

The Farmer's Exchange

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New Dairy to Bring Taste of Italy to Huntington Co.

by Kim MacMillan

A taste of Italy has been transplanted to Huntington County. The Golfo di Napoli Dairy organic cheese factory will soon begin production and will celebrate with a public open house on a yet-to-be-announced date in August. The production facility in Warren is the only one currently operated by Golfo di Napoli anywhere in the world and will produce a variety of cheeses including fresh mozzarella, burrata, ricotta and provolone.

The facility, which is owned by the Somma family from Italy and some minority partners, is located on State Road 5 about a mile north of the town of Warren in north-eastern Indiana. Work crews are currently putting finishing touches on the building, which also houses a café and retail outlet.

"Golfo di Napoli represents a close family business where everyone has the same vision for this company. The chief executive officer is Antonio Somma who has been directing the project since its birth over a year ago," said Paolo Bruni, marketing consultant for Golfo di Napoli.

According to Bruni when the plant is at full production, Golfo di Napoli will use 220,000 pounds of milk a day. However, they will work up to that amount beginning with approximately 50,000 to 100,000 pounds of milk a week. The high-quality, organic milk will come from Fair Oaks Farm in northwestern Indiana and a group of organic Amish farms.

According to their web site fior di latte (mozzarella) is the most famous cow's milk cheese in the world. It is a typical product of the Italian region of Campania, and in particular of the Lattari Mountains, located in the center of the Gulf of Naples.



KEY STAFF members of the Golfo di Napoli Dairy pose in front of the factory in mid-July. Pictured (from left) are Paolo Bruni, marketing director; Guglielmo Di Giovanni, head cheesemaker and Matt Cottrill, director of operations. (Kim MacMillan photo)

To honor the land of their origin they decided to call their facility the "Golfo di Napoli Dairy."

The head cheesemaker at Golfo di Napoli is Guglielmo Di Giovanni, from Meta Di Sorrento, Italy. At 16 years of age he started working in a small cheese factory specializing in artisanal techniques. He said that after eight full years, he began to master those techniques and became fluent in working on the traditional Italian pasta filata (stretched-curd, pulled-curd, and plastic-curd cheeses). Specifically, he mastered the art of making mozzarella (fior di latte), burrata, caciocavallo and provolone. He spent time working in cheese production in Melbourne, Australia, and St. Petersburg, Russia, as well.

"I have been working as a cheesemaker for the last 37 years and have had vast experience that has helped me perfect my craft. Cheesemaking is an art and I've developed the skills through my own two hands. In order to make the best tasting cheese, I stick to and perfect the techniques used by ancestors in the past respecting the authenticity and rich traditions involved," said Di Giovanni.

The on-site Golfo di

Napoli Café will have sit-down or carry-out service with a menu that offers cheese boards, sandwiches, salads, Italian wine and Italian and American coffee. There will also be retail sales of cheeses, wines, coffee and other imported products from Italy. Both indoor and outdoor tables are available for dining. Golfo di Napoli plans to partner with the community to host local events at their café as well. Recipes for using their cheeses will be available on their web site.

In addition to opening the dairy, the Somma family has already opened a pizzeria and cheese store in Chicago on North Michigan Avenue called Mozzarella Store Pizza & Caffè. The restaurant offers wood-fired pizzas, a variety of cheeses and espresso, among other Italian delicacies. Future plans are to open 20 to 30 more of these restaurants across the country over the next few years.

The decision by the Somma family to build their dairy near the small town of Warren was influenced by many factors. Two important things on the list were the easy access to Interstate 69, a major north-south thoroughfare, making it simple to truck milk to and cheese from the

plant, and the central location of the state of Indiana.

"A couple of years ago, while on an unrelated business trip to the U.S., Antonio Somma had the idea of bringing Italian cheese production plant to the U.S. and we'd do it our way; the Italian way. While talking about this idea he picked the brains of a few people. As it slowly gained traction, feasibility studies were conducted and backed the project with more than just 'we can do it'. As it appears, we could really do it," explained Bruni.

"As Antonio travelled to Indiana, known as the best and most agricultural state, he came across various opportunities to plant his factory," Bruni continued. "With all factors into consideration, such as the distance to our Chicago store and our milk suppliers, it all seemed to point where we are today. Coupling this with the fact that the land was up for sale, the Somma family decided to grasp the opportunity."

He said that Golfo di Napoli Dairy will employ about 25 to 30 employees initially, with possibly more later. About 90 percent of those new hires will come from Huntington County. One of the few outside hires is Matt Cottrill, director of operations. He is originally from Connecticut, but he and his family now live in the city of Huntington. The opening of the Golfo di Napoli plant brings not only jobs, but also much-needed retail and dining options to Huntington County which has lost a number of anchor retail stores and several restaurants over the last five years.

Executive director of Huntington County Economic Development, Mark Wickersham, said that the Somma family initially committed to invest \$9.5 million in building

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(Continued from page 1) the plant and purchased the 40-acre site which had been under option with the Huntington County Economic Development Corporation, and a recipient of the State of Indiana's PRIME Certification Designation.

According to Wickersham, the State of Indiana originally committed to provide a performance-based incentive of up to \$300,000 in conditional tax credits for the originally-designed project. However, since then the State has increased their commitment to reflect the major re-design of State Road 5 which adjoins the project location. After the initial investment, Golfo di Napoli has invested substantially more than originally planned (nearly \$4 million more), as it prepares to include a café and other amenities to the manufacturing plant. This brings the overall private investment total to around \$13 million.

The project was a team effort involving the State of Indiana, county government, the town of Warren and the economic development community. I believe the project is a wonderful addition to our county and has a direct impact on our agricultural community via the dairy and food-processing industries. We're very honored Golfo di Napoli selected a location in Huntington County," said

Wickersham.

The address of the Golfo di Napoli Dairy is 7916 South Warren Rd., Warren Ind, 46792. The public open house at Golfo di Napoli will be the only time that the public may tour the production floor, but there is a large window looking into the production floor from the café where customers can watch cheese being made.

For more information and the exact date of the Golfo di Napoli Dairy, go to: www.golfodinapolidairy.com/.

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Italian Dairy Set to Open