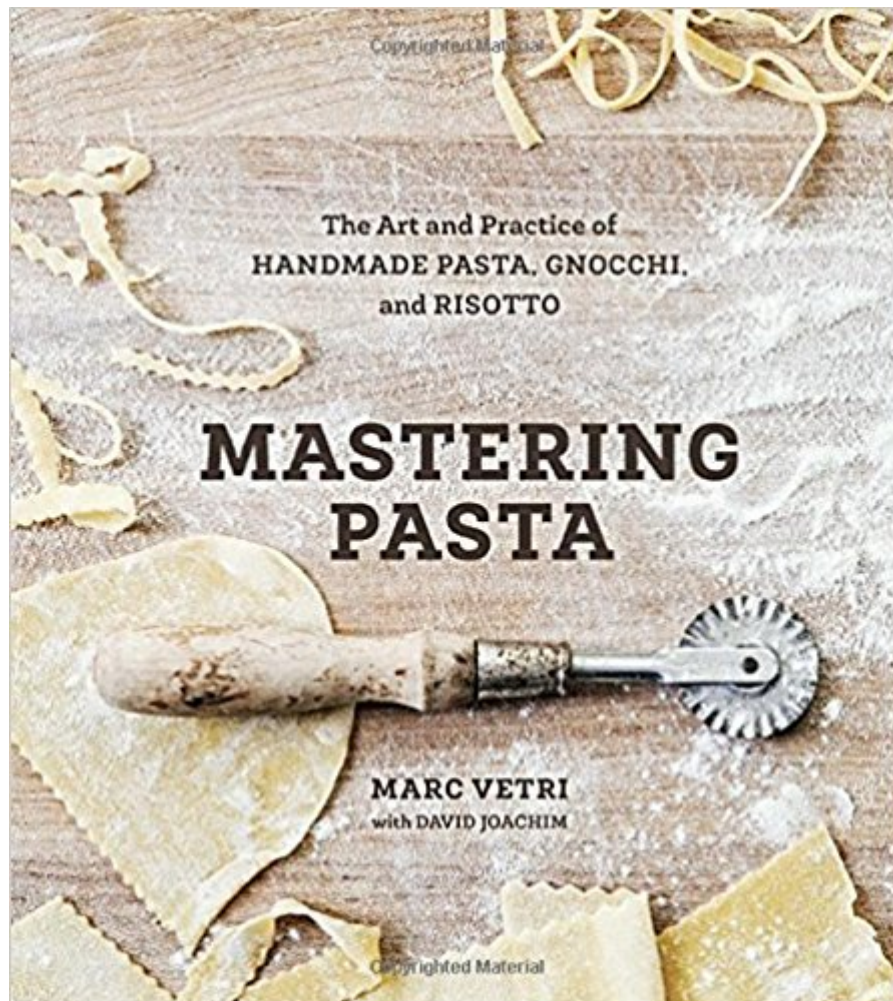


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Mastering Pasta: The Art And Practice Of Handmade Pasta, Gnocchi, And Risotto



Synopsis

Award-winning chef Marc Vetri wanted to write his first book about pasta. Instead, he wrote two other acclaimed cookbooks and continued researching pasta for ten more years. Now, the respected master of Italian cuisine finally shares his vast knowledge of pasta, gnocchi, and risotto in this inspiring, informative primer featuring expert tips and techniques, and more than 100 recipes. Vetri's personal stories of travel and culinary discovery in Italy appear alongside his easy-to-follow, detailed explanations of how to make and enjoy fresh handmade pasta. Whether you're a home cook or a professional, you'll learn how to make more than thirty different types of pasta dough, from versatile egg yolk dough, to extruded semolina dough, to a variety of flavored pastas and form them into shapes both familiar and unique. In dishes ranging from classic to innovative, Vetri shares his coveted recipes for stuffed pastas, baked pastas, and pasta sauces. He also shows you how to make light-as-air gnocchi and the perfect dish of risotto. Loaded with useful information, including the best way to cook and sauce pasta, suggestions for substituting pasta shapes, and advance preparation and storage notes, Mastering Pasta offers you all of the wisdom of a pro. For cooks who want to take their knowledge to the next level, Vetri delves deep into the science of various types of flour to explain pasta's uniquely satisfying texture and how to craft the very best pasta by hand or with a machine. Mastering Pasta is the definitive work on the subject and the only book you will ever need to serve outstanding pasta dishes in your own kitchen.

