

# ITALIAN CENTER HOSTS food & wine festival kickoff

By SIBYLLA CHIPAZIWA  
Assistant Editor

This year's Westchester Magazine Food & Wine Festival kicked off with a new event: a wine tasting.

The kickoff, which was held at the Westchester Italian Cultural Center in Tuckahoe on June 6, featured a tasting tour of Italian wine, antipasti and dessert from DeCicco & Sons, cooking demos from Tarry Lodge Chef Andy Nusser, and a special vintage tasting with wine expert Kevin Zraly.

Barbara Begley, marketing and communications director at Westchester Magazine, said organizers were looking to add another event to celebrate the festival's seventh year. "Everybody loves Italian

wine," she said. "[The cultural center] is a beautiful building, and the layout works for this kind of event. It's an Italian night, and it's a perfect fit."

Joe Armentano, a cultural center member and locally renowned oenophile, was the perfect host, given his 20-year-old passion for wine. Armentano is also a rare Italian-American with roots in four southern regions in Italy: Sicily, Campania, Calabria and Puglia. "It's unusual to have all four grandparents come from different parts of Italy," he told the Review.

Westchester Magazine approached Armentano for the festival to not only sponsor the tasting, but also because of his hobby.

"Wines are a big hobby of mine," he said, adding that he has a cellar that can hold a few thousand bottles and a new tasting room in his Rye Brook home. "If I have an opportunity to marry my passion and hobby with a good cause, you can't do any better than that, quite frankly."

On Tuesday evening, guests had two tasting rooms to explore more than a dozen wines from six Italian regions, from a light prosecco to full-bodied Super Tuscans. Bottles were available for purchase courtesy of Varmax Liquor Pantry, located in Port Chester.

The cultural center also has a



A DeCicco & Sons employee pours some wine for a guest in one of the two tasting rooms.

cellar in its basement, where the wine expert, Zraly, drew crowds into the small, dark space to taste two of the most expensive wines being featured. One wine, a lush Brunello di Montalcino from Tuscany, was already delicious with a 2010 vintage. "Wait until you taste it 10 years from now," he said.

Chef Nusser also held two cooking demos in the basement's kitchen, preparing a mortadella and rabiola panini, and a peach crostata topped with lemon thyme ricotta—"Like peach pie without the hassle," Nusser said. Both

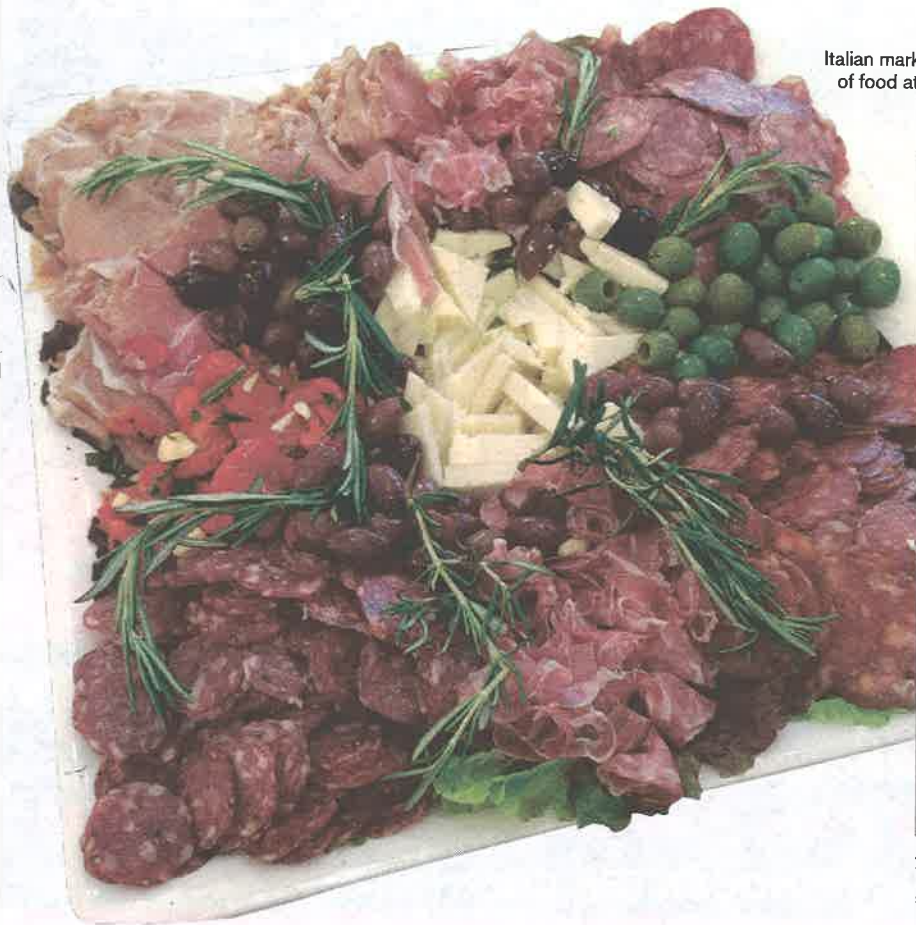
dishes will be available at Tarry Lodge's Port Chester location.

The wine tasting was the first of a week of events highlighting what Westchester has to offer when it comes to food and wine, on through Sunday, June 11. In its seventh year, the festival, which runs through Sunday, June 11, added two other events to its offerings, including a food and fashion event at Savor Westchester and a junior chef experience for children ages 3 to 12.

CONTACT: [sibylla@hometown.com](mailto:sibylla@hometown.com)



Chef Andy Nusser of Tarry Lodge Port Chester holds two cooking demos, one of them featuring this peach crostata with lemon thyme ricotta.



Italian market DeCicco & Sons served platters of food at the wine tasting.



Joe Armentano, who hosted the kickoff event to Westchester Magazine's Food & Wine Festival, speaks to guests during the wine tastings. Photos/Sibylla Chipaziwa