

Giada De Laurentiis on Lemon Pasta, Homemade Pizza Dough, and Portion Sizes

Emmy-winner and Italian-born superstar chef Giada De Laurentiis catches up with Homemade host Martie Duncan about her new book, her go-to family meal, her great-grandparents' pasta factory in Naples and much more!

MARTIE DUNCAN Welcome to Homemade. I'm Martie Duncan. And if you're like me, you can't mention Italian cooking without thinking of my guest today. She's a mom, a chef, a restaurateur, and she was a mentor on my season of "Food Network Star." She's been nominated for and has won multiple Emmy awards for her Food Network shows "Giada's Everyday Italia," "Giada at Home," and "Giada Entertains."

She's got a great new series with our friend Bobby Flay that's streaming on Discovery Plus called "Bobby and Giada In Italy."

We'll get some insight into her Italian roots today as well as her new cookbook, which focuses on ways we can balance good health with the foods we love.

I am thrilled to welcome the one and only Giada De Laurentiis to today's episode of Homemade. Good to see you again, Giada!

GIADA DE LAURENTIIS Oh, my God. It's my pleasure. This is so fun.

MARTIE All right. Well, I want to talk to you today, Giada, about *Eat Better, Feel Better: My Recipes for Wellness and Healing Inside and Out*. But, that's not the only thing I want to talk to you about.

GIADA I didn't think so.

MARTIE No, ma'am. But she has a book, y'all, coming out. You've got to get it. I have enjoyed every second of it. What prompted you to write the book, first of all?

GIADA Well, as you know well, since we met on "Food Network Star," we work long hours, and sometimes we don't get the nutrition that we need. And that has been my life story for a long time. And I think that I spent almost 20 years now in a world where I was running all over the

place. I was working long hours. I was putting myself — and honestly in tight dresses where I couldn't breathe half the time.

MARTIE Right.

GIADA And I wasn't eating appropriately because I would get too tired if I ate. So I usually picked things like sugar to keep me going. And I started to realize, especially, after I had my daughter, the havoc that this lifestyle was wreaking on my body. I started to have chronic sinus infections constantly. I couldn't get on a plane without getting a massive sinus infection. And when I would land in New York, I would have to go see an ENT and get steroid shots just so I could work the next morning on the "TODAY Show" or anywhere else.

And I just started to realize, I can't live like this. This can't be what I have to do in order to survive and just, you know, last, what, five, 10-minute appearances at a time.

So after several years of torture and taking a lot of antibiotics and just never feeling well, always tired. And when you have a little one, it's awful. It's just an awful feeling.

MARTIE I think for me, and I think for a lot of our listeners, it will be refreshing to know that no matter your size, you can still struggle with food-related problems.

GIADA Yes.

MARTIE It doesn't matter if you're big or small. This is something that will catch you at some point. The sugar highs and the crashing lows and the skipping meals, not sleeping. So, y'all, the book has lots of great chapters. You're going to want to dig in.

The one thing that I'm particularly intrigued with, Giada, is the parallels to the regular Mediterranean diet, first of all, and the fact that you started out with a three-day reboot.

GIADA Yes. So, first of all, Martie, when I was not feeling well, at no point did anybody tell me, "You need to change your diet." Everybody told me, you need to stop traveling and you need to have less stress. I'm like, OK, well. This doesn't go hand in hand.

So I started to play with different ways of sort of cleaning up my diet a little bit. In the sense that I started seeing an acupuncturist, who was doing a lot of muscle testing on me. And she would say things like, "Caffeine, wheat, dairy, sugar. You need to start getting off of them." And I thought, "All of them?!"

MARTIE Yeah.

GIADA Oh, what? I can't live if I get off all of them!

MARTIE Right.

GIADA So we started to just get off a little bits at a time, and I started to feel a difference. Now, I didn't eliminate everything at once. What I started to figure out and it took me years to figure this out, is with a three-day reboot I could eat — because a lot of people believe, like, go on a cleanse. Water with pepper, cayenne pepper, and lemon. Or just eat soup. Or don't eat anything.

MARTIE Don't eat anything. Right.

GIADA It doesn't, that — you can't survive? I just couldn't. So, I figured out a way that I could start with a three-day reboot, which means that I do clean my diet of most everything. I will tell you I cheat from time to time and I have an espresso, which means I have caffeine.

