



# LA BELLA GIADA

THE FOOD NETWORK'S ITALIAN-BORN SENSATION DRAWS ON FAMILY TRADITIONS TO BUILD LEGACY by JOSHUA LURIE

Photography by JACK GUY Hair by CAMPBELL MCCAULEY WITH SOLO ARTISTS  
Makeup by MONIKA BLUNDER WITH THE WALL GROUP Styling by TARA SWENNEN WITH THE WALL GROUP

Giada De Laurentiis is a native Roman who was initially inspired by after-school visits to her grandfather's Italian market in Beverly Hills, DDL Food Show, which he owned more than 20 years ago. She drew on her family's love of food, attending Le Cordon Bleu in Paris, where she immersed herself in the city's legendary pastry culture.

Back in L.A., De Laurentiis worked for Spago pastry chef Sherry Yard before starting own catering company — GDL Foods. Food Network discovered her in the pages of *Food & Wine* magazine, where she documented a De Laurentiis dinner party. They asked her to film an off-air cooking segment to see if she was comfortable being on camera, so she prepared a childhood favorite — baked pasta with

béchamel. This inspired the hit show *Everyday Italian*. She's gone on to film her current show, *Giada at Home*, and *Giada's Weekend Getaways* for the network, while writing cookbooks and being a contributing correspondent on the *TODAY* show. With undeniable good looks and girl-next-door appeal, Italy's hottest export has cooked her way into America's heart.

We met in the lounge at Santa Monica's Casa del Mar hotel. De Laurentiis showed up dressed in black and sipped a cappuccino while discussing her background and approach to food as we overlooked runners and crashing waves on a misty Southern California afternoon.

“MY HUSBAND LOVES MY FARFALLE WITH TURKEY SAUSAGE, MUSHROOMS AND PEAS. THAT’S ONE OF THE BASICS.”

**944:** How did your family influence your love of food?

**GIADA DE LAURENTIIS:** Even though we lived in the states, we kept our traditions. My grandfather comes from a large family in Naples, and his parents had a pasta factory after World War II, so he would go door to door and sell his parents’ pasta and sauces. He was very passionate about Italian food, and especially Neapolitan food.

**944:** Who first taught you to cook?

**GDL:** It was a combination of my grandfather, my mom and my aunt...my mom wasn’t an avid cook, so she’d make things that were healthy but also very quick. I learned that from her. My aunt loves to cook the way I love to cook. She loves to explore new ingredients and just really have a good time in the kitchen. She and I would bounce ideas and recipes off of each other... My grandfather was very much instructional. Whatever he says, you do it his way and the recipes are always best made his way. He’s very passionate about the way he cooks.

**944:** Do you have a first kitchen memory?

**GDL:** Making pizza with my family. We believe that Neapolitan pizza is the best pizza in the world, so my grandfather was making pizza dough and we used to make pizza as kids. He’d roll it up and each grandchild would get to make their own pizza. It was like a pizza party.

**944:** If Food Network didn’t discover you, what would you be doing to fill your days?

**GDL:** I think that I would be working in politics. I’m really fascinated by what goes on in D.C. Running a chain of hotels was another idea I had. I’d like to be a GM at a hotel chain, a luxury hotel chain, probably.

**944:** What sets your shows apart from other shows on Food Network?

**GDL:** Well, I’m really the only one who does a lot of Italian food. Mario Batali used to do a lot, but now he’s no longer on Food Network. I carry a lot of my heritage with my family. There’s a lot of family oriented around my show, lots of Italian food that really nobody else does the way I do. Also, I give a California spin to everything I do. That’s a little different because most of the chefs are based in New York and have an East Coast mentality ... And I try to be stylistic. I really like clean modern presentation, even with the way the kitchen is set up.

**944:** How does knowing your audience affect your approach?

**GDL:** To be successful, you have to know your audience and

don’t kid yourself about who’s watching your show. It’s not to say that people in the big cities don’t watch — they do — but most of the people who watch my shows are moms who need to get dinner on the table quickly, who want to make something that makes their kids happy, and it’s going to be healthy for them. They have a thirst for knowledge; they want to do new things with ingredients they already know. I try to gear my recipes to about eight ingredients or less [so that] when they read the recipe ... they don’t get overwhelmed. I try to use ingredients that are readily available in most of the country. If they can’t find it, I give them a substitution. I also try to make the recipe so it doesn’t cost a fortune.

**944:** What are some ways that you go about creating or discovering new recipes?

**GDL:** Part of it’s my family. Part of it’s travel. Part of it is friends. Part of it is reading, and the other part is eating out and being inspired by other chefs.

**944:** How do you decide where to travel for your *Weekend Getaways* show?

**GDL:** Food is a big part of why I go where I go. If there isn’t a great food scene, chances are I won’t spend a lot of time there, or I won’t go there at all ... They also had to have a lot to offer activity-wise, where you wouldn’t just go to eat.

**944:** What are some places that you haven’t been to that you’d like to explore?

**GDL:** I’m dying to go to Asia. Japan. China, and Southeast Asia.

**944:** That’s longer than a weekend getaway.

**GDL:** That’s probably why I haven’t been yet.

**944:** What’s your favorite part of the career?

**GDL:** You’re kind of in a bubble when you’re shooting, so you don’t get out and actually meet people. It’s fun to go on book tours to meet people. It’s also fun to do these festivals because, again, you’re coming face to face with people. I do demos for 3, 4, 500 people and they get to ask the questions they never get to ask when they watch my show.

**944:** What are some secrets to maintaining such a high energy level given all of your commitments?

**GDL:** Working out, which I do to just keep my system running properly. Eating well. I don’t eat a lot of big meals. I eat a lot of small meals to keep my energy up, because when I sit down to have a very large meal and you’re done eating, your energy just tanks. I also try to get some sleep, as much as I can.



**944:** What are a couple go-to dishes that you make repeatedly at home?

**GDL:** My husband loves my farfalle with turkey sausage, mushrooms and peas. That's one of the basics. Another one is my lemon spaghetti, which I've made for years because you can basically use it as a side with steak, fish or chicken.

**944:** Would you ever consider opening a restaurant?

**GDL:** I'm considering it, yeah. For a long time I thought, would I do it in LA or would I do it in New York? Definitely I'd do it in LA. For me it's about finding the right location and the right space ... I don't have a space yet, but I am definitely thinking about it.

944.COM/

GO BEHIND THE SCENES WITH MALIN AT  
WWW.944.COM/GIADA

Paule Ka dress, Lia Sophia earrings