

[beyondthepasta.com](http://beyondthepasta.com)

Online Press Release: [View](#)



## Beyond The Pasta

*Recipes, Language & Life with an Italian Family*

By Mark Leslie

\$32.95 • Hardcover • 6 x 9 • 352 pages • September 2010

\$19.95 • Paperback • 6 x 9 • 352 pages • January 2014

**“Award-Winning Finalist ~ Travel Essay” — USA Book News Best Books 2011**

After a trip to Italy in 2001, author Mark Leslie reluctantly returned to his home in Alabama. But he couldn't get the splendor of the country out of his head. In 2005 he returned to Viterbo, Italy--only this time, he immersed himself in a cooking and intensive language course where he would live and study with his teachers. Each day, “Nonna,” a charming Italian grandmother, taught him to cook authentic Italian recipes while her daughter, Alessandra, taught Mark colloquial Italian.

In *Beyond the Pasta: Recipes, Language & Life with an Italian Family*, Mark shares his experience in a day-to-day journal format and offers his charming story in English with enough translated Italian woven throughout that, by the end, even non-Italian speakers will feel as if they have learned the language. (It is also perfect for those looking to refresh their Italian.) Readers get to know and love this kind-hearted, generous, and often dramatic Italian family and with Mark's artful description of every meal, conversation and experience, they feel as though they are actually there, eating and laughing along with Nonna and the entire family.

In the tradition of *Under the Tuscan Sun*, *Pig in Provence* and *Eat Pray Love*, Mark's book takes the reader through his journey and shares how he developed a new, more enjoyable and uniquely Italian way of looking at the world.

Each day begins with a special experience Mark had with Nonna, Alessandra, or their colorful family and friends, and ends with a recipe. The book is peppered with Italian idioms and translations to make the reader feel that they are right along on Mark's day-to-day adventure.

The book includes photographs of the sights, food, and people he encountered, along with 29 authentic, delicious family recipes Nonna shared with him.

## Sample Recipe:

### **Pollo al Pomodoro e Olive** **Chicken with Tomato and Olives**

*I could eat this dish once a week for the rest of my life and never tire of it. Sadly, Nonna only made this once while I was in Viterbo. This is a simple, country dish and reminds me of Tuscany. Nonna cuts her chicken into small pieces—it is only 10 but in her pan it looks more like 14 since they are so small. You may cut yours to any size you desire.*

**1 (4 pound) chicken, cut into 8 or 10 pieces (cut into 10 by dividing the breast into quarters)**

**Salt and freshly ground black pepper to season the chicken.**

**2 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil**

**1 cup dry white wine**

**2 large cloves garlic, minced**

**¾ cup strained tomatoes, such as Pomi brand \***

**1½ cups (5 ounces) whole green olives, pitted**

**¼ teaspoon salt, or more to taste**

**¼ teaspoon freshly ground black pepper, or more to taste**

Dry the chicken pieces with paper towels to remove any excess moisture and liberally season with salt and pepper on both sides.

Heat the oil in a large skillet on medium heat, and when the oil is hot, add the chicken pieces, skin side down and fry until nicely browned, turning to brown both sides, 3 to 5 minutes on each side.

When the chicken has browned, transfer to a plate and set aside. Add the white wine and garlic to the pan, scraping the brown bits off the bottom of the pan. After the wine has reduced by half, about 3 minutes, add the strained tomatoes, olives, salt and pepper. Stir until combined. Return the chicken to the skillet with its juices. Cover, turn the heat down to low and simmer for 20 minutes. Remove the cover and cook another 10 minutes, until the chicken is done and the sauce has thickened slightly.

Remove the chicken to a warmed platter. Adjust the seasoning of the sauce with salt and pepper, and pour the sauce and olives over the chicken. Serve hot.

Serves 6.

*\*Note: Strained tomatoes can be readily found in most supermarkets in either the canned tomato or pasta aisles. Sometimes the product may be referred to by its Italian name “passato” and can be found either bottled or cartoned, as is the case with the Pomi brand.*

## About the Author

**Mark Leslie**, who loves to cook for anyone with an appetite, vacations in Italy every year and lives to eat his way through every plate of pasta and cone of gelato placed before him. His first book, *Beyond the Pasta: Recipes, Language & Life with an Italian Family*, tells of his life in Italy while cooking with an Italian grandmother. He shares his food experiences on his blog at [beyondthepasta.com](http://beyondthepasta.com). A Chicago-area native and “Yankee” by birth, Mark has lived in Alabama for over 24 years, and celebrates the fact that he started life eating farina, progressed to grits, and finally arrived at polenta. *Buonissimo!*

*Beyond the Pasta: Recipes, Language & Life with an Italian Family*

By Mark Leslie

\$32.95 • Hardcover • 6 x 9 • 352 pages • September 2010 • Gemelli Press, LLC

\$19.95 • Paperback • 6 x 9 • 352 pages • January 2014 • Gemelli Press, LLC

\*Also available on Kindle • \$9.99

## Praise for Beyond the Pasta

“Mark has captured the essence of the Italian people.”