MARTIE Right.

GIADA Just so you know. But, for the most part, I take out all refined sugar, all wheat products, and all dairy products, for the most part. No alcohol, obviously, which I think for three days, most people can do that.

MARTIE Right.

GIADA For three days, I think people can do all of that. And it just in three days, it makes you just feel less foggy, more energetic, and, honestly, you're in a better mood. You're in a better mood.

So usually I do that for three days after I've traveled or after the holidays or any period of time where I've indulged more than I should. And that usually could get me on some kind of track.

Now, if I feel like I can handle it, then I go another 20 days. Not like that, though, not that severe. I start to introduce things like a little bit of dairy. So just a sprinkle of Parm, Parmesan cheese on food. Not half a cup.

MARTIE Right.

GIADA Just a sprinkle. A couple of tablespoons. And I eat a little bit of pasta, even if it's not gluten-free. So if it's a Bolognese, I'll eat more of the meat sauce than I will the pasta.

MARTIE Right.

GIADA So it's that kind of reintroduction. I'll have desserts like my banana bread in the book, but I'm using unrefined sugars like coconut sugar. It's gluten-free. So I found ways that it can be doable. Is it doable 365 days a year? No. Unless you have a chronic illness where you need to, it's not. But it's almost like turning off a computer, letting it completely shut down and rebooting it. That's what you're doing to your system.

MARTIE And I love your meal plans. And then you've got some big batch cooking in here, which I'm a big fan of.

GIADA Yeah.

MARTIE I've always done it. I feel like if I'm a mess up a pot, I might as well make a big thing that I can freeze some of it for later.

GIADA Agreed. I'm totally into batch cooking. I'm totally into freezing lentils and brown rice and quinoa and whatever and using it as you need it, because when you're starving — and you will grab anything you can find — but if you have stuff in there, you're good to go.

MARTIE Giada, it's a very similar to a Mediterranean diet: less red meat, no refined things or processed things, a lot of fish. Like, a fish can be really decadent. It doesn't have to feel like you are depriving yourself of something.

GIADA No, no. That was the whole thing. And that's why it's taken me almost 10 years to write this book, is because I had to find ways that I wouldn't feel deprivation. I think that is the

mentality that we have: "I'm going to go on a diet." Well, most of the time, for most people, that means, "I'm going to deprive myself of all the things that I love." Well what happens psychologically? That's all you think. About 24/7. I can't wait to have that piece of candy. I can't wait to have that plate of pasta. So why don't we just have it the way that I grew up, which is small amounts?

MARTIE Right.

GIADA Not large amounts. And I didn't grow up with a lot of bagged foods, a lot of jarred food, a lot of grab-and-go items. We just didn't do that. And I had strayed from that for the last 20 some years. And it took a beating on my system.

MARTIE Well, let's face it, multiple shows. I mean, I don't know how many you tape at a time, but a lot. Then you've got your travel, your restaurant. You have a great website. Congratulations on that.

GIADA Ah, thanks.

MARTIE Yeah, Giada-zy?

GIADA Giadzy.

MARTIE Giadzy.

GIADA Giadzy. It was my nickname growing up. Giadzy.

MARTIE I heard you say it a million times, but...

GIADA I know and people are like, "Why did you name it that? It's so hard to say."

MARTIE It's not. Giadzy's easy. Like Yahtzee but Giadzy.

GIADA Exactly. Oh, my gosh! I'm going to use that, Martie.

MARTIE OK, good. Well for, y'all who don't know, she's got a website where she has recipes and all kinds of things and you've got products that you're doing. And you have a child you're raising.

GIADA Yeah.

MARTIE So I imagine it is a bit tricky. All right. So I'm going to dig into a few other questions.

GIADA OK.

MARTIE First question I want to ask you about Aunt Raffy.

GIADA Oh, God. What do you want to know about Aunt Raffy?

MARTIE I want to know everything about Aunt Raffy! She is so fun. I want Aunt Raffy to be my best friend. She is a hoot.

GIADA She's a hoot. From the very beginning, she has been one of the people in my life who's really kept me grounded through all of this. She is also my inspiration, along with my grandfather and also my mother. She is just so passionate and so curious about food and travel. And she's traveled the world. So she, you know, makes movies all over the world. She'll spend six months at a time in a different location. She doesn't have any kids, so she's good to do that.

