



Made in Italy: Food and Stories

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Giorgio Locatelli started helping out in the family restaurant at age five. He was raised in Corgeno in northern Italy, close to the Swiss border and Milan. Almost everything his family ate and drank was produced locally. He was told by the head chef at his first real Italian restaurant job that he would never make it as a chef. His grandmother, who shared her great love of food with him, said Giorgio would have to go back and show him. And so he did. After getting suspended from cooking school because of kissing a girl on the school's steps, he went on to become a greatly admired chef.

Made in Italy is a 624-page, vibrantly illustrated book full of Locatelli's recipes, insight and historical detail about Italian food. He combines food narrative with hands-on expertise of a top chef. He peppers the book with evocative stories and funny and often outspoken observations on the state of food today. This is the contemporary Italian food bible, from the acknowledged master of modern Italian cooking.

Made in Italy: Food and Stories Details

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Linda says

Having read this book cover to cover, yum food and great stories. I have been a fan of Giorgio for years, then going to his restaurant in London was a highlight of that trip. Highlight of the book - risotto, simple dish requiring seventy-four pages. This cookbook is kept beside the bed, when not in the kitchen.

Claartje says

Fantastico!!

Michele says

I didn't read this book cover to cover, but what I did read I absolutely loved. Great photos on top of step-by-step directions make it a wonderful cookbook. Interesting stories on top of historical background information make it a fascinating read.

Chris says

This is one of the most underrated Italian cookbooks and I've looked through quite a few. I made the ragu, risotto alla lodigiana and spaghetti al crudo; all turned out really well.

Locatelli is from northern Italy and the recipes are mostly from this region, so don't expect recipes like pizza.

The book is quite old so the photos look outdated but it was the recipes and his passion in the stories that convinced me to pick it up. It has definitely helped me to cook and understand Italian food.

Elaine says

I know it's a bit weird to read cookbooks -- trust me, it's part of research for a book -- but the fact of putting these cookbook recipes in your head changes you. I've read a few others, but I judge a cookbook by how deep your hunger/craving is to cook something after you've finished reading a few of the recipes or the cookbook author's thoughts on food etc.

By this standard, Giorgio Locatelli's hefty 615 page cookbook is a resounding success. I had the

unconsumable craving to make my own beef-cheek ravioli. I think one of the failings of certain celebrity chef cookbooks is to try to simplify steps taken to make a dish. The left side might give the list of ingredients as well as a step-by-step instruction, usually limited to five or six steps. The right side however depicts this luscious, wonderfully arranged plate of food. You follow the recipe, and no surprise, the dish you've made looks nothing like the picture on the page. What's missing? Simplifying a master chef recipe for the layman - - translating it for the dunce-cooks like us -- isn't an easy translation. Miss a few crucial warnings and the end-result is flat, unappetizing, or worse, frankly inedible.

This is what sets Locatelli's book apart. There are fulsome descriptions. Pages describing the making of pesto, the kind of basil leaves one should use. The recipes themselves are sometimes short, sometimes taking up to two pages. Take the recipe for asparagus risotto. Locatelli happily spends an entire paragraph prosaically describing how to prepare asparagus. "Wash, then peel each spear below the tip and keep the peelings. Cut off the tips, then trim off the woody part of the stem... You should now have three mounds of asparagus: the tips, the tender spears, and the crushed woody ends and peelings." Some other celebrity chef might just give you a one-liner, "Trim the asparagus."

The cookbook is organized into sections: Starters, Zuppa, Risotto, Pasta, Fish, Meat, and then Dolci. There are stories about growing up in Corgeno. There's an exegesis on olive oil, on balsamic vinegar, the two fundamentals of Italian cooking. Questions to which you've always wondered perhaps: should you prize fresh pasta over dried pasta? What is the correct consistency of risotto?

There are odes to the olive, the tomato, to mozzarella and burrata. Unbelievable pictures of salami hanging, a globe artichoke (as pretty as a purple rose), saliva-inducing snapshots of seafood antipasti, prawns with fresh borlotti beans, beef carpaccio (one of my all-time favorites!), chestnut tagliatelle. More often than not however, his full-sized pictures are of people handling food, either holding a bucking wild hare, or sitting around a table laughing and eating (sobremesa), or his cooks in the kitchen, flames leaping, a hot pan searing food. The full-size pictures are more about the process of making food than of the finished dish themselves. This tells you something about this chef's philosophy : the platter of beautifully cooked food in front of you is a story. It's a story about food, about the people who made it, about the nature of earth's bounty, about the history of civilization.

As a writer, it's the little quirky details that spark creativity for me. White truffles, for Giorgio, recalls a smell of people. It's musty, earthy, raw, mossy, maybe a little like sweaty socks. There are associational spirals. Mushrooms...you never heard a mushroom scream. No, I haven't. Have you? But it makes me imagine it. Would it be high-pitched, at the levels only dogs can hear? Would it be tiny, squeaky perhaps, or whispery, hushed, the sound not of screaming but of susussuration?

