

Ciao Italia: My Lifelong Food Adventures in Italy

Mary Ann Esposito

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Mary Ann Esposito is the host of PBS's *Ciao Italia*. Her latest cookbook is the capstone of twenty-eight years of Italian travel and food broadcasting. An engaging cultural translator, Esposito emphasizes regional recipes and distinct food products from the country's twenty diverse areas, splitting the difference between Italian and US food culture to make the Italian preference for food "cooked simply, either boiled, grilled, baked, or fried" an accessible, practical goal for American kitchens.

While *Ciao Italia* includes the occasional ambitious recipe in terms of ingredients, time, or technique involved, the emphasis is on kitchen workhorses. Most recipes serve four, with some topping out at 8-10 servings and the infrequent recipe serving more. Easy, everyday recipes focused on fresh ingredients are the stars, and two or three of these simple recipes can be mixed and matched for a wide variety of meals, or served alone for something that's filling and fresh with minimal effort.

Recipes like Farfalle con Salsa di Cavolo Nero, or Butterflies with Kale Sauce, fuse Italian ingredients with current US food trends, while others, like Spaghetti con Ragù di Agnello, or Spaghetti with Lamb Ragù, require special tools and teach traditional Italian techniques. Thoughtful touches, like all sauce recipes being sized to dress the exact amount of pasta from either the book's fresh pasta recipes or a purchased box, ensure that this cookbook is not merely aspirational—it's a book to use.

Dotted with interesting facts, *Ciao Italia* effectively conveys tradition—but eschews the traditional whenever it might cause a barrier to entry for American audiences. Full of approachable recipes adapted for home cooks, the latest entry in the *Ciao Italia* series showcases Esposito's gift for reducing things to their essence and translating them effectively for delicious results.

LETITIA MONTGOMERY-RODGERS (November/December 2018)

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