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A Delicious Tradition

DOMA Importing Examines the Past to Determine the Future

Quality and Authenticity Never Go Out of Style

Times change — and so does DOMA Importing Co. Learn more about how they’ve adapted for nearly eight decades.

by Danielle Zimmerman
Editor

For a store that opened nearly 80 years ago, DOMA Importing Co. on Drinker Street is surprisingly current. In fact, since the business was founded in 1934 by Dominic Mastri, Sr., it has continually learned to bend — not snap — in the changing winds by responding to local consumer needs throughout the decades.

History of DOMA Importing Co.

Dominic Mastri Sr. arrived on American shores from Italy on the Stampalia in the 1920s. His sights were set on south Scranton where his two brothers were making a decent living operating a general grocery store. He worked there while putting himself through college at the University of Scranton. When he graduated college, he took a job at a local butcher shop.

Having spent many years in the food industry, he eventually realized what it had been lacking.

“He saw a need to open up a store for the Italian immigrants who were coming to the area,” said Dominic Mastri, Jr. of his father.

So, on April 19, 1934, Mastri, Sr. opened DOMA Importing Co. in Dunmore, taking the first two letters of his first name and the first two letters of his last name.

“He primarily sold to the local working class, mostly miners,” Mastri, Jr. said.

“You get people coming in as grandparents with their grandchildren just like they came in with their grandparents when they were young.”
— Dominic Mastri, Jr. said of the store’s long-standing tradition in Dunmore.



The front counter at DOMA Importing Co. The store boasts more than 5,000 different Italian ingredients, many of them imported from Italy. Photo courtesy of Corey Aebli



The meat and cheese counter at DOMA Importing Co. You’ll find homemade sausage, soppressata and mozzarella among many other Italian specialties. Photo courtesy of Corey Aebli

Families would visit DOMA Importing Co. and stock up on bulk pantry items, such as 100-pound bags of flour or sacks of macaroni, as well as specialty ingredients that Mastri, Sr. had shipped in from Italy. Mastri, Sr. would often allow people to take things from the store on credit as they needed them and later bill them when they received their pay each month.

The original store thrived in Dunmore and he went on to open up two more — one in West Scranton and another in Jessup. Given all of his success, Mastri, Sr. figured it would be best to have his own warehouse so he could supply his own



Dominic Mastri, Jr. stands by a wheel of cheese in DOMA Importing Co., the store that his father founded in 1934. Throughout the decades, the store has gone from being a bulk ingredients store, to a wholesale distribution business, to a specialty, gourmet ingredients store it is today. Photo courtesy of Corey Aebli

stock for the three stores. Soon, other grocery stores were asking to buy wholesale from his warehouse.

“[Dominic Mastri, Sr.] saw a need to open up a store for the Italian immigrants who were coming to the area”
— Dominic Mastri, Jr. on the 1934 founding of DOMA Importing Co.

By the 1950s, DOMA Importing Co. consisted of more than 100 wholesale contracts with local groceries, four delivery trucks and five salesmen. Business was booming. When Mastri, Jr. wrapped up his studies at the University of Scranton in the late-1960s, he returned to Dunmore and got a job working as a salesman for the family business.

DOMA Importing Co. continued to do well over the next few decades, even as pressure from bigger corporate distri-

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2 ITALIAN RECIPES FROM DOMA

- **DOMA’s Famous Homemade Pasta:**
1 cup plus 2 tablespoons 00 all-purpose flour
1 cup DOMA semolina flour
2 eggs
½ teaspoon sea salt
On a work surface, mix the two flours and make a mound with a well in the middle. Add the eggs to the well and ½ teaspoon of salt, moisten with 1/3 cup and 2 tablespoons of lukewarm water, and knead to a smooth and silky dough. Cover with a clean dishcloth for 20 minutes. Work dough on a floured surface. Roll and cut dough to desired lengths.
- **Insalata del Basilico del Pomodora**
Roma tomatoes
black pepper
4 tablespoons 12-year-old balsamic vinegar
fresh basil
Cut Roma tomatoes into quarters, sprinkle with black pepper, drizzle balsamic vinegar and top with basil. Serve with buffalo mozzarella or over arugula lettuce.

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bution companies threatened their wholesale business. The Mastri's were able to keep up with the times by occasionally changing the focus of the business. Instead of selling to other groceries, they began focusing their efforts on selling food and supplies to commercial kitchens, such as restaurants and cafeterias at schools and in hospitals.

"We're an ingredients store for people who like to cook and need authentic ingredients."

— Dominic Mastri, Jr.

Mastri, Sr. eventually retired and handed his business over to his sons. By 2006, they were down to just the original store in Dunmore. When a couple of proprietors approached them about purchasing the DOMA Importing Co. business, they thought it'd be a good idea to take the deal and retire.

The New DOMA Importing Co.

Not long into his retirement, Mastri, Jr. found himself hanging around the store.

"I was a retiree who didn't want to be retired," he said.

The new owners hired him back as a manager, three days a week. Together, they revamped the store and tailored its focus.

