

20 Amici, 40 Ricette: Friends and Food from the Heart of Chianti

John Bersani

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20 Amici, 40 Ricette is American entrepreneur John Bersani's inviting culinary guide to Italy's Chianti region.

On his first visit to Tuscany, Bersani was seduced by its landscape, art, people, and food. He later bought a home in the village of Gaiole-in-Chianti, tucked into the mountainous center of the region. He fell further in love with the "beautiful, crazy, and, at times frustrating place." Here, he makes a personal introduction to the traditional foodways of the Chianti Classico wine appellation.

The book begins by outlining pantry essentials, like the best quality tomatoes, olive oil, cheeses, and the dried borlotti and cannellini beans that feature in many robust and budget-conscious traditional dishes. Twenty Chiantigiani friends, many involved in the restaurant and wine trade, present their food philosophies and toothsome recipes, seasoned with Bersani's wine recommendations, menus, travel advice, and asides about proper kitchen techniques. It's a satisfying melange of storytelling, travel writing, and culinary history, with the effect of being immersed in a curated tour of Bersani's adopted village. Dreamy color photographs throughout evoke even more of the unique sense of place and its residents.

The lively contributors include fungi fanatic Luciano, who, while not divulging his favorite foraging spots, imparts his expert mushroom cooking advice and favorite pasta recipe. Actor and waiter Saverio offers up a hearty ribolitta soup recipe laden with black kale and beans, while other friends dole out stories and treasured family recipes from Chianti and more far-flung hometowns, ranging from Sardinia to Argentina and Texas. A finale of Bersani's own well-honed recipes, including Grilled Chicken Wings, Sauteed Swiss Chard and Broccoli Rabe, and Pork Chops with Vinegar Peppers demonstrates his passion for "drawing flavors out of simple ingredients."

Seductive and illuminating, *20 Amici, 40 Ricette* is a culinary introduction to the delicious life at the heart of the Chianti region.

RACHEL JAGARESKI (March / April 2025)

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