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At home with Luca Ciano

LEANNE RILEY IS DEVOTED TO HEALTHY LIVING. HERE SHE EXPLAINS HOW SHE FOLLOWS A NUTRITIOUS DIET TO KEEP IN TOP SHAPE.

Luca Ciano is Casa Barilla's award-winning executive chef. He teaches Barilla's Italian Master Classes in Annandale and has worked in famous Michelin-star restaurants such as Il Luogo di Aimo e Nadia in Milan, London's Millennium Gloucester Hotel and Bermuda's Relais and Chateaux.

What is your favorite dish to cook?

It has to be pasta because of the different shapes, textures, heritage, versatilities and it's good all year round.

What ingredient is always in your pantry or fridge?

Italian high quality extra virgin olive oil.

Describe your style of cooking in 3 words:

Simple, seasonal, fresh.

What international cuisines influence your cooking?

Mainly French and Asian but I love to get inspired by any different style or techniques from any corner of the world. If I don't know it I want to learn it!

How did you learn to cook?

For fun at the age of 10 with my mum and grandma at home and then for real at the age of 15 when I started working in a restaurant.

Tell us a bit about the Italian master classes you teach?

What can people expect from the cooking classes?

I try my hardest to keep it as simple as I can and the main aim is to spread knowledge about authentic Italian cuisine. Italian food, away from Italy has been distorted for so long and I feel it's my duty to help fix that. I have the privilege of working for Barilla, which has been representing Italian authenticity through their products worldwide for over a century, so it makes it really easy for me to achieve this. People don't come to see how good I am, but they come to learn simple day-to-day recipes that can be replicated at home for family and friends.

■ Words – Nancy Merlo



Luca's favourite: Warm Orecchiette Pasta Salad

- 500g Orecchiette
- 4 tbs extra virgin olive oil
- Teaspoon of dried chillies
- Bunch basil leaves
- 1 spring onion, thinly sliced
- 2 punnet cherry tomatoes, quartered
- 1 celery stick, thinly sliced
- 2 handfuls rocket
- 100g salted ricotta, grated
- Extra virgin olive oil, to serve
- Salt and pepper
- Rock salt, for cooking water

Bring 5 litres of water to the boil in a large pot.

Add rock salt (7 grams per litre of water). Drop in orecchiette and stir.

Cook pasta till "al dente". Meanwhile, in a bowl, place olive oil, basil, spring onion, chilli, cherry tomatoes, celery and season to taste.

Once the pasta is cooked, drain and toss into the bowl with the vegetable mixture. Allow the pasta to absorb all juices.

Once it reaches room temperature, add the grated salted ricotta and rocket and stir well to combine.

Drizzle of extra virgin olive oil to taste and serve immediately.

Serves 6. TIP: prepare the vegetable infusions hours earlier to intensify flavours.

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