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Clarion Review ★★★★½ COOKING

Viva La Cucina Italiana: Long Live the Italian Cooking! Over 300 Wonderful Recipes from the North, Central, and South of Italy

Joe Famularo
Cristopher Laus, Contributor
CreateSpace (Jul 19, 2012)
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Joe Famularo's *Viva La Cucina* is organized much like any other cookbook. There are chapters devoted to the usual courses of an Italian meal, beginning with antipasti and ending with desserts, along with a short chapter on what Famularo calls the "basics," which includes recipes for broths and fruit vinegars. The book ends with a useful list of sources for ingredients as well as a thorough index.

The author offers some basic Italian fare in this collection of nearly three-hundred recipes. As expected, readers will find a decent recipe for a simple marinara sauce. Famularo dedicates a section of the chapter on pasta to making this staple and explains in simple terms the steps to follow for creating homemade noodles. Once readers have mastered this process, they will likely never view store-bought pasta in the same way.

Likewise, the chapter on pizza contains a basic recipe for pizza dough that can be used with any topping the cook desires. Famularo offers pizza topped with mortadella, artichokes, and fontina cheese—certainly not what one would order from Dominos!

And that is the secret of *Viva La Cucina*: it presents original recipes from Italy not often presented in other Italian cookbooks. Other unique entries include *pasta allo zenzero e aglio*, pasta with ginger and garlic, as well as *salmone marinato con rabarbaro*, marinated salmon with rhubarb.

Many of the recipes are startlingly simple and direct, their appeal coming from the freshness of the ingredients. For example, Famularo presents two recipes for roast chicken, one with olive oil, rosemary, and garlic, and another that adds white wine to the list of ingredients. This approach is in keeping with the author's purpose, which he states is "to present simple Italian pleasures, fresh, fragrant and flavorful food from the joyful Italian table to yours in America."

Unfortunately, *Viva La Cucina Italiana* contains no pictures. Cookbooks need not be coffee-table tomes of photographs, but it is often helpful to see how a finished dish is supposed to look before one embarks upon making it. Typographical errors, such as missing words and punctuation, are also evident in the text.

That said, the photograph on the cover—a fork of spaghetti topped with a dollop of tomato sauce and a sprig of basil—is a delicious image of a quintessential Italian dish as well as a clear, crisp portrayal of the Italian flag. It is sure to catch the eye of any reader who has an interest in Italian cooking.

JOHN SENGER (September 10, 2012)

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