

Lucio's Ligurian Kitchen

Like the fascination savvy diners have with regional, as distinct from generic, Italian restaurants, this beautifully produced hardback delights with its disciplined focus just on the food of Liguria. It's the region Lucio Galletto left for Australia (for love, actually) 25 years ago but revisits regularly, seeking inspiration for dishes to serve at his eponymous Sydney restaurant.

In the opening chapter David Dale describes his arduous journey (not!), with Galletto and photographer Paul Green, along the Ligurian coastline including not only tales of what they ate and where they stayed but the characters they met and those who had visited in times past. The chapter is broken into sections on each town visited and is a great read, each part including a useful 'try to visit' paragraph with addresses and websites for anyone lucky enough to do the same trip.

Then it's over to Lucio, the region's key ingredients, best wines and the recipes. There's a mix of regional classics and new ideas using traditional ingredients as well as fascinating insights into the Ligurian character and way of life. The opening chapter deals with finger food (stuzzichini), snacks that were originally developed to be taken aboard fishing boats or into the fields by workers. It opens with this: "By starting this book with what the French might call canapés, we wouldn't want to give the impression that Ligurians are the sort of people who stand around at cocktail parties: they are much too hardworking and sensible for that."

Distinguishing features are that there's lots of seafood (the cuttlefish with peas is great), not surprising given the region's long coastline, and a number of pies and stuffed pasta dishes, which traditionally made good use of leftovers (described as "the Ligurian habit of stuffing stuff inside other stuff"). There's a good mix of simple and more challenging dishes, which makes this a safe choice for cooks of all skill levels. And the lavish photography manages to excite the tastebuds as well as arouse any dozing travel bugs, testament to Paul Green's equal talents with food and travel subjects.

Review by [Stephanie Clifford-Smith](#), 14 Jan 2009

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