

AGRI SERVICE ARMS GOING BACK TO FARM WORK.

Up to some time ago, the expression “braccia rubate all’agricoltura” (arms stolen from farm work) was used to describe someone with no attitude for intellectual work or with a strong physique that could well endure the labours of the fields. Three years ago, at Bellante Stazione, province of Teramo, someone began to think that arms really were being stolen from farm work, and decided to take action. The plan was to safeguard farming, the land, and all those who use the products of the land, or derived products or farm-grown meat. One year later Agri Service was inaugurated, a “fattoria” (farm) where the farmers of Abruzzo could meet consumers - the former to sell their products, the latter to buy first-quality natural food at low prices - ideally and in person (with visits to member farms, organized by reservation). The project was an immediate success. Customers have reached 25,000 a month and are still growing. The outlet at Bellante Stazione was soon followed by others in L’Aquila and Montesilvano; more will be opening soon in Pescara, San Benedetto del Tronto and Rome. Customers find fruit and vegetables in season, cured pork products, cheese, meat, olive oil, wine, gastronomic delicacies, freshly drawn milk and homemade ice cream, perfectly preserved and displayed in a round, revolving cabinet: **Tonda**, made by IFI S.p.A.

“In 2006”, says Roberto Rosati, President of Agri Service, “the European Community was paying landowners to leave their fields untilled. That was the last straw. In the province of Teramo about a hundred farms are forced to close each year, because farming has become uneconomic, while food is being imported from faraway countries. Could we just stand and watch, while the land that always provided us with fresh, genuine, healthy food was left unattended, and the pantries being filled with foreign produce?” Rosati got the idea of setting up a sales outlet offering the produce of selected local farmers and breeders. “What all Italian farmers have in common is the love for the land and for the fruits of their work.

Most of the products sold at the Fattoria Agri Service are made by organic methods and come from farms close

DATA SUMMARY

Name

Fattoria Agri Service

Location

Bellante Stazione (TE)

Services

Sale of foodstuffs, ice cream shop

Opening year

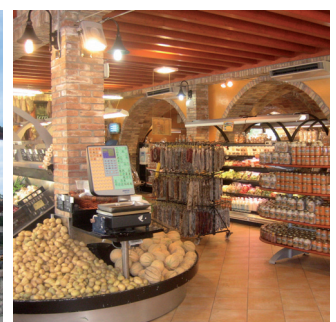
2007

Ice cream shop furnishings

STEANT arredamenti - L’Aquila

Ice cream shop technology

Tonda display for UC ice cream, made by IFI



to the point of sale, which consumers are invited to visit to get a closer look at what they serve on their tables. When you buy milk at Agri Service, you know what barn it came from and even who did the milking; when you buy a steak, you know the name of the breeder, and you can visit the farm to see how the cattle is raised. You'll find that the meat we sell comes from animals born and raised in our farms and fed grain and forage also grown by us. And that the milk we sell, available 24 hours a day from a network of distributors in the province of Teramo, is drawn every twelve hours."

The first thing you see when you enter the Agri Service store is the ice-cream corner, where the round display, the Tonda, made by IFI S.p.A. captures the eye. "The Tonda", says Stefano Ciuffetelli, owner of **STEANT** furniture, "meets the requirements of total quality management that is at the core of the Agri Service philosophy. The ingredients for the ice cream, beginning with the milk, are all first-choice. The ice-cream makers were trained at our school in L'Aquila, where before the earthquake we held 1st and 2nd-level courses with the collaboration of the best ice-cream makers in Italy.

Every part of the project is aimed at achieving the highest quality. On these conditions the Tonda display was the best choice: it keeps the ice cream just as well as the traditional vats, it displays it like a jewel in a carousel of flavours, it defrosts only when necessary (preserving the ice cream from temperature shocks) and it lets vendors work more comfortably, with no unnatural movements. In addition, thanks to the materials used Tonda is eco-friendly and energy-saving - two features highly appreciated by the patrons of Agri Service."

The Fattoria at Bellante Stazione is much more than a point of sale. "Inside the farm", continues Roberto Rosati, "we built a classroom that is visited each year by 30,000 people, including schoolchildren. We also take them to visit the member farms, where they spend a day watching farming activities and end with a pleasant dinner at our restaurant".



Agri Service does not plan to sell its products outside the local area. "We could make more money, but we would betray the very principle we worked so much to establish. Approximately 80% of the farms we work with are located in the province of Teramo, and the remaining 20% are in the same region of Abruzzo. Here's a note of interest: thanks to our local network, four hours after the April 6 earthquake struck we managed to open our sales point at L'Aquila, and 25 people worked shifts for 72 hours at handing out supplies. They stayed for the following days, working from dawn to late at night. The Fattoria is a model that we would like to see replicated in all of Italy, not only to increase public awareness for healthy eating, but especially to prevent local products from disappearing. I mean pasta, vegetables, cheese, meat, and even ice cream made with freshly-drawn milk".

But be careful. After enjoying your ice cream and complimenting the vendor, remember to pay your respects to the cow - she might take offence.