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Mr Radicchio Joe Marchini in his farm. After a trip to Italy, he understood that growing radicchio in California would have been a smart business choice and now he exports around the world even to Italy

J. Marchini Farms: farming the rich soils of California since the 1920's

LAVINIA PISANI

J. Marchini Farms revolutionized the radicchio industry introducing the Italian style to California. Based in Le Grand, CA, Joe Marchini

is the head and soul behind Mr. Radicchio. This is clear looking at his face printed on the radicchio jars now available internationally.

Mr. Radicchio is the result of family passion and commitment. The story started almost a centu-

ry ago when Italian farmer Florindo Marchini decided to move to California in 1920 from Marlia, province of Lucca, Italy.

"His brother told him about the land in California and all the opportunities there," writes

PG. 2

L'EDITORIALE

Buon Natale e a tutti l'augurio di un Felice 2016 da L'Italo-Americano

Quest'anno il calendario regala a *L'Italo-Americano* la possibilità di trascorrere con voi le festività natalizie: l'ultima edizione dell'anno arriva in tempo per essere messa sotto l'albero, anche come dono: potrete augurare buone festività ai vostri cari facendo due sottoscrizioni a \$45 l'una ottenendo così l'omaggio di una "Strillone Tote Bag".

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Florindo's son, Joe, during our interview. Florindo went for the American Dream and reached his brother in San Francisco traveling by boat and train.

The two Marchinis', together with their friend Carlo, ended up founding the Giampaoli-Marchini Company.

As a result, Joe was raised helping his father in the farm. Carrying on the family tradition, Joe became an agricultural expert and eventually founded the J. Marchini Farms together with his son Jeff.

The inspiration for creating the new company came after a trip Joe took to Italy.

"I was impressed with the tight ball radicchio. When I was a kid, my father grew radicchio but it was leafier, I had never seen radicchio in a ball," Joe writes.

As soon as he put eyes on those, he knew growing radicchio in California would have been a smart business choice. There was no domestic market for it in the U.S. So he decided to pursue it and brought some seeds back home.

At first, Joe was growing radicchio in his own garden. "It all started as a hobby," he writes. "[...] hardly anyone in the U.S. knew about radicchio. It was all imported from Italy and for the West Coast terminal markets & salad processors it was too



The Marchini family

expensive due to shipping."

Mr. Radicchio is now incredibly popular and is exported around the world, also to Italy.

Why would the Californian grown radicchio be exported to Italy? I asked myself. Joe explained me that this is to help with a shortage, or in the off-season for European salad processors (bagged salads.)

The Marchinis' ended up turning weakness into strength.

When Joe first brought the Italian seeds to the Golden Coast, he didn't consider the climate differences between the two areas. In fact, he had a hard time growing the salad properly. Jeff & Joe had to try out a variety of seeds before figuring out the right supplier.

Aside exporting international-

ly, Mr. Radicchio is now grown in three Californian regions, as well as Mexico. Joe writes that the radicchio demand is very steady today. But looking at how little people knew about radicchio at first, how did this happen? How did a hobby turn into such a prolific business?

From growing radicchio in his own garden, Joe started taking boxes full of the read-and-white salad balls to small Italian grocery stores & restaurants in San Francisco and Los Angeles.

"Soon orders came in and we started selling. Then in the 90s, the bagged salad took off. Fresh Express (the U.S. salad processor) contacted us to supply radicchio for their Italian blend [...]. The salad was a success because the consumers loved seeing

radicchio in replacement of purple cabbage," writes Joe.

J. Marchini Farms is today a year round radicchio supplier thanks to transplant planting and shed packing. Joe is pleased with the results and is even more proud to see how the company still keeps family to its core.

A part founding J. Marchini Farms with his son Jeff, family generations are involved. Joe's oldest grandson helps with post-harvest production. The second grandson is in charge of pre-harvest production and his oldest granddaughter takes care of sales and marketing. "I have seven more grandchildren and would love for them to join," writes Joe.

What a better way to carry on Italian traditions?



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PUBLISHER

Robert Barbera
Condirettore Ufficiale

DIRECTOR/EDITOR IN CHIEF
Simone Schiavinato

ADMINISTRATIVE MANAGER
Patrick Abbate

EDITORIAL COORDINATOR
Barbara Minafra

COPY EDITOR
Antonella Bokor

LOS ANGELES CONTRIBUTORS

Valerio Viale
Silvia Donati
Nancy Casas
Benadetta Cicconi
Elisabetta Russo

SAN FRANCISCO CONTRIBUTORS

Catherine Accardi
Serena Porfetto
Bianca Friundi

CONTRIBUTING WRITERS

Jessica Andrews, Chiara Assi, Adri
Barr Crocetti, Michele Bocci, Joseph
Bocci, Giorgio Bicochi,
Stefano Carnevali,
Rita Cipolla, Nicoletta Curradi,
Generoso D'Agnesi, Kerry-Lynne
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