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- 1• Yacht Club Costa Smeralda Commodore, Riccardo Bonadeo.
- 2• Sonars racing in the lower Narangasset Bay.
- 3• Ambassador Umberto Vattani President, Italian Trade Commission.
- 4• Aicon 56.
- 5• Comitti Venezia 28.

The Italian Yachting Experience in Newport

The Italian Ministry of Economic Development together with the Italian Trade Commission (ITC) have embarked on a campaign to promote "Made in Italy", a country long held in esteem for the quality of the workmanship and the high level of design executed even in the simplest detail. The "Made in Italy" promotional campaign is one of the prime objectives of the Italian Ministry of Economic Development and ITC, in their efforts to raise the awareness of Italian products around the world. This year these two institutions have decided to focus on the Italian yachting industry (six out of the top ten mega-yacht builders are Italian) and what better place to celebrate the industry than at the prestigious New York Yacht Club (NYYC), the oldest and most venerated yacht club in America, with festivities at their Newport outpost, Harbourcourt. The event "Italian Yachting Experience" was held on September 27th, 2008 and was co-hosted by the Ministry of Economic Development, represented by Mr. Pietro Celi, Director of the International Trade Department, by ITC, represented by its President, Ambassador Umberto Vattani and the Yacht Club Costa Smeralda, founded 41 years ago by H.H. the Aga Khan. In Newport, the sailing capital of the world, CSYC commodore, Riccardo Bonadeo brought along the best of the Costa Smeralda squad to give some serious competition to the 8 entries from various Newport yacht clubs, sailing aboard Sonars. Unfortunately, they didn't bring along their glorious Mediterranean sunny climate to the often changeable New England weather pattern. With heavy downpours due to Hurricane Ike off the coastline and winds gusts ranging from 20 knots to 0, the Italian sailors had a sampling of the rigors encountered when sailing in this part of the country, paramount for exciting competition. Ambassador Vattani, shed some light on the mystique of "Made in Italy" products and boats in particular. "This world of sailing and boating is a very competitive market. It is not enough to be recognized as the best, you need also the aspect of uniqueness, to give you a competitive edge. This is what makes Italy such a powerful force in the market; there is the element of an artistic concept intermingled with the most advanced technology. When you buy an Italian product, there is an element of gift, something you don't pay for and that

is the amount of care and attention put into the creation of a product. An Italian will master the most advanced technology but he will also give it a very special artistic twist." ITC attaches great importance to the promotion of Italian yachts. They have partnered with the Genoa Boat Show, had a multifaceted presence at the 2008 edition of the Ft. Lauderdale Boat Show, in addition to expanding into newly developed markets such as Dubai and Shanghai. But their focus is on the American market, where nearly 60 million people are involved in the world of boating. In the mega yacht industry, Italian shipyards excel; out of over 800 orders in 2007, figures indicate that more than 400 were Italian hulls. Italian builders would like a larger share of the US \$38 billion dollar market; in Florida alone, there are more boats than in the whole of Europe. Events such as "the Italian Yachting Experience" at the NYYC, encourage more exchange between the two countries. Ambassador Vattani visited the International Yacht Restoration School and presented them with an Italian flag at the award dinner with the intention of increasing the Italian presence of students at this formidable school. This event also presented an opportunity to experience some of the newcomers to the US import world. Following lunch at the cozy Ida Lewis Yacht Club, guests had the opportunity to experience the smooth ride of an Aicon yacht, despite the inclement weather. Tom Sulentic, founder of Newport Yacht Sales, is the exclusive US Aicon Yachts dealer in the northeast. Sulentic took an early retirement from the corporate world and in 2002 nearly was the first US customer of Aicon Yachts. But it wasn't until 2004, newly married and in need of a larger boat that he not only became the proud owner of a 56' Aicon, but so impressed with the boat's performance and design, he decided to become involved with the dealership. He maintains an office on Goat Island in Newport, RI adjacent to his Aicon 56. Aicon was formed in early 1990's and today there are several boat building facilities in Messina area. As the company was initially involved in interiors of buildings and later mega yacht interiors; the eye of the architect is in the details, and what details. Aicon builds about 60 boats a year, ranging in size from 58' to 85' and what initially draws clients to an

Aicon, according to Sulentic, "is the sexy Italian design, that's the first thing". The architectural curves in the interior, the finishes on the wood, it's sensuous. Beyond the aesthetic and sensual attractions for a moment, Aicon has developed a superior hull design which has a RINA "A" offshore rating, "our boats will typically weigh 10% more than the competition, same size, because of hull thickness; 2 inch thick solid below water line and a cored two inches above." And lastly, for those lovers of exclusivity, Aicon is a limited production boat; you won't see it in every marina. It really appeals to the distinguishing buyer. Another beauty available at this event was the Comitti Venezia 28 boat. Their advertising slogan speaks well of the company, "Non una semplice barca, ma uno stile di vita." Not just a boat, but a style of living. There is an interest today in what we can call boutique boat builders, small companies honoring the tradition developed years ago by the founders who had a passion for their craft. Comitti was founded in 1956 by Mario Comitti and his son, Elia successfully raced these boats, establishing his father's reputation as an exceptionally talented builder. Mike Turner remembers when he was 9 years old, back in 1963, his father showed him a Riva Aquarama at the New York Boat Show and it made a lasting impression. Turner's whole life has been about boats; using, designing and building them. Having decided that he wanted to get into the boat import business, at the Genoa Show in 2003 he spotted the Comitti mahogany boats and it brought back the memory of his old love, the Riva Aquarama. Turner Marine Group, dba Comitti North America, is the sole North American importer and if you have ever had a lust for the workmanship in a beautiful mahogany boat, look no further. "These boats appeal because they are really sexy, the aesthetic is amazing and people seem

to really appreciate it." The quality and detail speak for themselves. Think La Dolce Vita in your sexy luxury runabout; mega yacht owners have been buying them as their tenders. In Newport the Venezia series turned heads, it combines durability and the low maintenance of a Fiberglass hull with the classical presentation of an epoxy sealed Awlcraft 2000 finished mahogany deck. The Venezia 28.6' handled the rough water in Newport with aplomb and can reach speeds of 55+ mph. But whether you chose from the mahogany Sanremo 21, or Portofino 25 or the Mahogany/Fiberglass Venezia in sizes from 22 ft to 34.5 ft, you'll feel like a movie star zipping across the waves in your Comitti, just what the craftsmen working in the boatyard back in Lake Como have in mind. Guests onboard both boats clearly enjoyed the ride, impressed with the coastline of Newport and the diligence of the racers. Italians have a flair for entertaining and while the NYYC is traditionally a conservative institution in the sailing world, the beautiful formal rooms of the Harbourcourt mansion were alive with good cheer and humor, thanks to the congenial spirit of our Italian guests. Following the cocktail reception where Ambassador Vattani presented the NYYC with a Ship's Bell, mechanical clock with chimes, guests sat down to an elegant dinner prepared by the chef of San Domenico restaurant in New York. Each course was exquisitely prepared and presented, paired with beautiful wines and topped off at the end of the evening with the infamous grappa and limoncello. As guests were leaving, the women were delighted with their Pucci gift scarf and the men tucked a copy of the leather bound CSYC magazine under their arm; clearly a good time was had by all. ■

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