

Giulia Melucci Talks 'I Loved, I Lost, I Made Spaghetti'



By Stacey Small

Lovers, losers, and a whole lot of linguine are at the forefront of Giulia Melucci's new memoir, *I Loved, I Lost, I Made Spaghetti*. Whether a kindhearted alcoholic, a novelist with a Peter Pan Complex (there were two!), or the classic commitment-fearing Manhattanite, Giulia has been courted by, cried over, and has cooked for them all. But this woman's tale is far from woeful. After each romantic letdown, she recovers by indulging herself in the comforting concoction of a good cry and a bowl of pastina. Recipe—along with a heap of other delectable dishes—included. Melucci's *I Loved, I Lost, I Made Spaghetti* is a personable, at times laugh out loud adventure of a strong woman who knows the importance of nourishing her stomach, and even her soul, no matter how many times her romantic flames fizzle faster than what's cooking on the stove.

What is the number one thing you should do to attract the right partner?

Cupid's Advice:

Feel like you're looking for love in all the wrong places? Unhappy with your lack of amorous adventures? When it comes to finding that special someone, you need to begin the search closer to home: with yourself. Sure, you've heard it before, but it's true. The first step to setting yourself up for a

successful relationship is learning to lead by example. Enjoy your presence, respect yourself, indulge every now and then; your confidence may very well attract someone looking to treat you in a similar fashion.

Are there similarities between your creative processes of cooking and writing? How does one influence the other?

Well, cooking is a lot easier than writing, but I suppose both of them are about making something palatable out of disparate elements. With *I Loved, I Lost, I Made Spaghetti* I tried to combine humor, sadness, and food, to bring something entertaining and nourishing to my readers. Cooking is another way of expressing how you'd like life to taste. I try to keep it simple, because life is hard enough.

Were there ever any instances where the guy you were dating took advantage of your culinary talents?

Did you ever date someone who made you not want to cook, either for him or yourself? Every guy makes me want to cook, until he doesn't anymore. I cooked as a way to get people to love me, but also because I just really love to cook and I will do it for anyone who wants to eat with me. But yes, on occasion resentment built up around cooking in my relationships when it became clear that nothing, not even my most perfect Bolognese sauce, was going to inspire Ethan, or Lachlan, or whomever else to love me. That's my fault, not theirs. It is silly to think that cooking could change the way someone feels. I wish it could but it can't. It can't change me and it can't change them. Food is not as powerful as I hoped it would be.

You mention that your idea of comfort food never involves a pint of Häagen-Dazs. What are some of your favorite pick-me-up treats?

I don't use food to pick me up when I'm sad. Cake and ice cream are for celebrations, not pity parties. When I'm down I

eat nourishing food; a bowl of pasta with broccoli and garlic or a grilled salmon fillet with a side of sauteed spinach. Just something good to keep me going.

Having spent the majority of your life in Brooklyn, what restaurants have given you the most inspiration for your cooking?

I'm inspired by Anna Klinger's wonderful cooking at Al Di La in Park Slope. Her malfatti—lovely lumps of swiss chard held together by a bit of flour and sauced with brown butter and sage—is one of the most perfect dishes I can think of. But mostly I'm inspired by the cooking my mother did for our family when I was growing up in Bay Ridge. One of her typical dishes was a bowl of penne topped with tomatoes and fresh basil, with the delicious surprise of a few slices of fried eggplant hiding underneath. That recipe's in the book.

Your book is filled with charm and humor, but are there any foods or recipes you now avoid because they rekindle negative memories?

No, everything I ever cooked belongs to me and me alone. They are my creations and no bad memory can spoil that. It's one of the good things I got out of my failed relationships; I learned to be a better cook. I'm happy for every dish in my arsenal, no matter who might have been waiting at the table while I was creating it.

In your interview with The New York Times, you agree that this book is like a "Sex and the City" with wittily-titled recipes, but that it's not all about going to the hottest nightlife and dining spots. What are some 'dos and don'ts' for other single city ladies looking for romance?

Don't do anything you don't feel like doing. Don't go out if you're not in the mood just because you feel you have to because you might meet someone. Don't go on a date with someone if the idea of it makes you miserable. Do trust the

universe's timing, it is spot on. Thing is, you're never going to meet the right person until you are ready to meet him. The moment you are ready, he'll be there. You may think you are ready when you're not. I know I did.