



ABBIAMO tutto

it's all about Italy!

***DONNA TERRITO** has held firm to her vision, bringing timeless tableware treasures from Italy to America's shores. Now celebrating its 15th year in business, AbbiAMO tutto – in Italian, **We have everything** – brings classic artistry to unique ceramic collections, each one made with tanto amore in Italy.*



CONGRATULATIONS ON YOUR 15TH ANNIVERSARY.

I've been following AbbiAMO tutto since you opened your doors in 2001. It's been a joy watching the evolution. Thanks, that means a lot. It's about perseverance, sticking to what you believe in against the odds, keeping an open mind, and staying focused on the product, on who you want to be, on where you come from, and where you want to go.

Are you surprised you made it 15 years?

No. But I thought we'd be in a different place.

What do you mean?

I thought we'd be a stronger national brand. So much has changed in the last 15 years that couldn't be imagined. The economy gave us a jolt midstream. Then there's Italian pricing. We started to feel the pinch in 2008 when the euro was so strong against the dollar and which made me reevaluate our products and price points. One thing I wasn't going to reevaluate was sourcing the product anywhere else. Our product remains totally made in Italy and I'm determined to keep it that way.





Monogram and personalized programs are strong sellers for Abbiamo tutto, with 12 patterns made to order. Customized pieces are also available with supplied JPEG images. "It's all about being special for our stores," says founder Donna Territo. "This program is a great way for retailers to stand out and shine with their customers."



The pressure to source in Asia is huge.

Advisors and colleagues have told me it doesn't matter where it's manufactured – what matters is the design and price. Of course. But there's nothing like Italian artistry and craftsmanship. It's a challenge to keep producing in Italy, but it's something I'm passionate about. It's why I started this business – to promote my Italian heritage and this dying art. I'm one of the only people doing what I'm doing.

It is a dying art. There used to be so many folks importing Italian ceramics. Haven't many of your suppliers – particularly the smaller shops – shuttered their doors?

Yes...that's one of the biggest challenges I've faced the last two years. Many of my suppliers have closed. In one small town, there were 35 ceramic companies; now there are five. It's difficult for all of us.

And yet you're optimistic about this business model.

I am. I'm positive about the future and the designs I'm creating. I feel as if the fallout has happened and it's only going to get better. If my factories survived this long, they're going to continue. I'm not taking my product to a different country. I considered that option very seriously. But I want to be true to my vision. Abbiamo tutto means *everything Italian*. I'm not changing that.

Have the 15 years gone by in the blink of an eye?

A lot has happened in these 15 years, but, yes, it's flown.

"Being a good vendor is about consistency in quality of merchandise, in quality of shipping, in timely shipping, in communication," says Territo. "It's about knowing that I'm doing the best I can, which is all I can do."



What's the greatest skill that has enabled you to reach this 15th anniversary?

I'm beyond organized. I was raised by a mother who had tertiary thoughts: if this happens then this will happen and that will happen. I've also always known that if you have something in your hand you better deal with it.

Isn't that the best skill to have? Just do it.

When I was selling my store and starting Abbiamo tutto, I searched to see if the name was taken for my website and email. It wasn't. But I waited a week until the store sold before registering the name. During that time the name was picked up by an Italian porn site. That's why I had to make our site e-abbiamotutto.com. It's also why I will never, never, never wait again to make a decision. By the way, that Italian site went away and I since registered abbiमतutto.com.

You mentioned your store. It's one of the reasons, I believe, that you've been such an effective supplier.

You were a good retailer and you understand merchants. Business was less complicated back then. Since I've been on this side, selling to retailers, I understand why I was successful with my store. I assumed everyone worked as hard as I did, finding new products, developing relationships with vendors. I always wanted to be the first on the block to have something new. I always took chances. I never ran one

sale. I had awesome relationships with the people I bought from. It's been a surprise to see how unwilling retailers are to take a chance on new products.

You thought they'd all be like you?

I did. So many of them want something safe. When I was a retailer I walked trade show aisles looking for products I liked because if I liked it I could sell it. I didn't hem and haw. My customer base expected fresh new products. Retail today is a different story. But they face e-commerce competition which I didn't. When I sold my store websites were just starting.

How long did you own your store?

Ten years. I sold it when it was time to renew the lease. I had already started importing products from Italy and customers loved what I brought in. I began to think I should sell the products across the country. When a customer expressed interest in buying my store it was the perfect time to leave.

Your decade in retail must have been invaluable.

Being in retail was one of the best choices I ever made. My grandparents were in retail. I remember vividly spending time with them and learning how to merchandise product and be with customers.

