

Pistachio Party

Dumante Verdenoce Introduces Ultra-Premium Italian Pistachio Liqueur

BY CARA McILWAINE



Recently, flavored liqueurs have regained popularity with consumers after years of sitting on shelves. Some of the classic Italian varieties include Frangelico and Amaretto, but until recently there has not been space for an ultra-premium Italian nut cordial. Enter Dumante Verdenoce, launched in 2007.

Howard Sturm, Dumante brand owner who lives in Louisville, KY, decided to take advantage of living in the “Bourbon Belt” to try his hand at crafting the first-ever ultra-premium pistachio Italian liqueur: Dumante Verdenoce. Says Sturm, “My market research showed me that no one had really done this before, and my passion drove me to create the first-to-market pistachio liqueur.”

Kentucky-Born, Italian-Made

Sturm, along with his business partner, Paul Paletti, feels fortunate to live in Louisville. “With lots of industry professionals in the area, it helped us to procure talent to help realize our goal,” he says. Dumante Verdenoce is produced in a facility along the Amalfi Coast that has been making natural spirits since the 19th century, and sources a percentage of real Sicilian-grown pistachios. The right formulation took patience.



“It took a long time to get the product right. First, we tried to do the infusions with neutral grain spirit, but that didn’t work. It was actually someone behind a vodka brand who suggested we use Italian molasses-based alcohol, and it not only worked great, it made the product even more authentically Italian” shares Sturm.

The molasses base not only aids in melding the flavors, it also cuts sugar by about half. As low-calorie spirits and cocktails gain momentum, Sturm admits, “We use the low-sugar angle as a talking point, but our goal was really to create a liqueur that didn’t feel syrupy or one-dimensional.”

The liqueur contains 10% real Sicilian pistachios, and adds depth of flavor through the inclusion of five different types of vanilla, including Madagascar. “Dumante is intentionally very mixable, partly because of those complex vanilla notes,” says Sturm.

Sturm and Paletti envisioned a spirit aligned with high-end brandies and Cognacs: “Our product is not sugary, and it has an incredible nose and a very long finish.” With an SRP of \$39.99–\$43.99, Dumante situates itself in the ultra-premium category. “We chose to infuse the real pistachios into the molasses, and that establishes Dumante as ultra-premium—there are no extracts in our product,” points out Sturm.

Pistachio Empire

Currently, Dumante Verdenoce is available in 16 states and will soon be found in four more. While expansion into new markets is always good, Sturm knows that “liqueurs have a limited audience,” so he is “happy with how far we have come since we started.”

The history of the pistachio played into branding. The bottle itself is reminiscent of a flask, while the logo presents an ancient mystical fertility symbol. The stopper is black glass, and the whole effect is of elegance and simplicity.

Much of Dumante’s marketing and advertising incorporates art and music. The brand has print ads featuring the artwork of Chuck Connelly, and a commercial featuring an opera singer using Dumante to quench his thirst before he sings. Dumante has also been sponsoring “Du The Night” events in markets including Louisville, Indianapolis, Chicago and St. Louis. “We sponsor a restaurant to have a local artists’ night, where we set up a Dumante table tent for people to try our drinks,” Sturm says. Additionally, embracing Louisville, Dumante helps sponsor concerts with artists including Bela Fleck and this month, Tony Bennett.

Sturm’s enthusiasm for his brand is infectious: “I set out to create something that I would want to drink, and I want it to be the best ultra-premium Italian liqueur available. It is so cool to go into a liquor store in so many places now, and see my Dumante on the shelf.” ■