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Inside the Italian Kitchen

Marco Roccasalvo

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Discover the secret to cooking delicious authentic Italian food at home using everyday ingredients.

Inside the Italian Kitchen

MARCO ROCCASALVO and ANNE KENNEDY

PHOTOGRAPHS by HARRY WEIR

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INTRODUCTION

When Marco Roccasalvo arrived in Ireland almost ten years ago, he was a relative latecomer to the Italian food scene. In some ways he reaped the benefits of that belated arrival. When he opened his restaurant *Campo de' Fiori* in the seaside town of Bray outside Dublin and politely but firmly refused to add cream to sauces or to make *Spaghetti alla Carbonara* with white wine, people were surprised but they did not reject him out of hand. Over time, they returned to experiment and slowly but surely he nurtured a growing and loyal band of customers who came to appreciate that authentic Italian food, the food that Italians actually eat in their own country, is simply much better than its confused Irish cousin.

At *Campo de' Fiori* Marco and his team have created a destination restaurant where you can find a real taste of Italy. People come from all over the city and its environs to eat hand-cut cured meats, to see what Marco can do with a fresh lobster and a handful of pasta, to enjoy a restrained *Fiorentina* adorned with just olive oil and salt and to explore regional dishes that he has researched first-hand. Marco's quiet strength of purpose and the genial way he sells what may at first appear to be a lack of compromise works to his advantage. In the early days, had he wavered when he was asked to cook a quick dish of *penne* with chicken and mushroom 'just to please the wife' he would have lost the high moral ground not just as a chef but for the Italian cuisine. Instead, he took the time to explain what

real Italian food should be. By the time he finished, his guests were truly charmed and ready to try his suggestions. This approach takes time and effort and when you are both chef and owner it can be a risky endeavour. (Many people would, with justification, ask who is this *eejit* who is turning away good money?) But Marco held firm and by doing so he has shown that there is space for a restaurant where you can weave delicious ingredients into joy on the plate.

The idea of this book emerged as a result of many conversations between Marco and I as to why Italian food, one of the oldest cuisines in the world, was not true to itself in Ireland. The most difficult thing has been to draw out the essence of Italian cuisine and to present it as simple tenets so that you can make authentic Italian food at home. In Italy people rarely agree on the subject of food and no doubt, given that this book reflects the vision of just one Italian chef and the ingredients that inform his cooking, we will contribute to that robust discussion.

We hope that we can share some of the seminal moments that make Italian cooking what it should be, those small details that make the difference between an average dish and an excellent one. The recipes are genuine: Marco cooks them in his restaurant and he has tested them at home. If you think some of the recipes are too simple to be excellent, then his work is done. Throughout the book I have done my best not to

lose Marco's voice and where it is essential to the story, I have not tidied up his English.

Inside the Italian Kitchen also sums up what we are about at Greatfood.ie: a belief that good food doesn't have to cost the earth and should be available to everyone. That when you have good ingredients and cook them with intelligence and affection you can make an exceptional plate of food that is greater than the sum of its parts. Most of all, we want to share not just good food, but great food.

We are delighted that the *Italian Institute of Culture* has endorsed the book. It is a formidable compliment and we thank them for their kindness and confidence in us.

We hope you enjoy reading and cooking from *Inside the Italian Kitchen*.

Anne Kennedy

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