



A September to Remember: Searching for Culinary Pleasures at the Italian Table

Carole Bumpus

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Carole Bumpus's culinary travelogue *A September to Remember* is written in the inviting voice of a learner. Bumpus's exploration as an American abroad will draw in those who hunger for travel as much as they hunger for flavor.

For Bumpus, appreciating food requires a strong sense of people and place; in fact, she regards food and culture as inseparable. Her initial encounters with Italy began when she had very little sense of its language, but had a basic appreciation of its food, and a deep desire to learn the culture from the people she met. Her interest in learning about the culture and its cooking is the central, engaging element of her book. Her narration is open-minded and inquisitive, respectful and humble—and open-handed with all that's she's learned.

The book is organized by region, covering Lombardy, Tuscany, Campania, Apulia, and Lazio. Each section includes several chapters of travelogue, with a recipe per chapter at the end of the book. The narrative elements are strong, featuring well-paced scenes, real-life characters, and informative dialogue that harnesses the beauty of the two languages Bumpus engaged in, and reveals the challenges of cross-cultural communication.

The recipes include basics like Homemade Gnocchi; meat dishes like Bistecca alla Fiorentina (porterhouse steak, Florence style); desserts like tiramisu; and, of course, pasta dishes, like Orecchiette con Cime de Rapa (ear-shaped pasta with broccoli rabe). Their instructions are easy to follow for confident home cooks, with clear ingredient lists of items readily available outside of Italy, and thorough instructions. While some elements are simplified for typical American cooks, there are no shortcuts; Bumpus embraces authenticity over simplicity, encouraging cooks to rise to the challenge.

A September to Remember is a food narrative that brings the heart of Italy to tables around the world.

MELISSA WUSKE (March / April 2021)

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