The store went out of business not too long after you

Abbiamo tutto carries 25 ceramic collections, including Farfalle (Butterflies), shown here. With three new collections added yearly, the current catalog has about 500 pieces, with retails from \$16.99 to \$500. "We haven't discontinued a design since I started to design our dinnerware collections," Territo boasts. "There's been no reason to... our shelf life is forever!"



sold it.

The owner changed the whole dynamic, which broke my heart. The store became different, not pretty, not special. Eventually it closed, after all my blood, sweat, and tears. But I learned to accept that. What might have set me off 15 years ago doesn't even make me bat an eye now. Now if a retailer, for example, goes off about a broken plate, I'm like, 'It's just a plate. It can be replaced'.



You've learned the zen of business!

I've learned to put things in perspective, and to follow one of my golden rules which is you can't break rules. When I say no, it's no. If I break a rule for you, I have to break it for someone else.

It's like Yosemite Sam threatening Bugs Bunny not to cross the line in the sand!

Exactly! In the last 15 years I may have lost some patience as retailers try to wear me down. But no is no. I'll listen, but I'm not going to change my mind. I think it's the New Jersey coming out of me!

How has business changed most in these 15 years?

The biggest disappointment is the lack of camaraderie in this industry. It's competitive. You have to be tough; it's not for the thin-skinned. No one seems to embrace anyone's success. I'm happy when people succeed. I like helping people.

A rising tide raises all ships.

Yes. I like supportive colleagues. People who share ideas.

The fewer there are of us, the more we have to support each other to keep our industry going.

I never grasped the idea that someone has to fail for you to succeed. What's been the best change since you started the company?

Product development. When I started, original Italian collections relied on the classics. That's basically all these artists knew. I said, 'Let's take the classics, understand how they're created and the color combinations, and create our own products that work today'. That's been the biggest joy, just creating, working with the crews I have painting for me. I love relating my ideas to artists and having them execute them.

My strength is bringing the best product that I can to stores. I bring passion. I bring made in Italy. I want them to enjoy the products I design. If retailers met these artists, they'd enjoy the product even more. Life's too short not to work with people you don't enjoy working with.

DONNA TERRITO



Do you design it all?

Almost all of the designs come from me. The lines I started with 15 years ago, none of them were mine. When I began designing the collections, that was the game changer.

When did that start?

Six years ago I started focusing 90% of the collection pieces solely on my designs and creations. I kept, and will always keep, the more interpreted traditional designs, but my designs are what are moving the company forward.





New directions like *Polpo (Octopus)* ceramics and kitchen towels, and personalized designs have propelled *Abbiamo tutto* these last few years. “The future looks pretty good,” enthuses Territo. “So much has gone into the last 15 years to get us where we are now. We’re in a great place and have every intention of sticking around...we’re here to stay.”

How does your design process work?

I sketch, scan, email. It really is very different than when I started. Everything’s instantaneous. Fifteen years ago we weren’t even emailing. Now there are instant images the factories can see and Skype, which doesn’t rely on me always being in Italy. It’s so much quicker to get samples.

When you started I remember additional product categories, like pewter.

I started the business with pewter, crystal, and ceramics. I never ordered enough pewter to keep suppliers happy so I was muscled out. That was a good thing though. I can stay more competitive with ceramics. Then crystal became prohibitively expensive. I’ve learned to change the *Abbiamo tutto* assortments based on where I can be competitive and creative, like kitchen towels from Umbria, which I started importing and designing two years ago.

At the start of this conversation, you said you thought *Abbiamo tutto* would be a stronger national brand.

How important is a brand name?

It helps. Our profit margin on our products is small compared to products made in other countries which doesn’t allow room for accepting returns and long extending payment terms. Our quality is impeccable. Large branding stores require vendors to accept returns and to extend payment terms beyond 60 days. I’ve seen other companies struggle with extended terms and taking merchandise back. I’m a good student. I watch. I see what works and doesn’t work. That type of business plan doesn’t work for *Abbiamo tutto*.

So it’s taken us a little longer to get recognized because we aren’t in the large stores. But we’re getting there and on our terms. Some retailers want a strong brand name; others buy product because they like it and it sells. I have awesome customers and once they take the line they stick with us.

It’s probably one of the best things working with an owner-operated business. You’re it. Your accounts know you. They get you on the phone.

I’m always available. When you’re an entrepreneur, it’s hard to turn it off.

What percentage of your success do you attribute to you?

Well, the business wouldn’t exist without me. We’re selling my interpretations of classic Italian designs. Success is measured in many ways. I am still passionate about what I do. I’ve stayed with Italian products all these years when others haven’t. I started this company based on the fact that I want to sell made in Italy and we’re still selling made in Italy. My job isn’t to sell a cup. My job is to sell a cup made in Italy, with raw materials made in Italy. I’m not doing this for the sake of just being in the industry.

