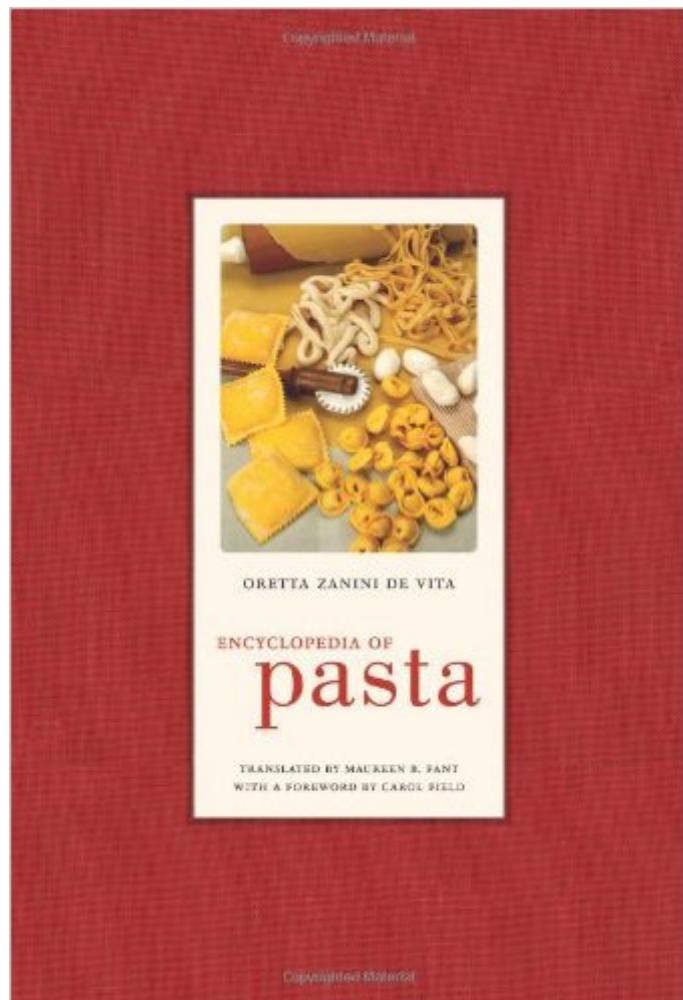


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Encyclopedia Of Pasta (California Studies In Food And Culture)



Synopsis

Spaghetti, gnocchi, tagliatellea, ravioli, vincisgrassi, strascinati—pasta in its myriad forms has been a staple of the Mediterranean diet longer than bread. This beautiful volume is the first book to provide a complete history of pasta in Italy, telling its long story via the extravagant variety of shapes it takes and the even greater abundance of names by which it is known. Food scholar Oretta Zanini De Vita traveled to every corner of her native Italy, recording oral histories, delving into long-forgotten family cookbooks, and searching obscure archives to produce this rich and uniquely personal compendium of historical and geographical information. For each entry she includes the primary ingredients, preparation techniques, variant names, and the locality where it is made and eaten. Along the way, Zanini De Vita debunks such culinary myths as Marco Polo's supposed role in pasta's story even as she serves up a feast of new information. Encyclopedia of Pasta, illustrated throughout with original drawings by Luciana Marini, will be the standard reference on one of the world's favorite foods for many years to come, engaging and delighting both general readers and food professionals.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

During the year that Marta from Lombardy lived with me, I was mystified at her insistence that certain coffees could only be consumed at certain hours, and that Americans not only cooked pasta badly, but served the "wrong" sauce with every noodle. Who cares? I wish I had read this book

before her visit. Marta was right! Pasta is both a science and an art! So much more than a cookbook, the Encyclopedia of Pasta, is a social history of Italy, Europe, class struggle, regional parochialism, agriculture, food, religion, trade routes, women, families, religion, the universe and everything. OK, I exaggerate, but only slightly. From well-known pastas such as macaroni, in many varieties, to the exotic pi fasacc, this is truly an encyclopedic work. Well written, with lively descriptions and a plethora of anecdotes, de Vita mixes scholarship with an intense love of her subject, be it people or pasta. If you ever wanted to know the complex and rigid Italian rules for the mating or sauce and pasta, this is your book. If you wondered about the Arab contribution to noodle cuisine (ravioli, among others), this is your book. If you ever wanted to know the ingredients of different pastas, this is your book. If you are interested in unique and highly specific pasta making tools, this is your book. If you want to amaze your friends with your esoteric knowledge, this is your book. Or if you simply want to curl up with a fascinating compendium about your favorite food, this is your book. Reading it also made me feel very hungry. And, in case you were wondering, the author reveals that there were records of pasta in Italy 500 years before Marco Polo returned from China.

This is truly an Encyclopedia of pasta. In that regard, it is well done and quite thorough. It is well researched and gives amazing history of each of the pastas. I use it as a history book. That said, it is lacking drawings for much of the pasta and that is unfortunate. The book would have been truly wonderful if it included photographs or drawings of each of the pastas. Without them, it makes some of the descriptions quite tedious, leaving too much to the imagination. Translations of more of the names of the pastas, would have also added much to the book since the names of the pastas, in Italian, are quite humorous: the mouse tails, the blind husband. It is not a cook book and that is a point that should be underscored: it is what it is, an Encyclopedia.

My son and daughter-in-law lived in Asia and they constantly amazed me with their dialogues on the various types of rice. A grain of rice isn't just a grain of rice! There are all sorts of variations in rice and in cooking rice. Well, this book proves the same holds true for pasta. For the pasta lover, this book is an absolute delight. The role of pasta in social settings and in history is explored as well as explanations of hundreds of pastas and their origins. Ms. Oretta Zanini De Vita not only explores over 300 pastas, but talks about how to make them, what sauce goes with what pasta and how to present the pastas. Entries are illustrated with ingredients and how the pasta is served along with a short history. This is a fascinating book that must have taken years of research to produce. This is not a recipe book, but rather an exploration of pasta and a commentary on its history and how it fits

into our current society. If you like pasta, this is truly a fascinating look at how variations in the making of the dough produces sumptuous dishes that have been the staple of cultures all over the world.

For serious pasta makers, this book is an absolute treasure trove of information about the myriad shapes and doughs and styles of Italian pasta and dumplings. This is not a how-to book, it is what it says it is: An encyclopedia of what's done in Italy. But if you know how to make pasta yourself, it is a touchstone for endless fun in the kitchen. I find myself using the index most often: I'll have an ingredient, like rabbit or porcini or anchovies, and I will want to pair it with pasta or a dumpling,. Chances are Oretta has written about some obscure pasta perfect with braised rabbit. Armed with solid knowledge about how to make pasta on my own, her entries tell me most of what I need to go from there. My only regret is that there were not more illustrations. The line drawings are beautiful and very clearly illustrate what the shape is supposed to look like, which can be tricky with some of the odder shapes.

This is a great book about the historical and culinary aspects of pasta. The names of different type of pasta are arranged in alphabetical order, from "abbotta pezziende" (not so common a pasta name/type) to "zumari". In between you will find information about rigatoni, fettuccine, farfalle, and many other. The different pasta shapes combined with the presence/absence of ridges on the outer surface allows each pasta to capture the right amount of sauce. Some names are related to the shapes of pasta (eg. farfalle = butterflies) while others derive from old fairy tails or popular stories. The book is very entertaining and instructive, well done! A good complement to the Encyclopedia is "Pasta, a story of a universal food" by Serventi and Sabban.

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