

# FAMILY RECIPES

Great Dishes From Local Chefs | By Christina Elston

## A Mama and her Pasta

**W**hen she'd used the last of the homemade lasagna and ravioli from her freezer, Leah Ferrazzani faced a dilemma. The busy food writer had been making her own pasta once or twice a week. Now, she was also a new mom. "All of a sudden, that time was gone," Ferrazzani says.

She wanted her family's food to be organic and locally made whenever possible, but wasn't finding options in the pasta aisle at the grocery store. When she researched why most top-shelf pastas are imported from Italy, she discovered that it wasn't because of the flour. "We export about half the durum wheat we grow in the U.S. to Italy for them to make into pasta and send back to us," says Ferrazzani.

She decided the difference in quality was a matter of craft and, just after her second child was born, turned away from the path where her master's degree in journalism from the University of Oregon had led her and made learning the crafting of pasta her mission. "I was getting tired of telling other people's stories, and I wanted to do something on my own," she says.

That something turned out to be Semolina Artisanal Pasta. Ferrazzani launched the business in 2014 out of her home kitchen, and now has a small shop in Pasadena. She sells small-batch pasta made on site from semolina flour milled from organic U.S.-grown durum wheat. You can buy her dried pastas online and at high-end grocers and specialty food stores around Southern California and beyond. It is also served at area restaurants, including the famed Osteria Mozza run by Nancy Silverton, Hippo in Highland Park and Love + Salt in Manhattan Beach.

Ferrazzani's pasta is different from the "industrial" brands you'll find at the supermarket. "Their goal is to make as

much pasta as they can as fast as they can for as cheap as they can," she explains. This means much of it is made using finely ground flour instead of robust 100-percent semolina, extruding through Teflon-coated dies and drying at heat high enough to toast the flavor out of the grain. The result is pasta that is mushy and bland when cooked, with a slick texture. "That slickness means that all of your sauce slides off your pasta and ends up in a puddle at the bottom of your bowl," Ferrazzani says.

Semolina pasta is made from all-semolina flour, extruded through bronze dies and dried in 20 hours rather than four. It has a nice chew, a sauce-grabbing roughness to the surface and lets the flavor of the grain shine. "Your kids' favorite buttered noodles will actually taste like something," says Ferrazzani, whose children are now 6 and 7.

In addition to pasta, her tiny shop sells delightful sundries such as fennel pollen (trust me, you need some), kosher sea salt from Oregon and whole tomatoes canned in California. And these aren't the only reasons to visit if you're in the neighborhood.



PHOTOS COURTESY SEMOLINA ARTISANAL PASTA

Leah Ferrazzani at work in her pasta shop.

Ferrazzani often sends visitors home with recipe cards and is always ready with advice.

"I love talking to people about cooking, particularly parents," she says. "Because as somebody who cooked a ton and was really ambitious before I had kids, I have learned how much harder it is to cook once you have a family. A lot of the recipes that I hold in my head are really simple and approachable. And they're all recipes from a home cook. When I think about food, I think about what regular people can put on the plate."

This recipe, which comes from her father-in-law, is a great example. If you've planted a home garden, it will give you something to do with your bumper crop of zucchini. And despite the fact that it's soup, it is a great summer dish. "I love how simple and pure all the flavors in it are, and that it's really easy to make," Ferrazzani says.

Adjust the seasoning to your taste but do use plenty of salt. "Zucchini is a relatively bland vegetable," Ferrazzani says. "If you don't turn up its volume, it will taste like nothing."

Think of this as summer comfort food. "In my husband's family," says Ferrazzani, "it's usually zucchini soup and a grilled cheese sandwich."





## Ferrazzani Family Zucchini Soup

Serves 4 adults

3 medium zucchini, cut into ½-inch cubes

1 bunch basil, stemmed and roughly chopped (about one cup)

1 tablespoon extra-virgin olive oil

4-6 tablespoons kosher salt, plus more to taste

8 ounces Semolina Artisanal Pasta Ditalini

Bring 6 cups of water to boil in a large, heavy-bottomed pot. Add zucchini, basil, olive oil and salt and reduce to a simmer. Cook until the zucchini is tender. Check the seasoning of the broth and add more salt if necessary. (Remember the pasta will absorb some of the salt, too).

Add pasta and cook until al dente. (If you are using Semolina's pasta, this will take just 5-6 minutes.) Serve! ♦

Valley Village • Agoura Hills

SUMMER 2019

**ART ACADEMY**  
PROVING KIDS CAN DO ANYTHING!



For Kids, Youths and Teens 5-17

Art, Cooking, Global Gourmet, Musical Theatre,  
Dance, Silly Science, Ceramics, Cartooning,  
Magic, Tech, Crafts, Woodworking,  
Bakers Delight, Photography, & more!

For more information

[www.summerartacademy.com](http://www.summerartacademy.com)  
(818) 386-1108

## PRIME TIME SPORTS CAMP

Boys & Girls  
Ages 4-14  
Sports • Games  
Special Events  
Credentialed Staff  
Daily Sports Training

**PRIME  
TIME  
SPORTS CAMP**

June 10 - August 16

3 Exciting Locations  
West Los Angeles  
Santa Monica at XRDS  
Silverlake



Our  
29th  
Year!

Art/Sports Combo and  
Art/Tech Combo Specialty Camps

**(310) 838-7872**

[www.primetimesportscamp.com](http://www.primetimesportscamp.com)