

Cooking with Rossella and her Nonnas

Natasha Lardera (July 10, 2013)



Cooking with Nonna is a web-series cooking show with Rossella Rago, an Italian American actress from Bensonhurst. She merges traditional Italian cooking with the new generation by inviting a new Nonna (Grandmother in Italian) to make the most traditional recipes from Italy

Cooking with Nonna is a web-series cooking show on www.cookingwithnonna.com [2]. On the show Rossella Rago, a beautiful Italian American actress from Bensonhurst, Brooklyn whose heritage finds its source in Mola di Bari, a small fishing village in Puglia where her parents grew up, merges traditional Italian cooking with the new generation by inviting a new Nonna (Grandmother in Italian) on each show to make the most traditional recipes from Italy.

A new episode is streamed every Monday evening at 8pm and it features a new recipe and a short



Bio of the guest Nonna.

A few lucky ones had the opportunity to meet Rossella and two Nonnas (one was a guest, the other was Rossella's real grandmother) for a night of traditional recipes at Joanne Trattoria, owned by Joe and Cynthia Germanotta. The dinner was a four course meal during which Rossella, together with her Nonnas, demonstrated each dish. The menu Rossella created for the occasion - Arancini di Riso, Maritati Pasta with Eggplant Meatballs, Pesce Spada al Forno and Cannoli with Ricotta Cream & Nutella Mousse - was a fusion of Sicilian and Pugliese cuisine and, of course, with Rossella's own personal touch.

Rossella was born into a family of culinary aficionados and food lovers: growing up there was always something on the stove. "Cooking was never just about cooking, it was about family, community, and spending quality time with each other," Rossella said in the past. Rossella spent most of her childhood in the kitchen with her maternal Grandmother Romana learning the long legacy of recipes passed down through the generations for centuries.

In addition to inspiring Nonnas from Italy and other countries around the world, to pass down their traditional recipes, entertaining audiences with her show and demo dinners like the one at [Joanne Trattoria](#) [3], and popularizing authentic Italian cuisine, with Cooking with Nonna, Rossella plans to raise awareness and promote healthy eating habits for young women everywhere.

We had an opportunity to ask her a couple of questions:

When did your passion for cooking start?

My passion for cooking was always present in my life. Growing up first generation Italian American cooking was an tremendous part of every day life and culture. In many ways, it was what my family used to keep the bond of the world they had left behind in Puglia strong. Every Sunday was about Ragu' and Focaccia, Christmas time was exclusively about Cartellate and Good Friday was centered around our Scalcione. With all of this going on around me, it was difficult to not form an appreciation for food. When I started attending University I moved in with Nonna Romana and that's when I can say my "training" really began. I was completely inspired by how every single day of Nonna's life was about food and feeding people. She took no short cuts and barely used any modern appliances to make her specialties. Seeing that back to basics approach really made me aware that if these methods and traditions weren't documented they would be lost forever.

How did you get the idea of Cooking with Nonna?

To be honest, the idea of Cooking With Nonna came about through a bit of a joke. While I was living with Nonna I was studying to be a secondary Italian teacher at St. John's University. My parents both knew that teaching was probably not my true passion in life, so after a big holiday meal my father Vito asked the ultimate question. "What do you want to do with your life?" At that time, I'll admit that I would have considered joining the circus, but before I could say that I blurted out "I should host a cooking show! That's the greatest job in the world!" We both realized there were currently no cooking shows that centered around Italian Grandmothers and the name Cooking With Nonna was born. As a joke! A week later my father bought the web domain www.cookingwithnonna.com and the rest was history.

Is there a recipe you particularly enjoy preparing with your Nonna? Why? Any special memories?

I really love making Orecchiette pasta with my Nonna. It took a long time for me to master making the dough on my own, but she really pushed me to keep doing it more and more and it would get easier. We also tend to fight about how to make the Orecchiette shapes. I usually like using my thumb but Nonna says the only real way to do it is with a knife. We have the same argument every time but it's a battle I will always lose. After all, she is Nonna.

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