

THE MESSAGE

Lemon Gurus

Rossana Zaretti left the Marche region of Italy 30 years ago, and has been living in Los Angeles ever since. She brought with her a recipe for limoncello and began to make batches with homegrown Southern California backyard lemons. When her son-in-law, James Carling, first tasted Rossana's distinctive liqueur, he prophesied, "One of these days we'll go into business together."



PHOTO: MERIDITH MAY

Rossana Zaretti and her daughter Manuela Carling of Ventura Limoncello.

Now, sourcing lemons from two ranches in Ventura County—Petty Ranch and Limoneira—their Ventura Limoncello brand has emerged. Three years in bottle, this pretty, canary-yellow spirit (58 proof) is at the top of the list for our taste buds.

Rossana and her daughter, Manuela Carling, hand-peel each lemon and maintain quality control by instinct. "I can tell if this one or that was grown in a period of too much smog," attests matriarch Zaretti. "I have the ability to detect freshness, inside and out." www.venturalimoncello.com

Basilicata comes to Manhattan



PHOTO: LANA BORTOLOTT

Celeb chef and culinary personality Lidia Bastianich at her midtown restaurant, Felidia for a sampling of regional food and wine from the Italian wine region of Basilicata.

It's hard to get travelers south of Italy's "3P Tourist Triangle"—Pompeii, Positano and Paestum. So, the south, instead, came here. Producers of wines and food products from Basilicata arrived in New York last month to showcase their goods, promote their region as Italy's gastronomic up-and-comer, and pay homage to host and native son Lou Di Palo, fourth-generation proprietor of Di Palo's Fine Foods.

Basilicata may never get the limelight, but there are several areas in which this middle child shines—its fine olive oils and cheeses are wonderful expressions of the land, and its single DOC wine, Aglianico del Volture, is a true Basilicata original and one of Italy's great unknown grapes.

Aglianico is just coming onto Italy's wine map. Grown on an inactive volcano, it's known for its berry profile and full tannins that evolve to earthy dark fruit and velvety tannins in time. Top winemaker Riccardo Cotarella has worked with the variety and if other such names turn their attention to this "Barolo of the South," Aglianico could be the next great grape that gets people traveling to this area. — *Lana Bortolot*

We Root For Bradley Ogden's Wine Country Cuisine

At **Root 246**, our favorite new restaurant in the Santa Ynez Valley, chef/consultant Bradley Ogden holds some coveted truffles. With him are famed winemakers Morgan Clendenen (Cold Heaven Cellars) and Doug Margerum (Margerum Wine Co.); on the far right is Root 246 Executive Chef Johnny Church. The restaurant, located in Solvang, is a play on Route 246, the road that runs through the celebrated wine country valley.



PHOTO: MERIDITH MAY