

Playing Restaurant

People often ask if I have always been a cook. The answer is yes and no. My professional life in the kitchen did not begin until I was forty, but the signs were there long before.

I have a vivid memory from when I was seven or eight. Whenever my parents stepped out for a while and my younger brother and I would be on our own, the house transformed. The moment we heard the front door close, I would storm the pantry. Not because we were hungry, but because I had a restaurant to run. I was the chef, he was the guest, and our living room was the dining hall. To this day, I am baffled our parents never noticed the smell of sizzling butter and eggs. The aroma must have been evident, yet they never said a word.



stories from an Italian Kitchen

Decades later, living in Rotterdam, that childhood urge resurfaced. I saw a call for *Restaurant for a Day*: a project that turns private homes into pop-up eateries for a night. I did not hesitate for a moment. Before I knew it, I was hosting fourteen strangers, pushing out 4-course southern Italian dinners from a kitchen clearly never designed for such chaos.

Those dinners were great fun, but I knew I was lacking the technical know-how. I needed to step up my game. First on the agenda was to master the art of fresh pasta. That pursuit brought me to Bologna, where I arrived as a student and ultimately stayed as a teacher.

Full Circle

2020 Marked the opening of Pasta Lab, an artisanal fresh pasta shop that doubles as a laboratory for pasta workshops. In my free time, I host intimate Chef's Table dinners in my Bolognese home. From the pantry raids of my childhood to building a career in the culinary capital of Italy, you might call that a full circle.