

# Italian Pasta Baron's Comments About Gay Families Spur Calls for Boycott

Guido Barilla, chairman of the world's leading pasta manufacturer, prompted calls for a consumer boycott on Thursday after telling Italian radio his company would never use a gay family in its advertising.

"I would never do (a commercial) with a homosexual family, not for lack of respect but because we don't agree with them. Ours is a classic family where the woman plays a fundamental role," Barilla, 55, said in an interview with Radio 24 on Wednesday.

Barilla, one of the best known pasta brands around the world, is one of Italy's biggest advertisers, and for many years has used the image of a happy family living in an idealized version of the Italian countryside, with the slogan: "Where there's Barilla, there's home."

In the interview, Barilla said he opposed adoption by gay parents, but was in favor of allowing gay marriage, which is not legal in Italy. His comment about advertising was in response to a direct question about whether he would ever feature a gay family in his company's commercials.

If gays "like our pasta and our advertising, they'll eat our pasta, if they don't like it then they will not eat it and they will eat another brand," he said.

Aurelio Mancuso, head of gay rights group Equality Italia, said Barilla's comments were an "offensive provocation" and called for a boycott of the company's pasta, sauces and snacks.

"We accept the invitation from the Barilla owner to not eat

his pasta,” Mancuso said. Many Italians used social media to voice support for a boycott.

Alessandro Zan, a gay member of parliament, said on Twitter: “You can’t mess around with consumers, including gay ones.”

Barilla issued a statement on Thursday apologizing, explaining that he was trying to say “simply that the woman plays a central role in a family.”

“Barilla features families in its commercials because it embraces anyone, and they have always been identified with our brand,” he said.

Spanish film star Antonio Banderas features in the latest publicity campaign for Barilla’s Mulino Bianco cookies and breakfast cakes. They feature him baking biscuits with children and talking to a chicken called Rosita.

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*Reporting by Steve Scherer; Editing by Robin Pomeroy*

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