"Now, we're an ingredients store for people who like to cook and need authentic ingredients," Mastri, Jr. said.

Mastri, Jr. said that they chose that concept after he began to notice a trend — over the past 10 years more people, including men, have been adding cooking to their list of hobbies. Not just any cooking, people are more inclined to make something gourmet, he said. It's no secret that, in recent years with the rise of farmer markets, people have become more interested in knowing where their food comes from and want to use the best quality ingredients available. DOMA Importing Co. strives to meet that demand.

People are also more willing to try new things, Mastri, Jr. said. A few months ago, a columnist published a recipe for a pasta that was made with a special kind of sardine sauce. The author of the recipe noted that DOMA Importing Co. would be the only local place that carried it.

"The next morning, people were lined up waiting to pick up that sardine sauce," Mastri, Jr. said.

A few years ago, people would have thought that was strange, said Mastri, Jr. Today, unknown tastes and foreign



DOMA Importing Co. is located at 302 E. Drinker St. in Dunmore. It's filled to the brim with Italian specialty ingredients, such as meats, cheeses, vinegars and more.

Photo courtesy of Corey Aebli

foods are considered intriguing.

You don't need to know what you're looking for when you walk in to DOMA Importing Co., because you're sure to leave with something. It's a treasure trove of vinegars, oils, meats and cheeses. They boast over 75 cuts of homemade and imported pastas, homemade mozzarella, and homemade sweet, hot and garlic sausage. Authenticity and quality is in the limelight at DOMA Importing Co.

However, quality is expected from more than just the food and ingredients — DOMA Importing Co. also wants to provide the best service possible.

Mastri, Jr. says there's a certain rapport between those who work there and those who shop there. The conversations are friendly. Often, you'll find people sharing recipes and talking about their experiences with different products.

"Everyone who comes in the store is in a good mood,"

Mastri, Jr. said.

DOMA Importing Co. is something that Mastri, Jr. is proud of and he's happy to share it with his community.

"You get people coming in as grandparents with their grandchildren — just like they came in with their grandparents when they were young," he explained. "They have memories of the smells and stealing an olive out of the jars. They take pride in being able to share something from generation to generation."

The Best of the Best

DOMA Importing Co. carries more than 5,000 Italian ingredients but some are more sought after than others.

San Marzano Tomatoes

San Marzano tomatoes are grown in the Agro Sarnese Nocerino region of Italy in the ashes of Mount Vesuvius. The tomatoes are known for their sun-ripened, rich, flavorful taste. Don't be fooled by those that simply claim the San Marzano name -- a Protected Designation of Origin (D.O.P.) seal certifies that the product is not only made from authentic San Marzano tomatoes, but also ensures quality.

Olive Oil

Olive oil is the go-to cooking oil for Italian food. A good olive oil can be used for everything from dressing a salad to sautéing fresh vegetables. High-quality olive oil is also good for you -- rich in antioxidants and low in saturated fat. The best (and often most expensive) olive oils are made from olives picked by hand and stone-pressed without the use of heat or hot water. Look for terms such as "extra virgin" and "first cold pressed."

Grana Padano

An Italian dish is never quite finished without a sprinkle of grated cheese and in many households Grana Padano is the cheese of choice. Similar to Parmesan, except made exclusively from the milk of cows from Northern Italy's Po River Valley. Aged between nine and 30 months, Grana Padano is best served on its own with a glass of wine or grated over a dish.

Balsamic Vinegar

Balsamic vinegar is made from the boiled-down juice of grapes which is given time to ferment and mature. The ideal conditions for balsamic vinegar production is in the Modena and Reggio Emilia regions of Italy because their drastic temperature change between cold winters and hot summers aid in the fermentation and maturing of the vinegar. Italian law prohibits balsamic vinegar producers to claim the vinegar is "aged." Instead, they are rated using the number of times it has gone through the Traversi process, which entails allowing the vinegar to "sleep" in low temperatures and then transferring it from big barrels to smaller barrels.

For more information, visit DOMA Importing Co. online at doma-italian-market.com.

—Danielle Zimmerman

What You'll Find at DOMA Importing Co.

Meats: Homemade hot, sweet and garlic Italian sausage, homemade sopressata, bologna, capicola, cooked ham, dry sausage, Genoa salami, lonza, mortadella, pancetta, pepper ham, pepperoni, prosciutto, salami, spiced turkey and meatballs

Cheeses: homemade mozzarella, locatelli, pecorino romano, American, asiago, bocchini, cooper sharp, fontina, gorgonzola, muenster, parmesan, parmigiano reggiano, pepper cheese, provolone, sardo and sharp provolone

Sweets: amaretti, candied cherries, mixed candied fruits, figs, Panettone, Torrone and biscotti

They also sell kitchen utensils, such as pasta makers, pizelle makers, cheese graters, tomato presses, pizza stones and more.

For more information about DOMA Importing Co. visit them online at doma-italian-market.com or in store at 302 E. Drinker St.



DOMA Importing Co.

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DOMA Importing Co. was founded by Dominic Mastri, Sr. 79 years ago in 1934.