

THE 5 ESSENTIAL THINGS YOU NEED TO GET IN TOUCH WITH YOUR INNER NONNA

- 1.** Invest in a house dress or dedicate an old dress to be a house dress. Extra points if it's paisley or floral.
- 2.** Get a striped or floral apron and wear it whenever you cook or whenever you have aforementioned house dress on.
- 3.** If you want to get serious about cooking like a nonna, get a *passa tutto*, a potato ricer, a pasta machine and a *cafeteria* – you need not buy these things new, go to op shops as they are commonly found there.
- 4.** You need a trolley to do your shopping if you truly want to embrace the nonna approach to life. It will save your arms when you inevitably end up buying more than you intended.
- 5.** A deck of Italian cards is essential to live life like a nonna.

CHAPTER ONE

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MANGIA E BEVE



Food is love (si mangia insieme)



For Italian nonnas, the greatest expression of love is through food. 'Mangia, mangia' – meaning 'eat, eat' – might be the most repeated phrase in all of Italy. If a nonna had her way she would feed her family continuously forever. By feeding you, she can show you how much she loves you, how much she wants to nurture you, how important you are. Nonnas may not be overly sentimental but they make up for it as aggressive food pushers, all in the name of love.

Consider how beloved Italian food is all around the world. It's beloved for a reason – nonnas are the best cooks and have set the standard for how delicious and nutritious food should be. We have doctors and nutritionists from around the world telling us that not only is the *Italian diet** the healthiest way to eat, but that they also now think it makes us live longer.

* Well, okay, they didn't specify the Italian diet. They said the *Mediterranean diet*, which, strictly speaking, includes Greece and other countries bordering the Mediterranean Sea. But this book isn't called *Yiayia Knows Best!* So, if you want to embrace the way of the nonnas, step one is a deep love and appreciation for food and where it comes from and how it's cooked.


Love food

In Italy, lunch is often the biggest meal of the day and traditionally all family members return home from school or work for lunch. Having the biggest meal in the middle of the day means you get to burn off some of the calories, rather than eating a large meal and then going to bed soon after. Italians would argue that it's not always *what* you eat but *when* you eat it. No nonna is going to serve you a sandwich for lunch (or dinner for that matter). Meals are not eaten quickly at a desk. Appreciating the role of food and meals in your life is a way to bring joy and appreciation to your table and home. Food is not just about sustenance, it's also about love. Love the food you make, love the food you eat, love the people you cook for – Nonna wouldn't have it any other way. *Buon appetito!*



TALES OF NONNA

I had been seeing my non-Italian (scandaloso) boyfriend for a few months when I decided it was about time he met my Nonna. We arranged a Sunday lunch and I explained to my boyfriend that all he really needed to do was eat my Nonna's delicious food ... and tell her repeatedly how delicious it was. On the big day, after an antipasto Nonna brought out plates of homemade lasagna, steaming hot, crispy on the outside, soft on the inside, just how I like it. We ate. '



'She asked my boyfriend if he'd like more and he said yes. She brought another huge serve, which he quickly ate. She offered thirds and he agreed. I was surprised by how much he was eating but Nonna was so happy and she clearly liked this guy. He declined a fourth serve of lasagna and we cleared the plates. Nonna and I returned to the table with the main course: roast beef, roast potatoes, peas, cotolette, arancini and a salad. My boyfriend looked at the food perplexed. He thought the meal was over, not realising the lasagna was just the entrée. Such a rookie mistake!' – J