—**Biba Caggiano**, *TV chef, cookbook author, and Sacramento restaurateur.*

“Alabama and Italy—what a delightful and delicious combination.”

—**Fannie Flagg**, *Best-selling author and actress.*

“Mark understands and so beautifully conveys the transcendent nature of true cooking, cooking that comes from the heart and feeds not just the body but the soul. There is something universal about this that goes beyond culture, age, race, and gender—real food, real cooking, real sharing is something sacred and often under appreciated. His writing is smart, sensitive and wittily observed. Beyond the Pasta exemplifies how the act of cooking is intrinsically an act of sharing and affirmation, and has the potential to be an open expression of the heart.”

—**Scott Peacock**, *chef and co-author with Edna Lewis of “The Gift of Southern Cooking: Recipes and Revelations from Two Great American Cooks.”*

“Cookbook, Memoir, Travelogue: a delicious treat ... ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆” -*San Francisco Book Review*

**Mark’s YouTube videos may be viewed on the “334mdl” channel:**

<http://www.youtube.com/user/334mdl?feature=mhee>

### **Television/Radio Guest Appearances:**

NBC's *The Today Show* cooking segment with hosts Hoda Kotb & Kathie Lee Gifford, Columbus Day, October 10, 2011: <http://vimeo.com/30469053> Password to view: columbus

*Here on Earth: Radio Without Borders* with host Jean Feraca, Wisconsin Public Radio, May 2011:  
<http://www.beyondthepasta.com/wp-content/uploads/hereonearth110520k.mp3>

KTVU Channel 2, San Francisco, CA, April, 2011

KRON-TV 4 with host Henry Tenenbaum, San Francisco, CA, April 2011:  
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Xy2jkupSozM>

*Community Affairs* with host Carolyn Hutcheson, WTSU 89.9, Montgomery, AL, January 2011:  
[http://www.beyondthepasta.com/wp-content/uploads/01-18-11\\_cf.mp3](http://www.beyondthepasta.com/wp-content/uploads/01-18-11_cf.mp3)

*The Kitchen Corner* with host Jo Henderson, Evergreen Radio Reading Service, WA, December 2010:  
[http://www.wtbbl.org/\\_assets/library/wtbbl/RadioPrograms/20101213\\_MarkLeslieBeyondthePasta.mp3](http://www.wtbbl.org/_assets/library/wtbbl/RadioPrograms/20101213_MarkLeslieBeyondthePasta.mp3)

**For a complete list of TV & Radio appearances, please visit Mark's website:**

<http://www.beyondthepasta.com/pressmedia/video/>

### **Publications/Blogs Features:**

#### **House Beautiful magazine article:**

Feature article in the February, 2010, issue: "Remodeling a Southern Home"

#### **Publishers Weekly:**

"Fall Cookbooks, By the Trends," August 9, 2010, issue. Mentioned under the category:

**Everything I Need to Know I Learned From an Italian Grandmother**

*Beyond the Pasta* by Mark Leslie (Gemelli, Sept.)

#### **Additional magazine articles:**

B-Metro, January 2011, issue: [May the pasta be with you, y'all!](#)

Montgomery Living, November 2010, issue: [Celebrating Good Food, Family and Italy](#)

Outword Magazine, December 2010, issue: A Man's "Eat, Pray, Love"

#### **Newspaper articles:**

The Island Packet, Hilton Head, SC, September 28, 2011: "Food Takes Center Stage"

Mercury News, Bay Area News Group, April 5, 2011: "Mark Leslie's Foodie Memoir Takes Readers..."

