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AUGUST 2014

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AUGUST 2014

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Summer Pastas

INSPIRED BY A FAMILY TRIP TO TUSCANY, AUTHOR AND FOOD HISTORIAN FRANCINE SEGAN HAS EMBRACED HER ITALIAN ROOTS, CREATING A COOKBOOK FILLED WITH AUTHENTIC RECIPES.

BY SUSAN VAN ALLEN

In summer, the markets in Italy are abundant with lush, bursting, ripe fruit. You walk by a stand and swoon from the aromas," sighs Francine Segan, an Italian-American food historian, author, and lecturer. Francine's family lines go back to Puglia and Sicily. She had traveled to Italy many times, but it was a summer trip 18 years ago, with her husband and two children, that really got her hooked. "We rented a house near Forte dei Marmi, on the coast of Tuscany, and joined a beach club, so we were instantly immersed in the Italian way of life. That's when the whole family really fell in love with Italy, and we kept going back—my

husband even learned Italian!"

Her passion ignited, Francine delved into studying Italian food with the help of a whole network of friends and cooks who opened her up to off the beaten track places that most tourists never see. She's written books and magazine articles on the topic, makes frequent

Susan Van Allen is the author of 100 Places in Italy Every Woman Should Go and the Golden Days in Italy blog. She travels frequently to Italy, the native land of her grandparents, and lives in Los Angeles. susanvanallen.com.



PHOTO CREDIT: PASTA ACCEPTA BY FRANCO LE SGAZZI

ZUCCHINI, CILANTRO, SPAGHETTI
starts with quality pasta.

Native Soil

television appearances, and gives entertaining lectures throughout America.

Her latest title, *Pasta Modern: New and Inspired Recipes from Italy*, focuses on what many of us take for granted. “Pasta is so iconic, we don’t always pay attention to its many nuances. And I also wanted to underscore for Americans that Italy is a vibrant place, very much in the moment. We tend to freeze the country in the past—Ancient Rome, Renaissance Florence, imagining nonnas dressed in black, stirring the sauce. But Italy is also a design and fashion capital, changing with the times, and the 100 recipes in the book reflect that lesser known [to Americans] Italy,” she says.

Research took Francine on a culinary adventure to Italy’s twenty regions, meeting the country’s best pasta makers, Michelin-starred chefs, food bloggers, and nonnas who were trying new things. *Pasta Modern’s* recipes are simple in keeping with the Italian tradition of not overcrowding a dish with too many ingredients and using techniques that are uncomplicated. Centuries old practices are updated, such as glazing pasta with vegetable juices and incorporating sweet flavors to make pasta desserts.

The book also includes essential pasta making tips, such as adding salt to the boiling water with the pasta, not before, so the salt won’t sink to the bottom of the pot.



PHOTO CREDIT: PASTA MODERN BY FRANCINE SEGAN

Pasta Cups

Though they’re excellent plain, there are endless ways to flavor these chewy, crunchy morsels. Pop in some prosciutto, cheese, pesto, tomato or meat sauce, caponata, or garlicky broccoli rabe—whatever your heart desires.

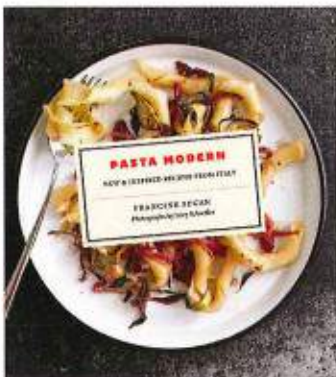
- 2 Olive oil
- 2 large eggs
- 3 tablespoons grated grana padano
Parmesan, or other aged cheese
- 2 tablespoons butter
- ¼ pound angel hair pasta or other long,
thin pasta, preferably Garofalo brand
- Salt
- Optional ingredients: salami, pesto,
anchovy, prosciutto, cheese, etc.

Preheat the oven to 350°F. Lightly oil 24 mini muffin cups (or use disposable mini cups and set them on a baking pan).

Combine the egg, grated cheese and butter in a bowl. Cook the pasta in salted boiling water until al dente, drain and toss with the ingredients in the bowl until well combined and almost all absorbed. Using a fork, twirl a few strands into a nest shape and put into a prepared muffin cup. Repeat. Drizzle any remaining egg mixture on top of the nests.

At this point you can either put an ingredient (from the optional list above), in the center of the nest, or bake them plain and top them with something yummy afterwards. Bake about 12 minutes or until set.

Makes 6 servings.





Zucchini Glazed Spaghetti

- 5 large zucchini
- Salt
- 2 garlic cloves, minced
- 1 pound spaghetti, preferably Monograno Felicetti farro spaghetti, which imparts a natural nutty flavor
- Olive oil, optional
- Parmesan or other aged cheese, grated, optional

Grate the zucchini with a cheese grater into a colander lined with cheesecloth that's resting in a large bowl. Toss with salt and the garlic and let rest for 1 hour. Squeeze out all the liquid, you should get about 1 cup's worth of juice.

Parboil the pasta in lightly salted water, drain. Bring 1/2 cup of the zucchini juice to a boil in the same pot you just cooked the pasta, that's now emptied of water. Toss in the pasta and cook until al dente, adding the rest of the zucchini juice a little at a time, so it quickly absorbs into the cooking pasta and creates a nice glaze.

Now you have a choice, you can either toss the pasta with the raw grated zucchini or, if you prefer, fry the zucchini in a skillet on high heat with 2 tablespoons of olive oil until crispy and toss that into the pasta. Serve the pasta topped with grated cheese, if you like.

Makes 4 servings.



PHOTO CREDIT: PASTA-MODEL BY FRANCINE SEBASTI

Berries, Basil and Bells

- 1 pound campanelle (bell-shaped pasta), or any short pasta
- Salt
- 2 tablespoons butter
- 1/2 pint blueberries
- 1/2 pint raspberries
- 1 cup ricotta
- 1 small bunch fresh mint
- 1 small bunch fresh basil
- Black pepper

Cook the pasta in salted boiling water until al dente.

Meanwhile, melt the butter in a skillet over medium heat. Add 3/4 of the berries, reserving the rest for garnish, and cook for two minutes until softened. Transfer the fruit to a large serving bowl along with the ricotta. Cut a handful, about 1/4 cup, each of mint and basil into thin ribbons (or just use tiny leaves), add to the bowl, and stir the mixture with a fork to combine.

Drain the pasta and toss with the ricotta mixture. Season to taste with salt and freshly ground black pepper and serve topped with additional mint, basil and fresh berries.

Makes 4 servings.