



**GIADA  
DE LAURENTIIS**

author of the  
bestselling

*everyday italian*

THE  
#1  
NEW YORK  
TIMES  
BESTSELLER

**giada's  
family  
dinners**



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**giada's family dinners**  
**GIADA DE LAURENTIIS**

photographs by victoria pearson



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ALSO BY GIADA DE LAURENTIIS

*Everyday Italian*



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**To my family,  
for giving me the courage, spirit,  
knowledge, and passion to do what I love!**



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# introduction

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Welcome to my family, where life is shared in the kitchen and around the table over recipes that have been handed down through generations. Where we stay close and take time to be with one another. Where we define ourselves by the food we eat and the stories we tell, and we pass plates and bowls around the table.

This is the kind of unpretentious, authentic, down-home Italian cooking that my family loves. It represents an unbroken line from my grandfather (who gave me my love of food), Italy (where I was born), to my extended family's life today in America. There is a lot of tradition in this book, and a lot of love.

Some of these recipes are special-occasion dishes in my household, but you shouldn't wait for a special occasion to entertain. A family-style meal is all about sharing. It's not about getting dressed up, or serving food so fancy that people are afraid to stick a fork into it. It's a chance to take a step back from everyday worries and focus on what really matters.

This is accessible and uncomplicated home-style cooking. With many of the recipes, it doesn't matter if you're cooking for four or fifteen; changing the quantities is easy. The recipes are flexible and nearly foolproof, so you don't have to worry about making everything perfect.

In my opinion—one colored by my family's rich culinary traditions—anytime you invite someone into your home and cook for them, you are making them part of your family. So don't worry about finishing all your preparations before the guests arrive. Invite everyone into the kitchen to help make the meal you'll share together. Personally, I am honored when someone asks me to help in the kitchen. That's when I know they're really letting me into their life.

So that's why I've chosen to gather my favorite family-style recipes, those that are a bit more casual both to make and to serve. It's fun food, nothing too fancy, but it's all deeply satisfying. After all, you're also inviting me into your home by making these dishes; I want you to be proud when you serve them.

Traditions help us understand who we are and where we come from. Sharing a meal helps define who we are as a family. Hopefully in this book you'll find heaping portions of tradition and culture, of good food and family togetherness. And perhaps it will inspire you to create new traditions of your own.







**SOUPS**  
and  
**SANDWICHES**





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**Soups and sandwiches are both simple and** economical. In Italy they are traditional, created from whatever is on hand, so they're a great way to use up leftovers. Soups are easy: most of them start with the traditional *sofrito* of onions, carrots, celery, and garlic. You sauté them together, add the rest of your ingredients and some liquid, and then walk away.

Here in America (and in Italy, too) soup is thought of primarily as lunch food, but when I was growing up it was often what we ate at dinnertime—especially on those nights when my mother was too tired to cook something more elaborate. What I love about making soup for dinner is that there are always leftovers for the next day and the flavor only improves overnight.

Sandwiches are considered more of a snack than a meal in Italy, so those you find in this chapter are really Italian-American creations. And my recipes are just suggestions; more than almost any other dish, a sandwich leaves room for improvisation. Experiment, and have fun.

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**BEEF AND LENTIL SOUP**

**TOMATO SOUP WITH PANCETTA**

**PASTA E FAGIOLI**

**WINTER MINISTRONE**

**ESCAROLE AND BEAN SOUP**

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**VEGETABLE PANINI WITH MOZZARELLA**

**PROSCIUTTO AND MELON PANINI**

**OPEN-FACED PLT**

**ITALIAN MUFFULETTA**

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# beef and lentil soup

6 SERVINGS

Growing up, I ate lots of lentils—in soups, salads, stews—and I still love them. My favorite way to eat them is in a hearty soup. This is a twist on the classic recipe, with big chunks of beef and lots of herbs and vegetables. It's like a meal in a bowl.