MARTIE Wait, wait, wait. She makes movies?

GIADA Yeah, she's a movie producer, which is where my whole family comes from, my grandfather was a movie producer.

MARTIE I didn't know she did that.

GIADA Oh, yeah, and so she would live in Mexico for six months, in China for six months, like it's crazy. And she'd bring back all these fun ingredients and all these, like, just great recipes and so much to explore and play with. And so, she became sort of, you know, my partner in crime.

MARTIE Yes.

GIADA And I have to say that my viewers love her.

MARTIE Oh.

GIADA I think they love how she keeps me grounded.

MARTIE I like that she tells you what to do. That's what I like.

GIADA She tells me what to do.

MARTIE Oh, my God. That cracks me up. It's like, "What are you doing, Giada? We don't do it that way. No, we do it that way. No, we don't do it that way."

GIADA I know.

MARTIE I love it.

GIADA She tells me I ruin tradition. You know, it's all of it. But it makes for good banter.

MARTIE So fun.

GIADA And she is one of my favorite people in the world.

MARTIE Mine, too, I think. I don't know her, but I want to.

You're listening to *Homemade*. Stay tuned and we'll hear Giada's go-to family recipe, what region of Italy she recommends visiting first, and much more. We'll be right back after the break.

I'm Martie Duncan, and my guest today is Giada de Laurentiis.

But I love the fact that your great-grandparents owned a pasta factory in Naples or close to Naples, is that right?

GIADA Yes. My grandfather's parents owned a pasta factory where they made fresh pasta and sauces. And he and his siblings would go door to door, and there were eight of them, and they would sell it. That's what they did for a living. And then World War II hit, and Naples was really bombed heavily.

MARTIE Yes.

GIADA And many, many people lost all their livelihood. But that is where my grandfather's passion for food comes from. It comes from them. And that is where, you know, I learned it. And that's why I have this little Italian grocery store online on *Giadzy*.

MARTIE Yeah, I love that.

GIADA And I get pasta from a family who still makes pasta on the same street my grandfather's parents had a place. It's just, you know, I think as we get older, Martie, we start to realize, our history and our culture and our family are really who define us and center us and feed our soul. And it's so important to honor that. And although I've been doing it through my career, it's really come full circle. And with the pandemic, I've had more time to think about doing all these passion projects that I've never had time to do. So it's been a gift in a way.

MARTIE It has to me, as well. I've been able to spend time at home for the first time in 20 years.

GIADA Yeah.

MARTIE And I mean really unpacked my suitcase, which I had never done. It always stayed on ottoman half open, half full, you know?

GIADA Yeah.

MARTIE Like grabbing and going and...

GIADA Oh, I hear you. Yup.

MARTIE I know, I know you do.

GIADA Yeah.

MARTIE So what's your number one go-to when you just need that family touchstone, that recipe that is so important in your in your whole family? What is it?

GIADA I would probably say that it's either lemon spaghetti.

MARTIE OK.

GIADA Or, which is sort of like a lemon alfredo. Or it's a baked rigatoni with béchamel.

MARTIE Ohh.

GIADA Béchamel, is like a cream sauce, you know?

MARTIE Yes.

GIADA So they're both pretty creamy and cheesy. One's baked, one's not.

MARTIE Walk me through one of them, really quick.

GIADA OK, so if you know what lemon spaghetti is, basically it's, well, we used to make fresh pasta a lot, obviously.

MARTIE Right.

GIADA So, it's lemon juice, lemon zest, a little bit of heavy cream, if you can have it. So it's definitely not part of this book. And Parmesan cheese. And basil and garlic. And I put all of those ingredients together and I just lightly, lightly, lightly heat them. And then I cook the pasta. I toss the pasta into the skillet that has the sauce, and I put Parmesan cheese on top of the pasta, before, *before* I toss it. And then I start to toss it and use extra pasta water...

MARTIE I was about to say...

GIADA To sort of blend it and bring it together. Yeah, the starches from the pasta water are the secret to really every pasta.

