

THE ITALIAN YACHTING EXPERIENCE IN NEWPORT

Story: Alessandro Vitelli



Reception at the NYYC
Harbour Court.



Riccardo Bonadeo, Yacht Club Costa Smeralda Commodore & Ambassador Umberto Vattani, President Italian Trade Commission

Coming back from the events organized in Newport, Rhode Island, by the Italian Ministry of Economic Development and the Italian Trade Commission (ITC), I want to point out that Italians have mastered the formula for promoting “Italian Style”.

In this particular case, Italian Style came to Newport briefly and, of course, with *éclat*. The event, billed as “The Italian Yachting Experience in Newport”, was held in recognition of Italian excellence in yacht building and it underlined the fundamental role that the American market and its yachtsmen have for the Italian yacht industry. In a whirlwind series of interrelated activities, that point was expounded upon with good cheer and good food, offering guests and press a memorable and proper yachting party. The Italian institutions that organized the event were represented by Mr. Pietro Celi, Director of the International Trade Department of the Italian Ministry of Economic Development, and by the President of ITC, Ambassador Umberto Vattani.

“The Italian Yachting Experience in Newport” is part of a vaster initiative, the “Made in Italy” promotional campaign, which is one of the main focuses of ITC and the Italian Ministry of Economic Development, that together, support the diffusion of Italian products around the world. This year and next are particularly exciting for the Italian yacht industry because these two institutions have dedicated additional efforts to promote Italian yacht building prestige and tradition internationally; specifically with a series of important events during the 2008 edition of the world-renowned Fort Lauderdale International Boat Show.

The decision to hold the “Italian Yachting Experience” event in Newport, home port to a large and discerning yachting population, essentially dictated that the occasion had to be elevated beyond the merely promotional. The involvement of the Yacht Club Costa Smeralda, represented by Riccardo Bonadeo, Commodore, guaranteed a certain amount of glamour, further enhanced by hosting the evening entertainment at the New York Yacht Club.

Over the course of 12 hours, we were treated to good espresso, a brief and entertaining presentation from Ambassador Umberto Vattani, a classic Italian light lunch at Newport’s Ida Lewis Yacht Club washed down with a delightful prosecco, a regatta in lower Narrangansett Bay and most importantly, the opportunity to experience “Yachting with Italian Style” onboard two Italian yachts.

Braving the occasional rain squall, we set out to watch the racing, an interclub regatta sailed in Sonars, with two-boat teams from six yacht clubs. The six teams sailed three short, but fiercely contended races – remember, short courses invariably mean a tight fleet, and a tight fleet almost invariably provides competitors and spectators with excitement – in variable breezes and sporadic rain. The participating yacht clubs fielded an impressive array of talented sailors. They soon “dialed in” and found speed, and by the third race the action was close indeed. In the end, the teams from Sail Newport prevailed.

The two press boats, an Aicon 56 and a Comitti Venezia 28, were representative examples of Italian yacht building at its best. A relative newcomer to yacht building, the Aicon Group has quickly established a solid reputation in the Mediterranean with a series of seaworthy, elegant, and luxuriously appointed motor yachts.

The Aicon 56 offers quintessential modern Italian styling, excellent performance, and accommodations to match. The interior is all flowing organic forms, with the aesthetics firmly kept subservient to ergonomic requirements. Superb attention to detail above and below deck becomes evident upon closer inspection.

From our dockside (and, while at the regatta, alongside) perspective, the Aicon 56 was impressively quiet, an acoustical feat that is always welcome both on and off the boat. Fifty-six feet is, in many ways, an ideal size, nimble enough to negotiate crowded conditions and tightly packed marinas, yet offering enough deck space and interior volume to banish the impression that you might have to give up any of your cherished creature comforts. You could easily imagine how enjoyable an



Comitti Venezia 28



Aicon 56 in the lower Narrangansett Bay

extended cruise would be on her.

The hardier few of the press opted for the sportier ride: the lovely composite/mahogany Venezia 28. Her builder, Comitti, is a limited series manufacturer of all-wood and fiberglass runabouts; the yard concentrates on an annual production of approximately 12 to 15 boats, each meticulously finished to exceptional standards – the operative word is concentrates; not only on structural considerations and finish, but on such details as the optimal deadrise at the aft sections, in order to provide the ideal wake for water skiers and a very comfortable and dry ride. Fifty years of boat building on Lake Como has given Comitti a vast backlog of information about its clients and how they use their boats.

The Venezia sped us out to the Sonar race course in no time (I believe I saw 40 knots on the speedometer briefly!), providing us rugged mariners with an ideal platform from which to enjoy the racing action, the rain be damned.

A costume change into drier – and more elegant – attire was followed by a cocktail, awards for the competitors, and a gala dinner at the New York Yacht Club’s Newport Station at Harbour Court. The competing teams were there, enjoying a well-earned drink or two; also several eminent sailors and local dignitaries. Our hosts at ITC had overlooked no detail, and gathered a polyglot and congenial group for the ensuing dinner. Adhering closely to the cardinal rule of such events – keep the speeches short and to the point, and keep the Italian food and wine delicious and copious – they ensured that the occasion was a memorable one, emphasizing Italian Style once again. As we were winding down nicely with a glass of excellent grappa, we kept thinking that, after all, rain or no, we members of the press should have formed our own team and gone racing! It was that kind of a day.

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