How do you get retailers’ attention?

Pretty often when I introduce someone to my collections, they’ll say, ‘We already carry such and such. Why should



Designs like Vineyard and Orchard – developed with artists throughout Italy – capitalize on the booming wine culture. “Motifs like these are the cornerstone of Abbiamo tutto,” says Territo. “We know how to design unique products that are a cut above the ceramics found in the marketplace.”

products? I take care of accounts; I don’t have a shopping cart on my website because I work with my stores.

we carry you?’ I don’t want to take their place, but you should carry my collections too. If brick and mortar merchants want to survive, they have to be open and not necessarily only look at brands that can be bought everywhere. What makes their store stand out if they’re all carrying the same

Your product is on the higher end. Are Millennials among your customers?

My core base is between 35 and 65. My designs are sophisticated and elegant and are for people, regardless of age, who appreciate quality, design, and artistry. The collections don’t fit in the mass marketed basic white category. We offer a white pattern, but the shape is classically Italian.

How much has the company grown year to year?

As soon as I started selling my own designs, business went way up. Every new collection is a steady seller.

The dollar has fluctuated a great deal over the past 15 years. How have your prices reflected that?





Drawing on her Italian heritage, Territo works with artists throughout Italy's provinces to create the hundreds of ceramic products in the Abbiamo tutto portfolio. New categories, like woven kitchen towels, below, appeal to customers. "I'm so proud that we're 100% made in Italy," Territo delights. "We're one of the only ones left designing and importing distinctive and classic products from Italy."



The euro favors the dollar currently, but Italian pricing has increased. I haven't increased our prices to reflect that. I'm paying more, but the exchange is keeping us even.

What hasn't worked for you?

It doesn't take me long to figure out when something isn't working. There are always things that don't work in any endeavor. As mentioned, it's hard for Italy to compete on price with what's going on in the rest of the world. That's something I think of every day. I've had to adjust designs to be less intricate, so production time is shorter which affects the price. With Italian ceramics you always pay for the amount of time someone needs to produce that item. Pricing isn't based on quantity; it's based on the amount of time needed to create a particular piece because it's made by hand. They're processed by hand; they're not made by machines. My designs are handpainted and the decorations are hand applied.

Where will Abbiamo tutto be in five years?

Our 20th anniversary? I would love to spend that milestone visiting my retailers. I love to go to my customers and say thank you. As far as assortments, the entire line will be my designs. We'll move more into weaving and kitchen towels. I want people to say, 'Abbiamo tutto? Yeah, I've heard of them!'

What does the future of retailing look like to you?

It's much better for me. Abbiamo tutto products are in a wide variety of stores from small retailers, e-commerce sites, museum shops, and catalogs, to wine tasting rooms, and wine and olive oil stores. We have 350 accounts, but there's always room for more.

Does social media play a role in your marketing?



That's something to improve on which is on my to-do list. I hope to have an intern manage this for me and learn about Abbiamo tutto in the process.

What keeps you up at night?

The euro against the dollar. If something happens to a major supplier. The stress is constant. Someone needs to spend a day in my shoes to see how much goes into running this business. I need five of me. Obviously every decision falls on me. There's no one to bounce ideas off of. That's a pretty hard thing. But that just makes me learn my lessons faster. One of the best lessons I learned is never make a decision when I'm upset. If I'm disappointed or upset, a good decision will not be made because I'm not thinking clearly. One of the best things about me is I'm thick-headed. I'm focused. I'm never willing to give in until I've tried every available avenue to get my product sold.

You're clever and tenacious. So while it's remarkable that a small supplier has been able to bring us tableware made in Italy when so many others have failed, it's not all that surprising because it's you.

You know how much I love this industry. I can't imagine doing anything else. There have been days when I say, 'Why am I doing this?' Then something good happens and it's all great. I don't know if that's because I'm a Gemini and I tend to forget the bad and focus on the positive, but whatever it is has gotten me through these 15 years. □

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IT'S ALL ABOUT THE GLASS

*Sneak peek of new products
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Ad materials due • June 19
(732) 332-1130

WHERE TO FIND IT

Resource list for products and services

Abbiamo tutto.....	(866) 714-9161
AmericasMart.....	(800) ATL-MART
Diane Seidle.....	(516) 642-4411
Jacob Ansel.....	(732) 536-5595
Kenny Mack.....	(212) 666-3261
Las Vegas Market.....	(800) 748-5065
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