

# COOKING SCHOOL

## With Mamma Agata, Gennaro, And Chiara In Ravello On The Amalfi Coast



**Breaking news! The treasure at the end of the rainbow has finally been discovered! You may ask yourself, where and what is it? Of all places in the world it could have been hiding, it is in the village of Ravello on the Amalfi Coast, situated high on a cliff top 1000 feet above the Mediterranean Sea. It is Mamma Agata's Cooking and Wine School, and yes, it is a delicious dream come true ... read along and be sure to absorb all of the wonderful aromas, colors, and flavors along the way.**

When you put your heart and soul into all that you cook, the result is much more than food — it is the nourishment of life itself. The love and connection of the family is the foremost ingredient in everything I make.

I was born into a large Italian family of seven brothers and sisters in the coastal village of Ravello, Italy. As with many families, it was sometimes difficult to make ends meet. Our family was lucky to own a small plot of land, a cow, a few chickens, and some rabbits. However, times were rough. I learned that in order to survive, I must work hard and remain strong. It was these trying times that shaped me into the person I am today.

As a child, I learned to appreciate very basic values in life. I had a deep respect for the land and farm animals, understanding they yielded nutritious vegetables, fresh milk, and eggs for their family. In modern times, we think

of these things as being so simple, yet they are important elements in our daily lives and existence and certainly not to be taken for granted. This is my “modo di vivere,” which means “way of life” in Italian. I still prepare every meal for my family with the same special care that is taken when preparing food for a wedding or private dinner on our terrace and, of course, for our beloved cooking school!

I began cooking for my family at 8 years of age. My mother, grandmother, and aunts all taught me their cherished family recipes as well as tips and secrets of food preparation. My elders gave me inner strength, and I learned to never give up, which is deeply rooted within my soul. My chores included collecting herbs from the mountains and tending to their garden. Once a month we baked breads, and any leftovers were always generously shared with the less fortunate townspeople.











As fortune would have it, I began writing a journal and recorded all of my family recipes as an adolescent — always having a great desire to learn (especially anything to do with cooking). I experimented on my own, discovering how every herb and flavor affected each recipe. Many local fishermen shared with me their fish stories and personal recipes for preparing the species of fish native to the Amalfi Coast. For a girl of such a young age, I was lucky to already have a profound knowledge of regional cuisine.

All of the tips I absorbed proved to be helpful in launching my cooking career when I was only 13 years old. It was something I did on my own to assist my parents in providing the necessities for our family. As fate would have it, my first employer was American heiress Ms. Chinigo, who liked my cooking so much she hired me to be her private chef to create cuisine for all of her most extravagant parties and famous guests.

It wasn't long before I knew many people in the A-list crowd — Hollywood actors, famous artists, and powerful politicians who were all friends of Ms. Chinigo. Humphrey Bogart especially loved my lemon cake. Fred Astaire, Jacqueline Kennedy, Richard Burton, Liz Taylor, Federico Fellini, Marcello Mastroianni, and Pierce Brosnan, along with countless others, have all delighted in my lovingly prepared meals.

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**“Cook with love  
and passion!”**  
— Mamma Agata

Today my simple and genuine passion for life, deliciously prepared foods, and wonderful wines all play an integral part in the world we created and hope to share with you here in Ravello at our Hidden Treasure for many years to come. Gennaro, my son-in-law, has always shared my passion for cooking, so he cooks side-by-side with me every day now. And one day, he will be the perfect cooking instructor, carrying on the family tradition so that many more future generations will continue to happily enjoy our cooking school, delicious food, wine, and loving and nourishing lifestyle.

Our family is honored to be featured in this, the Premier Issue of **WHERE WOMEN COOK**, and encourage you to purchase our very first cookbook, *Mamma Agata's Simple and Genuine Italian Family Recipes*. We hope you will enjoy reading about our lives and share our passion for food, intense love of life, and family traditions, as well as our respect our culture and our cuisine. We welcome you to come to our cooking school with open arms.





# Mamma Agata's FRESH CHERRY TOMATO SAUCE



- 2 cloves fresh garlic, sliced
- 3 TB. extra virgin olive oil
- 1lb. of cherry or Roma tomatoes (can also be ½ of each)\*
- 2 pinches of sea salt
- 2 TB fresh basil
- 2 pinches of dried oregano

1. Thinly slice the garlic. Add the olive oil and garlic to a large saucepan at the same time. Note: do not heat the oil first, then add the garlic to the pan. Rather, place the ingredients into the pan at room temperature and then heat the pan.
2. Chop the cherry tomatoes in half (or quarters if they are large or you are using Roma tomatoes).
3. Add the chopped tomatoes, sea salt, and fresh basil to the pan with the oil and garlic. Cover the pan and cook over medium heat for 5 minutes. Add the oregano.
4. Cook your favorite pasta al dente, drain the pasta, and add it to the sauce. You have to marry the ingredients before serving. Serve this dish hot with a drizzle of extra virgin olive oil. This beautiful sauce can also be used to garnish Pizza!

## MAMMA AGATA'S SECRET:

*The Roma tomatoes used to make this sauce should be vine-ripened so they are sweet. Sweet tomatoes are the key ingredient in many Italian dishes. However, if the tomatoes are not ripe and sweet, it is okay to add a spoonful of sugar to sweeten the tomato sauce.*

WHERE WOMEN COOK would like to thank Mamma Agata for her involvement in our Premier Issue. To learn more about her, visit [mammaagata.com](http://mammaagata.com) or e-mail [info@mammaagata.com](mailto:info@mammaagata.com).

This is told from the perspective of Mamma Agata, but was dictated to her daughter Chiara, as Mamma Agata does not speak English.