The Selma Times-Journal, February 4, 2011: [Chef, author to get library cooking](#)

The Tuscon Citizen, What's Cookin', December 6, 2010: "Italian Cook Book is More Than Just Recipes"

The Denver Post, November 24, 2010: "Yum Yum 'Beyond the Pasta'"

La Gazzetta Italiana, October 2010: [The World Beyond Pasta](#)

Northwest Herald, Wednesday, September 15, 2010: "Local Author Tells of Italian Life, Cooking"

**Videos Blogs:**

-Featured guest on blog *Gianni's North Beach*: <http://gianni.tv/chicken-potato-cook-off/>

-Featured guest on the food blog *dishKarma*: "Mark Leslie's Ultimate Italian Meal"

**Blogosphere features:**

PaulDeen.com, "pumpkin" article plus 4 featured recipes, 2012: "A New Pumpkin Perspective."

Field & Stream, The Wild Chef, featured recipe:

<http://www.fieldandstream.com/blogs/fishing/2010/12/recipe-make-tuscan-trout-filets-plus-win-new-cookbook>

Food Nation, article, March 3, 2011: "Beyond Pasta"

Food Nation, four "Chef's Table" recipes:

<http://www.foodrepublic.com/2011/03/11/penne-allarrabiata-con-panna-recipe>

The Kitchn: Book review: "Nonna in Your Kitchen"

Mother Nature News, 2011: "5 Summer reads for Food Lovers"

Dianne Hales, La Bella Lingua, 2011: "Falling in Love with Italian Gelato"

The Daily Meal, 2010: "2010s Best Blogs Cookbooks"

**\*For a complete publication and blogosphere list visit:**

<http://www.beyondthepasta.com/pressmedia/publications/>

**Mark Leslie's Talent Reel: [Online Link](#)**

**More from Beyond the Pasta:**

Below, please find a few of Mark's recipes taken from his book. Please also be sure to visit Mark's website/blog at [beyondthepasta.com](http://beyondthepasta.com). He is available for interviews, guest lecture series and cooking demonstrations.

\*Three additional recipes from *Beyond the Pasta: Recipes, Language & Life with an Italian Family* are featured on the next three pages. *Buon appetito!*

## ***Penne all'Arrabbiata con Panna***

### **“Mad Dog” Penne with Cream**

*I love it when the Italian language takes the meaning of one word and uses it to explain another. The “spicy heat” in this dish is reflected in the word “arrabbiata,” which means “to go mad” when applied to dogs and “to be angry” when applied to people. To increase your “rage” or the “foaming of the dog,” add dashes of pepper sauce to your plate at the table until you scream or howl at the moon!*

**1 tablespoon extra virgin olive oil**

**2 ¼-inch-thick slices (approx 5 ounces) pancetta, cut into ¼-inch cubes (smoked pancetta is preferred)**

**1 small onion, thinly sliced into half rounds**

**1 teaspoon crushed red pepper flakes**

**1 (28-ounce) can whole peeled Italian plum tomatoes (preferably San Marzano), placed in a bowl and crushed by hand, reserving all of the liquid**

**½ teaspoon salt**

**1 pound penne rigate**

**1 cup heavy cream**

**½ cup grated Parmigiano-Reggiano, Grana Padano or pecorino cheese, for garnish**

Heat oil in a large saucepan over medium heat. When the oil is hot, add the cubed pancetta and cook until browned, 4 to 5 minutes. Add the onion and sauté until soft and translucent, about 3 to 4 minutes, stirring occasionally. Once the onions are translucent and starting to turn golden, stir in the red pepper flakes and cook for 1 minute. Add the crushed tomatoes and their juices, the salt, and stir until well combined, bringing the tomatoes to a boil. Once at a boil, reduce the heat to low and simmer until the sauce thickens, 18 to 20 minutes.

Meanwhile, bring a large pot of water to a boil. Add 1 to 2 tablespoons of salt\*, stir the water, and add the pasta. [\*The Italian secret to seasoning the pasta as it cooks is for the boiling water to be as salty as seawater. Some people prefer 1 tablespoon, my seawater tastes like 2 tablespoons.] Cook, uncovered, over high heat until the pasta is tender but still firm to the bite — *al dente*. [Follow the pasta package’s cooking time as a guide.] Drain the pasta and place in the pan with the sauce, add the cream, stirring until well combined, over medium-low heat. Allow to simmer for an additional minute or two. Taste and adjust the seasoning. Serve immediately, garnished with the Parmigiano.

This makes 6 to 8 servings.

