“Tuscan food tastes like itself. Ingredients are left to shine. . . . So, if on your visit, I hand you an apron, your work will be easy. We’ll start with primo ingredients, a little flurry of activity, perhaps a glass of Vino Nobile di Montepulciano, and soon we’ll be carrying platters out the door. We’ll have as much fun setting the table as we have in the kitchen. Four double doors along the front of the house open to the outside—so handy for serving at a long table under the stars (or for cooling a scorched pan on the stone wall). Italian Philosophy 101: la casa aperta, the open house.”

—from the Introduction

In all of Frances Mayes’s bestselling memoirs about Tuscany, food plays a starring role. This cuisine transports, comforts, entices, and speaks to the friendly, genuine, and improvisational spirit of Tuscan life. Both cooking and eating in Tuscany are natural pleasures. In her first-ever cookbook, Frances and her husband, Ed, share recipes that they have enjoyed over the years as honorary Tuscan: dishes prepared in a simple, traditional kitchen using robust, honest ingredients.

A toast to the experiences they’ve had over two decades at Bramasole, their home in Cortona, Italy, this cookbook evokes days spent roaming the countryside for chestnuts, green almonds, blackberries, and porcini; dinner parties stretching into the wee hours, and garden baskets tumbling over with bright red tomatoes.

Lose yourself in the transporting photography of the food, the people, and the place, as Frances’s lyrical introductions and headnotes put you by her side in the kitchen and raising a glass at the table. From Antipasti
(starters) to Dolci (desserts), this cookbook is organized like a traditional Italian dinner.

The more than 150 tempting recipes include:
- Fried Zucchini Flowers
- Red Peppers Melted with Balsamic Vinegar
- Potato Ravioli with Zucchini, Speck, and Pecorino
- Risotto Primavera
- Pizza with Caramelized Onions and Sausage
- Cannellini Bean Soup with Pancetta
- Little Veal Meatballs with Artichokes and Cherry Tomatoes
- Chicken Under a Brick
- Short Ribs, Tuscan-Style
- Domenica’s Rosemary Potatoes
- Folded Fruit Tart with Mascarpone
- Strawberry Semifreddo
- Steamed Chocolate Cake with Vanilla Sauce

Frances and Ed also share their tips on stocking your pantry, pairing wines with dishes, and choosing the best olive oil. Learn their time-tested methods for hand rolling pasta and techniques for coaxing the best out of seasonal ingredients with little effort.

Throw on another handful of pasta, pull up a chair, and languish in the rustic Italian way of life.

Amazon.com Review

Featured Recipe: Giusi’s Ragu

Slow and easy—long-simmered ragù is the quintessential Tuscan soul food. There are as many ways with ragù as there are cooks. This is ours, learned originally from Giusi, who’s made it a thousand times. By now, I think we have, too. On many Saturday mornings, Ed makes a huge pot of ragù—tripling, quadrupling the recipe—and another of tomato sauce. We consider these our natural resources. For lunch, while the pots are still on the stove, we spoon ragù over bruschetta, add some cheese, and run it under the broiler. By afternoon, we’re ready to fill several glass containers of different sizes and freeze them. We’re then free to pull one out during the workweek. Serve ragù in lasagne or over...
spaghetti and, as you eat, you know you're participating in a communal rite that's being enacted all over the Italian peninsula.

Serves 10

- 3 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
- 1 pound ground lean beef
- 1 pound ground pork
- 2 Italian sausages, casings removed
- 1 teaspoon salt
- ½ teaspoon pepper
- 2 teaspoons fresh thyme leaves or 1 teaspoon dried
- 1 to 2 cups red wine
- 1 cup soffritto (recipe below)
- 2 tablespoons tomato paste
- 16 to 20 tomatoes or 2 28-ounce cans whole tomatoes, juice included, chopped

Pour the olive oil into a 4-quart heavy pot with a lid. Over medium-high heat, brown the meats, breaking up the sausage with a wooden spoon, about 10 minutes. Add the salt, pepper, thyme, and 1 cup of the red wine. After the wine has cooked into the meat, about 10 minutes, add the soffritto, and stir in the tomato paste and tomatoes.

Bring the sauce to a boil, and then lower to a quiet simmer. Partially cover, and continue cooking for 3 hours, stirring now and then. Along the way, add the remaining cup of wine if you think the sauce is too dense.

Soffritto

Serves 10

- ¼ cup extra-virgin olive oil
- 1 yellow onion, minced
- 1 carrot, minced
- 1 celery stalk, minced
- 1 handful of flat-leaf parsley, minced
- ½ teaspoon salt
- ½ teaspoon pepper

Saute the ingredients in a small saucepan over medium-low heat until they begin to color and turn tender, 5 to 7 minutes.

Product Description

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