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La Dolce Vita with Altamura Vodka

- Altamura Distilleries/SS Impex to get Italian Vodka to India
- London Dry Gin to enter Indian market in second quarter

Newly Appointed, **Gopal Joshi, Marketing Director**, gives a detailed account of the company's plans to bring Altamura Vodka to India and the initiatives to market the brand in India

When you mention Italy, a whole lot of images pop up – delicious wine, yummy pizzas and pastas, fashion, amazing Venice, magnificent Rome et al. Italy is adding one more to the 'not-to-miss' list – Italian Vodka and that too from the Puglia region which is known for Pane di Altamura, a traditional authentic Italian bread. Frank Grillo and Steve Acuna, founders of Altamura Distilleries, with their love of all things distilled realised that an amazing loaf of bread is just an amazing bottle of vodka, gin or whiskey waiting to happen.

And like all good things in life have a way of crossing boundaries, Altamura Vodka has come to India and Gopal Joshi is all excited about how the premium spirit is going to capture the imagination of the discerning connoisseurs of alcohols. "I am sure Altamura Vodka will stand amongst international brands present in the Indian market." He is confident about the movement of Altamura Vodka, having closely worked with some of the prestigious international brands for 14 years in an MNC in India and contributed to several products launch and into their sustainable growth especially for premium white spirits.

Truly, a gift from Italy

The reason for his confidence is that Altamura vodka is unique and as unique as Altamura wheat grains. Gopal Joshi says "They are the strains of wheat that are used to make 'Pane di Altamura' or Altamura Bread. The only bread in the world to have a PDO (protected designation of origination)



Gopal Joshi



designation, much like Champagne has in the Champagne region of France. The wheat grown in the region has ancient origins. It was even mentioned by Horace in 37 BC, where he wrote 'Altamura bread, by far the best bread to be had, so good that the wise traveller takes a supply with him for his onward journey.'

These unique grains give our vodka a mouthfeel that Italians call 'morbida' a soft mouthfeel on the palette. Despite the relatively high alcohol content (43% ABV), it is not harsh. Rather it is smooth and slightly earthy from the terroir of Altamura. Truly a gift from Italy."

Fast-growing cocktail scene

Asked about the general perception about Italy known for wine, aperol spritz etc. and how vodka is going to make a breakthrough, Gopal Joshi replies "yes, Italy is historically a wine culture, but it has a fast-growing cocktail scene. In the major cities like Milan, Rome and Venice this interest in mixology is especially profound. We are happy to share this global trend with the people of India."

Altamura Distilleries Indian distribution partner is S.S.Impex which has a very strong presence in the Uttar Pradesh and Uttarakhand and where adequate infrastructure is available. "As we know Indian excise registrations are effective in the month of April month and once we have introduced our brand here, we will take it to Delhi, Rajasthan, Maharashtra, Goa, Daman and other markets in the next fiscal year."

Not just metros, other cities too crave for experience

As the mixology scene is emerging in India and happening in metros/cities such as Delhi, Bengaluru, Mumbai, Goa and a few cities, Gopal Joshi believes that there is a huge craving in other places for something new, something experiential. “Actually, we often underestimate the consumers' affordability and drinking choices in cities like Lucknow, Agra, Varanasi, Noida, Dehradun, Nainital etc. Since we are starting with these two states, we will provide a memorable drinking experience to consumers in these places before going into major cities.”

WE WILL BE BRINGING ITALIAN MIXOLOGISTS TO INDIA FOR GUEST SHIFTS, MASTER CLASSES AND SPECIAL EVENTS. IN RETURN WE ARE PLANNING TO TAKE SELECT INDIAN MIXOLOGISTS TO ITALY AND OTHER COUNTRIES TO SHOWCASE INDIAN MIXOLOGY.” THERE IS GOING TO BE SUBSTANTIAL CROSS EXCHANGES THAT WILL ADD TO THE MIXOLOGY SCENE GLOBALLY

Clearly Altamura has a game plan and Gopal Joshi gives a glimpse of that, “Our expansion to other Indian markets will focus on the mixology world. In support of this we will be conducting Master Classes by renowned Italian bartenders, starting with Delhi and then other areas.”

Affordable price range

On the positioning of Altamura Vodka with a price range of ₹3,300 to ₹3,500, Gopal Joshi sees good potential. “In India a couple of international vodka brands are already selling in this price segment. Although in some parts of the world our Altamura Vodka is selling above the price of these brands, for the Indian market we have decided to operate in this particular price point. We are excited to bring a “la dolce vita” [the good life] experience of our spirits to India. We are confident they will be popular, and we have the ability to fulfil customer demand.”



Italian mixology

On what kind of promotions Altamura is going to roll out in the Indian market, Gopal Joshi mentions, “We are so excited to share Italian mixology with India. We will be bringing Italian mixologists to India for guest shifts, master classes and special events. In return we are planning to take select Indian mixologists to Italy and other countries to showcase Indian mixology.” There is going to be substantial cross exchanges that will add to the mixology scene globally.

Coming to high taxation on imported liquor, Gopal Joshi states, “Taxes are a reality in the liquor business, but the tax regime in India is a major obstacle to entering the market. This is especially true

for a young brand like us with a single product. It was a difficult decision for us to enter the market. In the end, the size of the market and the emergence of a vibrant mixology culture caused us to jump in less punitive states and even more supportive of new brand entry.”

On plans to introduce London Dry Gin this year, he confirms that it will happen in early second quarter. “It is a very classic style gin but with the same unique creaminess of our vodka. We will follow the same market position of being an approachable premium brand. We will make the gin available everywhere we are selling the vodka.”

- R. Chandrakanth