## *Frittata con Zucchine e Cipolla*

### **Zucchini and Onion Frittata**

*Zucchini, like most squash, has a high water content. When shopping for this dish, choose small to medium-sized ones rather than one large zucchini, because the larger they grow, the more water and less flavor they have.*

**2 tablespoons sunflower oil (extra virgin olive oil may be substituted)**

**1 small-medium onion, finely minced**

**1 clove garlic, finely minced**

**¾ cup water, divided**

**3 medium zucchini (about ¾ pound), sliced into ¼-inch rounds**

**½ teaspoon salt**

**¼ teaspoon freshly ground black pepper**

**6 eggs, beaten**

**½ cup freshly grated Parmigiano-Reggiano cheese**

Heat the oil in a 10-inch nonstick skillet over medium heat. When the oil is hot, add the onion and garlic. Cook for one minute, stirring constantly. Add a ¼ cup of the water and cook for 2 to 3 minutes until the water has almost evaporated. Add another ¼ cup water and cook an additional 2 to 3 minutes until the water has, once again, almost evaporated. Stir in the zucchini rounds, salt, pepper and the remaining ¼ cup water. Lower the heat, cover and simmer, stirring occasionally, until the zucchini is soft, 10 to 12 minutes.

Meanwhile, beat the eggs in a medium bowl and stir in the Parmigiano-Reggiano.

When the zucchini is soft but still retains its shape, remove the cover, return the heat to medium and cook until the excess moisture has evaporated, 4 to 6 minutes. Stir in the beaten egg mixture, making sure the zucchini and onions are evenly distributed. Cook until the bottom of the frittata starts to lightly brown and the top begins to set up, 4 to 6 minutes. With a spatula, loosen the edges of the frittata from the sides of the pan and with a quick firm shake, flip the frittata over in one whole piece.\* Cook the second side 2 to 3 minutes, until the bottom is lightly browned.

Invert the finished frittata (or if inverting seems scary, you can slide the frittata) onto a serving plate, cut into wedges and serve warm or at room temperature.

Serves 8 as an appetizer, or 4 as an entrée.

*\*Note: If flipping the frittata seems daunting, place a dinner plate over the frittata and turn the pan over, inverting the frittata onto the plate. Slide the frittata back into the pan and finish cooking the second side. A third way to finish the second side of the frittata is to place it under a broiler: Preheat the broiler and when the bottom of the frittata is lightly browned and the top is still loose, place the pan under the broiler until the top is set and browned, 3 to 4 minutes. Nonna flipped hers effortlessly. I still tend to put mine under a broiler.*

## ***Cuppa, Cuppa, Cuppa*** **Yogurt Cake**

*In the original play, and later the movie, Steel Magnolias, there is a recipe called “Cuppa, Cuppa, Cuppa”, in which Truvy declares that she “serves it with a scoop of ice cream to cut the sweetness.” This is NOT that recipe. Here the recipe’s Italian name refers to the use of the yogurt container as the measuring cup (“cuppa”) for all of the ingredients. I have included both sets of measurements—the use of a standard American measuring cup and the use of the yogurt container “cuppa.”*

**1 teaspoon unsalted butter**

**3 tablespoons plain dried bread crumbs**

**1 6-ounce (single serving-sized) container of yogurt, mixed berry flavor or flavor of your choice**

**2 large eggs**

**1½ yogurt containers sugar (or 1 cup sugar)**

**1 yogurt container sunflower oil (or ¾ cup sunflower oil—vegetable oil may be substituted)**

**1½ teaspoons vanilla extract**

**4 yogurt containers all-purpose flour (or 2¾ cups flour)**

**1 tablespoon baking powder**

**½ teaspoon salt**

**1 cup peeled, diced tart apple (such as a Granny Smith)**

**1 cup peeled, diced pear**

**Powdered sugar for garnish**

Preheat oven to 350 degrees.

Prepare a nonstick 10-inch springform pan with the butter and plain bread crumbs. Set aside.

In a large bowl, mix together the yogurt, eggs, sugar, oil and vanilla until well combined. Set aside.

In a medium bowl, mix together the flour, baking powder and salt.

In batches, add a third of the dry mixture to the wet mixture, mixing until well combined between each addition. Next, stir in the apple and pear until mixed throughout. Pour into the prepared springform pan and bake for 15 minutes at 350 degrees, then reduce the heat to 300 degrees and bake for an additional 40 to 45 minutes, until the top is golden brown and a toothpick inserted in the center comes out clean. Cool completely in the pan on a wire rack.

To serve, remove from the pan, dust with powdered sugar and place on a serving plate.

This serves 8 to 10.