MARTIE You were the first person that I learned that from, watching Food Network many years ago. I'd never seen anybody use pasta water like that. Even when I watched Italian cooking, they never did it. Or if they did, they left it out. But you were the first person that taught me that. And I use that a lot.

GIADA Yeah.

MARTIE It's a — it's a wonderful tool for cooking any kind of pasta.

GIADA Yeah. And it's right there for. It's no added fat, and there's no added ingredient. You had to cook it anyway!

MARTIE Now, how old is Jade, now? I mean, we have watched her literally grow up before our eyes. And I looked at her a minute ago and she was like, I don't know, three feet tall? Now she looks almost as tall as you.

GIADA She's getting close to me, and she will be turning 13 in March. So she is...

MARTIE So you are going to have a teenager.

GIADA Yep. Which is a quite interesting time, in general, and then you throw the pandemic in the mix and it's, uh, you know — girls at that age, they really rely on their friendships.

MARTIE It's true.

GIADA And being around their friends, they get so much energy and just curiosity and everything. They grow so much and learn so much about relationships through their friends, and the inability to be able to go to school because we don't go to school here.

MARTIE Right.

GIADA And thank goodness I could be home to kind of help her through it because it's not been easy.

MARTIE Oh, a hundred percent. So when you and Jade have a girls' night in, what is your go to thing that y'all like to make together?

GIADA Well, Jade really likes to make pizza together. So, a lot of times, during the pandemic, since I couldn't really get pizza dough, I just didn't try to and I had the time, I made my own pizza dough. So we make the pizza dough and then we each make our own pizza and we just get a bunch of toppings.

And Jade likes to explore and sort of try lots of different things. So, sometimes it's chocolate pizza and then sometimes it's sausage and mushrooms and sometimes it's just straight pepperoni and cheese. And then we pop a big bowl of popcorn with chocolate chips in it, half milk, half dark — because I like dark and she likes milk — and then we watch a movie, and that's basically our night together.

MARTIE Giada, do you put the chocolate chips in while you're popping or you put it in after?

GIADA No, no, no. After.

MARTIE OK.

GIADA Mhmm. After.

MARTIE I've never put chocolate chips. I've drizzled some chocolate on popcorn, but never...

GIADA Nope. Put chocolate chips in it. It's a surprise every time. You don't know what you're going to put in your mouth. It's pretty awesome.

MARTIE Oh, it sounds amazing. I just can't believe how big she is. I mean, where did that time go? I know you must be like, what happened?

GIADA Ugh, yes.

MARTIE Well, the good news is, though, that y'all get to do a lot of it — she comes with you a lot of the time.

GIADA She's come with me since she was a baby, which is probably why she's such a great little traveler. She's become a little partner in crime when it comes to that. He loves to be on a plane and she loves to explore and she's super curious, which is really, really fun for me.

MARTIE Me, too.

GIADA Yeah.

MARTIE You have your entertaining show. Of course, I'm Martie with Party. Everybody knows that. And so I wanted to ask you, have you got any thoughts on when we can start getting back together, how we should do it or what we should do or? Give us any of your tips.

GIADA Well, you know...

MARTIE Ina Garten told me she got a heater and put it outside and she has dinner parties for two people with her and Jeffrey outside under the heaters.

GIADA Yeah. Yeah. Well, luckily, I live in California. It's a little bit warmer...

MARTIE Yes.

GIADA Than Ina in the Hamptons, gets a little cold and chilly in the winter.

MARTIE Yeah.

GIADA But, um, we do everything outside, as well. I have these tables that I can basically keep us separated. So, you know, my household, which would be two or three of us, and then my mom — and because my mom came back from Italy and is here now — and my sister, we sort of separated out. And sometimes it's one long table. And other times my mom's been more comfortable if I do a bunch of rounds. So we're all near each other, but we're not on top of each other.

MARTIE Right.

GIADA And I have little bags that a friend of mine makes that she calls happy bags. And I hand them out with little, little shawls and little mittens and warmers for your hands and all that kind of stuff.

MARTIE Oh, nice.

GIADA So everybody's pretty comfortable. But I think outside luckily in California, we can do that year-round and it's not too complicated.

MARTIE So for those of us with our bucket list, our Italy bucket list, where should we go first — if we've never been — where should we go first?

