

# Setting Itself Apart

Castella Imports is committed to bringing authentic flavors of the world to the plates of its customers, one taste at a time. **By Libby John**



>> Hauppauge, N.Y.-based Castella Imports supplies customers with products such as antipastos, cheeses, bread crumbs, olives, olive oils, sauces and vegetables.

**C**astella Imports Inc. is one of the largest importers of specialty foods in the United States. “Through hard work and dedication, Castella offers the highest quality products, which exceed industry standards, with unsurpassed packaging, pricing and distribution,” President and owner Bill Valsamos says. The Hauppauge, N.Y.-based firm provides a variety of products such as antipastos, beverages, bread crumbs, bruschettas, cheeses, flavors, food colors, olives, olive oils, sauces, specialty foods, spices, vegetables and vinegar.

As a manufacturer and distributor, “Castella has the passion for being the link to [other countries],” Valsamos says. “We work with the best growers in Chile, France, Greece, Morocco, Peru, Spain, Turkey and here in the United States to ensure our tradition of quality, freshness and variety.”

Castella has a long-standing reputation with its vendors. “We evolve and expand with the partnerships of our vendors, such as Rez-Tech,” Vice

President Chris Valsamos says.

“Castella has achieved something that not many companies have, which is continued growth during a down [economy],” Bill Valsamos adds. “As of 2000, we’ve doubled sales every five years.”

## Customer Feedback

Diversity is one way the company has been able to set itself apart. “By expanding into new markets, such as supermarkets and Costco, we have extended our expertise and developed new, authentic items,” Valsamos says. “We embrace the challenge of research and development.”

Staying on top of customers’ tastes and industry trends is a priority for Castella Imports. “We do a road show

## company profile

**Castella Imports**  
[www.castellaimports.com](http://www.castellaimports.com)  
**Headquarters:** Hauppauge, N.Y.  
**Service:** Specialty foods  
**Bill Valsamos, president and owner:** “We deliver the highest quality products ... while maintaining a culture of professionalism, teamwork, integrity and respect to our customers and community.”



>> Wine-infused olives are one of the new products Castella Imports will be introducing to the marketplace this year. The company says its works with customers one-to-one to help them anticipate and react to culinary trends

on a weekly basis at Costco,” Chris Valsamos says.

“With that, we’re able to work with [customers] on a one-on-one basis. Castella anticipates and responds to culinary trends.”

Later this year, the company will intro-

Product packaging is a key factor for Castella. “The right packaging can benefit the customer in a multitude of ways,” Valsamos says. “For example, we had glass [packaging], but now we have plastic and plastic bags to bring down freight costs.”

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duce wine-infused olives to the market with its Castella Vineyard Collection. It will feature flavors such as chardonnay and merlot. Samples of the new line were given to customers and the feedback has been outstanding, he says.

Castella transports its products nationwide with its own trucks. “We developed our own fleet of trucks so we can deliver merchandise for a reduced freight rate,” he says. “That is one of our competitive edges.”

## One-Stop Shop

Castella’s products distinguish it from the rest of its competitors in the industry. “We have a large array of products,” Bill Valsamos says.

“Our multitude of product lines gives us the advantage in the industry,” Chris Valsamos adds. “Companies that offer a single product line find it difficult to compete with Castella.”

Distributors can purchase products directly from the company, which is also different from most firms, Bill Valsamos says. “If a distributor has 10 vendors and they need 10,000 each, they can buy all those products from us,” he says.

“With that, we refer to ourselves as a one-stop shop, or your global marketplace,” Chris Valsamos explains.

## Growth Factor

In 1992, the roots of the company began in a production facility in Hicksville, N.Y. By 1999, the company doubled and relocated to Farmingdale. “To keep up with the demands of our customers, we opened our own distribution center in Wood Dale, Ill., in 2002,” Bill Valsamos says.

Castella acquired Millflow Spice Corp. and Regal Extract Co. in 2003. “This acquisition made us one of the largest spice companies in the Northeast,” Chris Valsamos adds.

A year later, Castella acquired the assets of Salvati Food, one of the largest Italian specialty manufacturers in the United States. Later that year, the company acquired and built its current 3.5 million-cubic-foot, state-of-the-art warehouse in Hauppauge.

Growth will continue to be the company’s major focus. Moving forward, “Castella will expand its nationwide delivery program by opening warehouses in Atlanta, Houston and Los Angeles,” Chris Valsamos says.

“Keeping in mind our customers’ desire for healthier and more delicious foods, Castella will continue to set the standard for the food industry through innovation and quality,” he adds. **FD**