like olives, chances are that it’s either not 100 percent extra virgin olive oil, but a blend of something else,” says Luciano. With an authentic brand and top quality olive oil, *CasaSana* proves to be as rich as the history associated with the region of its olive groves. Yet another example of passion meeting success. ♦

For more information on *CasaSana* including where you can purchase:

Direct from CasaSana: [info@casasana.ca](mailto:info@casasana.ca) or 416 460 5587

Purchasing outside Toronto and anywhere in Canada or the US - online through Olive Oil Emporium: <http://www.oliveoilemporium.com/OnlineStore/ProductList/ExtraVirginOliveOil/OliveOilsfromItaly/tabid/144/CategoryID/7/List/0/Level/a/ProductID/85/Default.aspx?SortField=ProductName%2cProductName>.

“Bottle Your Own” at Dish Cooking Studio: 390 Dupont Street. [www.dishcookingstudio.com](http://www.dishcookingstudio.com)

Be sure to also check out CasaSana on Facebook- CasaSana - Extra Virgin Olive Oil - D.O.P at: <http://www.facebook.com/pages/CasaSana-Extra-Virgin-Olive-Oil-DOP/208718935874154>