There isn't really a recipe for beef cheek ravioli in this massive compendium, although there is a recipe for oxtail ravioli, veal shank ravioli, or pheasant ravioli. But after reading scores of Locatelli's recipes, there is this sudden craving rising out of the foam of my creative desire for making my own beef cheek ravioli. Babbo apparently makes an outstanding dish, but there is no recipe for that. I'll tell you how I fare after I've given it a go, but if it doesn't work out, well, there's the story.

Paul Miller says

Cracking read. His chapter on olive oil and balsamic vinegar is very informative never mind the recipes

Jackie Donnelly (Baisa) says

Fantastic book of Italian recipes. I honestly cannot get enough from his recipes, so plan to get the next book of his "Made in Sicily" at some point. The books are not cheap but every recipe is outstanding (and not super complicated, either). There are a bunch of gorgeous photographs throughout the book (pretty much a MUST for me) and some stories in between (of his grandparents and such). The section on breads is particular great. A lot of step-by-step instructions and lots of variations to the recipes. Also, some unusual recipes, such as "Pumpkin and raisin bread." Their soups are also good and very simple. One is a recipe for "Chilled tomato soup" and all it is is three different types of tomatoes pureed, seasoned with salt and pepper, and chilled. I'm a fan of risotto, and he goes into great detail about the rice itself, the broth, the cheese, the technique, and so on. There are also photos showing the different phases of it while it's cooking. Very helpful. If you like Italian food and want a book from one of the best, this is the book. It has a very low-key (ie. boring) cover, but don't let that fool you. The insides are succulent. ;) Enjoy!

Fabrizio says

One the best Italian cookbooks ever- full to the brim with passion and gastronomic brilliance!!

Adrian Bishop says

This is my new all time favorite cook/food stories book.

Locatelli combines amazing stories, food histories, wonderful techniques and recipes and gorgeous photographs.

My risotto is now excellent. My pasta dishes have reached new heights. To cook these dishes really well it helps to have the history and basic theory behind them and Giorgio gives the real goods.

AMAZING!!!

Aileen Noura Vitarelli says

love the stories, the eating culture in Italy..ehem! the recipe of course.! cook like the Italian mama!the journey to find the ingredients..passion to make the food for family..enjoy to see the face of satisfaction when they eat my food..

Christian Deysson says

Well, this is a book you cannot read. It's rather a religion you have to practice, a science you have study, an art you have to master.

Carmen says

Yes. The presentation of Italian food and culture in this book is just very, very correct and true. This is obviously a very personal work for Locatelli as he pours his heart into the pages, sharing stories of his childhood and obvious love of quality food and presentation. Above all, it is the sharing of good food that makes it truly great. This is one of those cookbooks that you can peruse for hours. The pictures are simple, beautiful, and will make you hungry. The section on risotto even has me contemplating whether to try my hand at it, as it has always intimidated me. This was such a great gift, I absolutely love it, and I'm only hoping that there will one day be a Southern Italy edition as well!

Emily says

Locatelli's passion- and Italianess - really comes through in this book. Great stories, and thorough explanations of Italian cooking techniques and history, makes this a really great one for the recipe book shelf. Disappointingly, the editing is somewhat lacking (especially since this book was 5 years in the making) and you need to keep your wits about you when following a recipe as typos abound. He also tends to be a little over zealous with his quantities of butter, but that all just a matter of opinion I suppose.

Rob Haans says

I learned to make really good lasagna through this book. Not just because it has a good recipe on it, but because locatelli really explains the spirit of the dish.

Benjamin Chandler says

Locatelli's tome is part cookbook, part essay, part autobiography. It is heavy and wordy with not nearly enough pictures, but also personal, charming, and passionate.

I think my favorite parts to read are the essays about different ingredients or famous Italian dishes. (e.g. pages just about salt or eggplant or risotto; where they come from, history, his tips and preferred methods for using them) They are fun and informative.

His personal story takes up probably the smallest space in the book, but he peppers his recipes and foodie-essays with tales from his youth or home town or family, so the book is pretty saturated with the author's life and experiences. Locatelli really brings out the importance of both family and place in an individual's food culture.

Finally, the recipes: Many of them are complicated and labor-intensive. Locatelli cooks much like a grandmother from the old country would—home-made pasta; marinades that last hours; herbal crusts or salt-packed fish, different ingredients that need to be cooked at different times, then remixed and cooked in other ways. His instructions are often very time consuming. They're not quick meals for the nights when you're tired after work and just want to flop on the couch. But the results are good and unique. The food is completely Italian, but with some unexpected flavors. (It's not all noodles drenched in tomato sauce. I suppose if it was, Locatelli wouldn't be a popular London chef.)

A minor quibble if I may—although I adore Modernist typefaces, this book uses a Didot-like type where the thicks and thins of the letters are so exaggerated, it is sometimes difficult to read.