**2 TABLESPOONS OLIVE OIL**

**1½ POUNDS BONELESS BEEF CHUCK, CUT INTO 1-INCH CUBES**

**SALT AND FRESHLY GROUND BLACK PEPPER**

**3 LARGE CELERY STALKS, CHOPPED**

**2 LARGE CARROTS, PEELED AND CHOPPED**

**1 LARGE ONION, CHOPPED**

**6 GARLIC CLOVES, CHOPPED**

**1½ TEASPOONS CHOPPED FRESH ROSEMARY**

**1½ TEASPOONS DRIED OREGANO**

**6 (14-OUNCE) CANS (OR MORE) LOW-SODIUM BEEF BROTH**

**1 (28-OUNCE) CAN DICED TOMATOES IN JUICE**

**2 CUPS (ABOUT 11 OUNCES) LENTILS, RINSED**

**⅓ CUP CHOPPED FRESH FLAT-LEAF PARSLEY**

Heat the oil in a large, heavy pot over medium-high heat. Season the beef with salt and pepper. Working in two batches, add the beef to the pot and cook until browned all over, about 8 minutes. Use a slotted spoon to transfer the beef to a bowl.

Add the celery, carrots, onion, garlic, rosemary, and oregano to the pot. Sauté until the onions are translucent, about 8 minutes. Return the beef and any accumulated juices from the bowl to the pot. Add the broth and the tomatoes with their juice. Bring the soup to a boil, then reduce the heat to medium-low. Cover and simmer, stirring occasionally, until the meat is just tender, about 1 hour. Add the lentils. Cover and continue simmering until the lentils are tender, about 40 minutes. Stir in the parsley. Season the soup to taste with salt and pepper.

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# tomato soup with pancetta

6 SERVINGS

This recipe is made almost entirely from pantry items—all things you should have on hand. It's incredibly quick to prepare and cook. The rye bread and pancetta give the soup its hearty flavor; the mascarpone adds a bit of richness and smoothes it all out.

**1 TABLESPOON OLIVE OIL**

**3 OUNCES PANCETTA, CHOPPED**

**1 MEDIUM ONION, CHOPPED**

**3 (3/4-INCH-THICK) SLICES RUSTIC RYE BREAD (EACH ABOUT 5 3/4 × 3 3/4 INCHES), CUBED**

**6 CUPS REDUCED-SODIUM CHICKEN BROTH**

**1 (28-OUNCE) CAN DICED TOMATOES IN JUICE**

**1/4 CUP COARSELY CHOPPED FRESH BASIL**

**1/2 TEASPOON DRIED OREGANO**

**1/4 TEASPOON CRUSHED DRIED RED PEPPER FLAKES**

**SALT AND FRESHLY GROUND BLACK PEPPER**

**1/4 CUP MASCARPONE CHEESE**

**1/4 CUP SOUR CREAM**

Heat the oil in a large, heavy pot over a medium flame. Add the pancetta and sauté until crisp and golden, about 5 minutes. Add the onion and sauté until tender, about 3 minutes. Add the bread cubes and toss to coat with the pan drippings. Sauté until the bread cubes are golden, about 5 minutes. Add the broth, tomatoes, basil, oregano, and red pepper flakes. Bring the soup to a boil, then reduce the heat to medium-low. Simmer uncovered until the flavors blend, about 10 minutes. Season the soup to taste with salt and pepper.

In a small bowl, stir together the mascarpone and sour cream until blended. Ladle the soup into bowls. Spoon a dollop of the mascarpone mixture onto each serving and serve.



*Pasta e Fagioli*

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# pasta e fagioli

6 SERVINGS

This is the classic Italian comfort-food soup, here livened up with fresh herbs. If you don't have any thyme or rosemary, feel free to substitute dried. Any small shaped pasta will do.