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Customer Reviews

Mark Vetri is a talented professional chef. I am an advanced home cook. But when Mario Batali opined that this was 'the single most important book on handmade pasta I have ever read' and Jamie Oliver concluded 'Everyone needs a copy of this book on their shelves', I made the purchase. Okay...I've been making pasta at home for thirty years, I've attended a pasta class in Italy and I have owned and used 'Beard on Pasta' and 'The Essentials of Italian Cuisine' by Marcella Hazan for years. I am motivated to learn about pasta. But...what I expected from the promo for this book and what I found between the covers was disappointing. Bottom line: this book is a chef speaking to chefs. The fine first chapters on flours and making fresh and dried pasta dough will serve all-comers well, whether you are a beginner or are advanced. Unfortunately, that beginning gives way to a set of recipes that would challenge the home cook's pantry: 'Talleggio (that's a cheese) Ravioli with Radicchio, Honey and Walnuts,' 'Pea Agnolotti with Lardo,' 'Fig and Onion Caramella with Gorgonzola Fonduta...' Doppio Ravioli with Lamb and Polenta takes many steps and a good bit of time to prepare--assuming you have lamb and polenta on hand. Other enticing recipes call for foie gras terrine, octopus, scorpion fish, morel mushrooms, peekytoe crab--you get the idea. For sure, the book has beautiful pictures, is written intelligently and can provide 'inspiration'...but my inspiration was to find a high-end Italian restaurant and make a reservation! So...does this book 'reinvent the wheel' as far as most of us are concerned? Purists may cringe when James Beard--responding to what his reader's pantries would have on hand, says 'all-purpose flour' works best in America.

Marc Vetri is one of America's best Italian chefs, and the Philly native's latest book is a technique-driven walk through the process of making all kinds of pasta and gnocchi. Even though Vetri's a chef and many of his recipes are derived from his restaurants, the book is firmly grounded as an instructional guide for the home cook. Mastering Pasta is a beautiful book, heavy on photos of the actual making of the shapes, which is key. I especially like the decision to show that homemade pasta is by nature a bit erratic: Not every strand of hand-cut tagliatelle will be the same width, and there will be little creases where you'd folded the dough over. Vetri's recipes can get a bit esoteric, but he's very good about offering alternatives if you can't find sweetbreads or fresh porcini or snails. My main beef with the book is Vetri's basic dough. His batch is 395 grams, about 2 1/2 cups of various flours, moistened with 9 egg yolks, plus some water and olive oil. Sorry, but I can't see blasting through a whole carton of eggs for a batch of pasta that will serve 4 or 5 people. I mean I understand why Vetri does this: He runs a restaurant. He's trying to make a plate of pasta a special thing on a menu in a lovely restaurant. And his dough is

indeed wonderful. But it's just too spendy for a Wednesday night. And, given that you can whip up a basic batch of pasta in an hour, it's not crazy to think that some cooks might want to make pasta regularly, and not for special occasions. My advice: For day-to-day pasta making, use the Italian standard of 1 whole egg for every 100 grams of flour and you'll be fine. That said, I love this book. Vetrina's flavors and originality are remarkable.

There is not much I love to eat more than pasta. Making it is a little more daunting, however. But if you are thinking about taking that first scary step towards strands (or curls or twists or folds) of homemade pasta goodness or merely need some inspiration for your journey, then this is the book for you. A short introduction outlines the author's feelings about pasta, augmented with the first two chapters on Italian cuisine tradition and the basics of wheat, respectively. These chapters included possibly more information that I wanted to know but it is certainly interesting and there if you want it. I was keen to learn about how flour is described and what those words actually mean, something I've not fully grasped before. And then the serious business of pasta making begins. There is a chapter each on fresh pasta, baked sheet pasta, ravioli and stuffed pasta, extruded and dried pasta, flavoured pasta, hand-formed pasta, gnocchi and risotto. (Hungry yet?). Each chapter gives an introduction to the type of pasta, outlines ingredients and provides a basic dough recipe, with detailed instructions, equipment requirements and images of finished products and each step in the shaping processes. The basic dough recipes for each chapter are expanded upon to include various flavours, varieties and shapes. For example, by switching a few ingredients, the basic fresh pasta dough easily becomes egg yolk and bread flour dough or corzetti dough, and basic semolina dough can become red wine semolina dough or sweet pea semolina dough. Each chapter also includes a whole range of complete recipes.

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