

# A trip back to Rome always starts with pizza

BY KATHRYN O'SHEA-EVANS

Both food and fame are in Giada De Laurentiis's family history.

Long before she became a star on the Food Network, beginning in 2002 — she has had nine shows, including “Giada in Italy” — her grandfather, Dino De Laurentiis, produced Federico Fellini's 1954 drama “La Strada” and the 1973 movie “Serpico,” starring Al Pacino, and also owned an early Eataly progenitor called DDL Foodshow in New York City and Beverly Hills, Calif.

After graduating from U.C.L.A. with a degree in anthropology, Ms. De Laurentiis studied her cooking at Le Cordon Bleu in Paris and ran her own catering business, GDL Foods, in Los Angeles.

Ms. De Laurentiis, who was born in Rome, has written nine cookbooks. Her latest, “Giada's Italy: My Recipes for La Dolce Vita,” is a deep dive into some of the country's best dishes, adapted for American home cooks. “Yes, the recipes are Italian, but a lot of them are a culmination of both Italian and American — my California flair,” she said.

Below are edited excerpts from a conversation with Ms. De Laurentiis about her tips on Italian vacations — including where to find pasta like her great-grandparents made in their Naples factory.

## How does your dream trip to Italy begin?

I usually start in Rome, because that's where my family lives. When I land, the first thing I have is warm pizza bianca with mortadella inside. My mom usually gets it for me, but a lot of places have it, like Antico Forno Roscioli — which means “old oven” in Italian.

## What's your go-to gelato stop (and your order)?

Gelateria De Neri, in Florence, is a good one. I love espresso, pistachio, and fig and rum, something I started having when I lived in France. They also have a really great walnut, which I know is not everybody's favorite, but I think it's quite delicious.

## Which region of Italy is underrated?

Sicily is the undiscovered part of Italy that people don't go to very often, and then the outskirts of Naples. The government doesn't spend as much money

in tourism there, but it honestly has some of the best food, the best farmers' markets. For instance — I'm going into a tangent — but my grandfather's family had a pasta factory right outside of Naples. His parents made pasta and sauces, and he and his siblings would go door to door to sell it when he was a child. That whole area was all pasta factories, but when I say that, you can't think of the factory the way you think of a factory in Detroit. Think of a building, and part of the building they make pasta all day. They hang it on the roof, O.K.? Like on clothes lines. And then they live in that same building. There's blocks and blocks of that. Setaro is one of those companies that's still family run and still in that same exact building. It's phenomenal. They don't have modern machines — it's cut with bronze cutters — so they can't make as much; the texture, the flavor, the size, the shapes, they're all very unique. It's sold online.

## Do you have a favorite Italian hotel?

The great thing about Italy is it's so small. You can take a train or drive to this place up in the hills of Tuscany: Monteverdi. It's just beautiful up there and very serene. It's a place to recharge. They have a great spa to relax in, culinary classes where you can learn how to make pastas with them in-house, an art gallery, trails to go hiking — a little bit of everything people enjoy. I really like it because it's away from everything. For me, a very peaceful thing is to walk through the vineyard, through the vines.

## What souvenirs do you try to bring back with you?

I like going to fun antique shops on this really cute street in Rome called Via dei Coronari. I'm a huge lover of baby spoons and forks — I like petite things, so I collect them. These are family heirlooms from all over. I have a whole set of gold ones and a whole set of silver ones but they're not all the same, they're a little bit different.

There's also this man with the shop La Bottega del Marmoraro on Rome's Via Margutta, right by the Spanish Steps, where my mother lives. He writes Italian sayings on little pieces of white marble. I take them home all the time. One I have is “sorridi e la vita ti sorride” — “If you smile, life will smile back.”



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Giada De Laurentiis with an Aperol spritz on the rooftop of a hotel in Rome.

Intervista a Giada De Laurentis - Quando vado a Roma, comincio sempre con una pizza