GIADA If you've never been, Rome. You must go to Rome first. Rome has history that is insane and that I think you should see. Uh, the Colosseum. All the unbelievable, impressive, history and culture is in Rome. It's the center of Italy.

And then secondly, I mean, I know most people will say Florence. But to me, Naples and the Amalfi Coast. There is nothing like it in the world.

MARTIE So back really quick, back to, uh, the book for a second, *Eat Better, Feel Better*, what is the number one thing we absolutely — if we had to pick one thing that could make a big difference in our diet — what's the one thing we should leave out?

GIADA OK, well, this is all saying that you don't have any kind of chronic illness first of all.

MARTIE Right, right. Right.

GIADA I would say take out sugar.

MARTIE Yeah.

GIADA In as many different forms as you can. It's a giant cause of inflammation in people's bodies. And it comes, unfortunately, in many, many, many different forms that you don't even realize. So...

MARTIE True.

GIADA Secondly, I would say, if you can, stop eating packaged foods as much as possible.

MARTIE True, true. We all need to do that.

GIADA Even if it's chips, make them yourself.

MARTIE Yeah. They're not that hard.

GIADA You can make, you can make chips. You can do all that stuff, and start with one meal or one day at a time.

MARTIE Right.

GIADA Now if you have them three times a day or two times a day with meals, start with like one meal not having it.

MARTIE Right.

GIADA And then go to two and then maybe go to a whole day and then — but slowly. Things should be done slowly.

MARTIE One thing that I'm going to do after reading the book is the orange vegetables. Like, I love carrots and sometimes I'll have like...

GIADA And Butternut squash.

MARTIE Squash.

GIADA Sweet potatoes.

MARTIE Yeah, I didn't know the orange veg was so good for you.

GIADA Yeah, orange vegetables are phenomenal. It's funny because I was talking to somebody else, they said the same thing. They're like, "The orange vegetables, who knew?" Like, well, it's the color of the rainbow, as much as possible.

MARTIE Well I love your cheat sheet in the book: leafy greens, two times a day. I'm going to try to stick to this because I'm guilty just like everybody else, even though I'm cooking more at home now that I am home more.

GIADA Yeah.

MARTIE But, I mean, I don't think any of it's that hard to do.

GIADA And probably, you know, most of it, Martie.

MARTIE Yes.

GIADA Everybody probably knows most of it. It's just a reminder, that's all.

MARTIE Yeah. And it's wonderful to see it all in kind of written in one place. And like I said earlier, it's great to know that even people that you see on television struggle with the same things that the rest of us struggle with, you know?

GIADA We all struggle with the same things. We're all built the same in that sense. So nobody gets away with it, especially as they get older.

MARTIE Well, I am very excited for the new book. I am so tickled that you had time to come on and share a little bit about it and your life with us. Giada, you have been a joy to talk to.

GIADA Aww.

MARTIE And I really appreciate you spending time with our Allrecipes family here on Homemade.

GIADA Thanks for having me, Martie. It's lovely to talk to you again.

MARTIE Giada's new book is titled *Eat Better, Feel Better: My Recipes for Wellness and Healing Inside and Out*, which you can find at giadzy.com: G-I-A-D-Z-Y dot com, or wherever you buy books. You can also catch her with Bobby Flay on their new series, "Bobby and Giada In Italy," now streaming on Discovery Plus.

Coming up on the next episode of Homemade, I'll be joined by my good friend and former co-host of The Chew, Iron Chef Michael Symon.

MICHAEL If you think of kielbasa, kielbasa's a smoked sausage, and there's a lot of smoking that goes on in those Eastern European cultures. And, you know, those are always served with mustard. So, it made a lot of sense to me to feature the house-fermented sauerkrauts. I think they play really well with barbeque, especially if you're doing barbeque in Cleveland. I mean, I love Texas barbeque and I love all those different styles of barbeque, but I wanted to do a barbeque that really represented how I grew up.

MARTIE Please subscribe to the podcast right now so you don't miss it. And we'd love your feedback. If you could rate this podcast and leave us a review. I'd really appreciate it.

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Homemade is produced by Allrecipes with Digital Content Director Jason Burnett. Thanks to our Pod People production team: Rachael King, Matt Sav, Danielle Roth, Jim Hanke, Maya Kroth, and Erica Huang.

I'm Martie Duncan, and this is Homemade.