

Chefs Share Tips To Stock Italian Kitchen

(NAPSA)—Pasta is quick, easy to make and a tasty crowd pleaser. According to a recent survey, 75 percent of American families enjoy pasta at least once a week.

To help home chefs create authentic Italian cuisine, Barilla collaborated with StarChefs.com, a culinary community resource, to survey more than 100 professional Italian chefs—including celebrity chef and cookbook author Giada De Laurentiis—for advice on moving beyond spaghetti and meatballs.

Here are the essential Italian ingredients every home chef needs in his or her kitchen and tips to help create authentic Italian cuisine at home:

• **Escape the monotony of beef and chicken.** Italian dining includes several courses, with the “secondi piatti,” or main course, usually featuring meat or fish. Try recipes that call for popular proteins in Italian cooking such as fish, shrimp, scallops, prosciutto, pork and lamb.

“Lamb is a simple and versatile alternative to the more common beef-, poultry- or fish-based dishes. It can be prepared for an elegant Italian dish when entertaining or for a special Sunday dinner with family,” said De Laurentiis.

• **Cook with wine you would drink.** Better wine means richer flavor. When it comes to the bases for sauces and sautéing, chefs consider aged balsamic vinegar, good extra virgin olive oil and red and white wines to be staples, according to the survey.



• **Select pasta that cooks “al dente.”** Chefs surveyed were unanimous about cooking pasta al dente, or “to the tooth.” Perfectly cooked pasta should be soft on the outside, but still a little hard on the inside.

Quality refers to pasta, too. De Laurentiis swears by Barilla pasta.

“Italians love to cook with great-quality, simple ingredients, and pasta is no exception. Barilla has all the qualities of great pasta—it holds its shape, it’s always al dente and it has a great flavor,” De Laurentiis said.

Most importantly, Italian culinary experts agree that great food is not about complicated recipes, but more about using a few simple ingredients. A simple Italian dish, made with the freshest, high-quality ingredients, will always be delicious.

Home chefs can find the complete guide to the essential Italian pantry and recipes at www.barillaus.com/Italian_KitchenPantry.aspx.

Cooking Ideas

Try adding more uncommon ingredients to your Italian meals:

- Anchovies, small silver fish from the Mediterranean, are known for their salty taste and add excellent flavor to sauces and salads.
- Dried beans and dried porcini mushrooms are two staples that add flavor and texture to authentic Italian soups and sauces. Rehydrate dried beans by soaking them in water for 12 hours and dried porcini mushrooms for about a half hour.

For more recipe ideas, visit www.barillaus.com.

