

CELEBRITY CHEF FOR ORGANIC AND RUSTIC

An Italian organic cookbook, the first in a series to be released by one of the world's most renowned authentic cuisine chefs is coming to a good bookstore near you soon. Holly Vyner investigates.

By **HOLLY VYNER**

Authentic Italian chef, Mirko Grillini, is bringing modern cuisine up to date using recipes based on cooking methods hundreds of years old from Italy. With his charisma and passion for food he has people re-thinking food and getting back to slow-cooked, rustic style cuisine. Not only this, but his passion extends to use of certified organic ingredients and he is committed to helping the organic industry.

As a twenty-two year old, Mirko arrived in Australia from Bologna, Italy. One of his first discoveries was that "Italian cuisine" in Australia was possibly the worst eating experience imaginable! Recognising that something must be done immediately, he began a business making authentic Italian pasta. This was a huge success and two years later demand had grown to making 60-70 kilos of hand rolled pasta per week! He then went onto holding classes through restaurants teaching his method for creating pasta.

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EDUCATION

It was apparent to Mirko however, that there was a need for further education so that people appreciated and "cottoned on" to the full benefit of food.

Through TV program: The Food Lovers' Guide to Australia on SBS, cooking schools, TAFE teaching and other events, Mirko teaches a philosophy that has been forgotten especially in major cities and in Western culture, that there is a love and energy in food which has been cooked with an appreciation for the flavour and nutritional value of its ingredients. To bring back this lost philosophy, he has gone back to regional Italy where cooking traditions from 100's of years ago continue as they always have!



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Mirko maintains that food cooked too quickly is easily burned and can be toxic, (for example garlic). Also, food, when overcooked, loses much of its nutritional value. To avoid this, Italian rustic cuisine uses fresh produce and is slow-cooked to retain the flavour and nutritional properties of the ingredients. There is also an emphasis on the use of fresh herbs for enhancing flavour and for their varied beneficial properties. Mirko says "The meals are solid yet lean and don't take the body six days to digest. It is eating well. People eating this way don't tend to suffer from obesity or other modern food-related hang-ups."

Mirko believes that through his teaching he is making a difference. He says "There needs to be more emphasis on education and respect for ingredients rather than just teaching students how to hold a knife."

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By teaching the beneficial properties and nutritional value of ingredients and where they come from, he encourages students to transform their thinking. For Mirko, achieving to inspire one student from a whole class is worth the effort.

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ORGANIC

Organic food is a natural choice for Mirko. His belief is that from healthy soil comes healthy produce, which is more nutritious and has a better flavour than that of conventional farming methods. Currently he is co-publishing a cookbook with the BFA and business partner Alex Favali, (founder of international consulting agency puntoitalia): Mirko Grillini's Organic 'Italy'. It combines his recipes for rustic Italian cuisine with quality photography and education on organic. If you would like to be inspired with awesome rustic flavours and feel the energy of nutrients back in your cooking, look out for 'Italy' which will be released in major book chains in March 2005!

Looking for exposure?**Wish to feature in an organic cookbook?**

Mirko Grillini's Organic 'Italy' will be the first of a series of organic cookbooks to be released in 2005.

12 organic businesses are needed to feature in each of the cookbooks to follow:

- 'France'
- 'Spain'

It is first-in-first-served and the value for money for the marketing potential is rare, therefore please be quick to apply!

Enquiries to media@bfa.com.au or ph. 07 3350 5716 BFA Head Office.

On top of this Mirko is dedicated to further research of organics. He is supporting a student exchange research program facilitated by Alex Favali of agency puntoitalia, and the Biological Farmers of Australia (BFA)]. Over 2005, BFA will host students from Italy for a period of three to four months to study and conduct a comparative research on the different methods of organic farming and the organic industry in Italy and Australia. Australian students will travel to Italy to conduct similar researches. According to the Organic Annual Report 2004, Australia has the largest land area under organic management in the world and Italy the third largest, despite its comparatively much smaller land mass.

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TIPS FROM THE CHEF

In our busy world where thirty minutes saved in cooking is thirty minutes longer at the computer, here are a couple of suggestions from Mirko for really appreciating what you are eating.

- o Meal times should not be thought of as time to fill up but an experience and time taken to enjoy it. Unfortunately family luncheons are rare these days and meals are often eaten on the run.
- o With three fresh ingredients, good quality pasta, and a small amount of cooking skill, making a good meal is often less work and money than making a break down the road for fast food.
- o Keeping a few pots of herbs for using in cooking can mean improvement in overall health and greatly enhance flavour.
- o Buying organic wherever possible also will benefit your health and is a basis for healthy thinking.
- o Eat well; live well.