

THE **Gourmet** RETAILER®

A Salty Tale
By Anna Wolfe

To paraphrase Aaron Fuchs of Wagshal's, who was interviewed in the Management Strategies article on DIY Importing, knowing and sharing the story behind the products is a way for specialty retailers to differentiate themselves – and perhaps pave the pathway to the sale. These stories help retailers strengthen the bonds between themselves, their customers and their suppliers.

Take for example the capers from Pantelleria – a volcanic island between Sicily and Tunisia. These capers are the only ones to earn a Protected Geographical Indication (IGP) status from the European Union.



Because of the winds, these caper plants, which live up to 50 years, grow low and flat to the ground and up to two meters in length. Pictured is the caper flower.



Capers, the small unbloomed flower bud, are picked by hand daily from May through August. The diminutive size is most prized. (Large capers, such as the one pictured top right, are a sign of laziness, I was told.) Because of the island's volcanic soil, these capers have an almost floral taste.



I had the opportunity to visit Bonomo e Giglio, the company behind the upscale La Nicchia brand, known for its salt-cured capers, during an Oldways Preservation & Trust symposium in September 2012. When I was there, the fields had already been harvested.



To preserve their unique flavor and texture, they're salt-cured.



For years, La Nicchia's capers have been available in the U.S. market exclusively through esteemed retailer Dean & DeLuca. Here's the good news: Manicaretto Italian Food Importers in Oakland, Calif., has picked up several of the Pantellerian products – including La Nicchia's Crunchy Capers, pictured, and Caper Powder. And specialty food retailer Zingerman's recently shared the salty tale behind the Pantellerian capers it is importing direct in an e-newsletter.