**4 SPRIGS OF FRESH THYME**

**1 LARGE FRESH ROSEMARY SPRIG**

**1 BAY LEAF**

**1 TABLESPOON OLIVE OIL**

**1 TABLESPOON UNSALTED BUTTER**

**1 CUP CHOPPED ONION**

**3 OUNCES PANCETTA OR BACON, CHOPPED**

**2 GARLIC CLOVES, MINCED**

**5<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> CUPS REDUCED-SODIUM CHICKEN BROTH**

**2 (14<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub>-OUNCE) CANS RED KIDNEY BEANS, RINSED AND DRAINED**

**<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> CUP ELBOW MACARONI**

**FRESHLY GROUND BLACK PEPPER**

**<sup>1</sup>/<sub>3</sub> CUP FRESHLY GRATED PARMESAN CHEESE**

**1 TABLESPOON EXTRA-VIRGIN OLIVE OIL**

Wrap the thyme, rosemary, and bay leaf in a piece of cheesecloth and tie it with kitchen twine. Heat the olive oil and butter in a large, heavy saucepan over a medium flame. Add the onion, pancetta, and garlic and sauté until the onion is tender, about 3 minutes. Add the broth, beans, and sachet of herbs. Cover and bring to a boil over high heat, then decrease the heat to medium and simmer until the vegetables are very tender, about 10 minutes. Discard the sachet.

In a blender, purée 1 cup of the bean mixture until smooth, then return the purée to the saucepan. Cover and return the soup to a boil over high heat. Add the macaroni, cover, and boil, stirring occasionally, until the macaroni is tender but still firm to the bite, about 10 minutes. Season the soup with pepper.

Ladle the soup into bowls. Sprinkle with Parmesan cheese and drizzle with extra-virgin olive oil.

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# winter minestrone

4 TO 6 SERVINGS

Never throw away a Parmesan cheese rind; it is the secret to this soup. As the soup simmers, the cheese rind slowly releases its salty, buttery goodness and leaves the soup silky and so yummy. Make a double batch and eat it for days with crusty bread.

**2 TABLESPOONS OLIVE OIL**

**1 ONION, CHOPPED**

**2 CARROTS, PEELED AND CHOPPED**

**2 CELERY STALKS, CHOPPED**

**3 OUNCES THINLY SLICED PANCETTA, COARSELY CHOPPED**

**2 GARLIC CLOVES, MINCED**

**1 POUND SWISS CHARD, STEMS TRIMMED, LEAVES COARSELY CHOPPED**

**1 RUSSET POTATO, PEELED AND CUBED**

**1 (14½-OUNCE) CAN DICED TOMATOES IN JUICE**

**2 FRESH ROSEMARY SPRIGS**

**1 (15-OUNCE) CAN CANNELLINI BEANS, DRAINED AND RINSED**

**2 (14-OUNCE) CANS LOW-SODIUM BEEF BROTH**

**1-OUNCE PIECE OF PARMESAN CHEESE RIND**

**2 TABLESPOONS CHOPPED FRESH FLAT-LEAF PARSLEY**

**SALT AND FRESHLY GROUND PEPPER**

Heat the oil in a large, heavy pot over medium heat. Add the onion, carrots, celery, pancetta, and garlic. Sauté until the onion is translucent, about 10 minutes. Add the Swiss chard and potato; sauté for 2 minutes. Add the tomatoes with juice and the rosemary sprigs. Simmer until the chard is wilted and the tomatoes break down, about 10 minutes.

Meanwhile, in a food processor, combine  $\frac{3}{4}$  cup of the beans with  $\frac{1}{4}$  cup of the broth, and blend until almost smooth. Add the puréed bean mixture, remaining broth, and Parmesan rind to the vegetable mixture. Simmer until the potato pieces are tender, stirring occasionally, about 15 minutes. Stir in the remaining beans and the parsley. Simmer until the beans are heated through and the soup is thick, about 2 minutes. Season with salt and pepper to taste. Discard the rosemary stems (the needles will have fallen off).

Ladle the soup into bowls and serve.



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