

The Zest Bonus: Where Are They Now? Chef Giuliano Hazan on Italian Cooking
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Dalia: [00:00:00] I'm Dalia Colon, and this is The Zest. Citrus, seafood, Spanish flavor, and southern charm. The Zest celebrates cuisine and community in the Sunshine State. Today, we are catching up with our final Where Are They Now Zest guest of the summer, and yes, I know the summer is past, but isn't it kinda always summer here in Florida?

So we're chatting with Giuliano Hazan. If that name sounds familiar, it's probably because you heard him on The Zest in the past and because you are familiar with his famous mother, the late, great Marcella Hazan. Let's get into it with my colleague, Matthew Peddie.

Matthew: Welcome back to Florida Matters: Live and Local. I'm Matthew Peddie.

Time now to check in with Dalia Colon, host of WUSF's The Zest. This summer, Dalia's been revisiting some past guests on the podcast. Giuliano Hazan is a cookbook author and culinary instructor. He's the only child of the late Marcella Hazan, who's credited with popularizing traditional Italian cuisine [00:01:00] in the United States.

Now, Dalia visited Giuliano at his home in Sarasota back in 2024, and she caught up with him at his kitchen table in June this year. Dalia, welcome back to Florida Matters: Live and Local.

Dalia: Thank you so much.

Matthew: Now, Giuliano Hazan's parents emigrated from Italy to New York City in the 1950s, and back in 2024, you talked with him about his mother, Marcella's, influence on the culinary scene here in the United States.

Let's take a listen.

Giuliano: In early '70s, Italian-American food was predominantly the Italian food that people knew in the States. They didn't know real Italian food like people had in Italy, and that's what my mother brought. And my mother was always somebody who would not compromise. You know, she wouldn't change things and, you know, to please, you know, people who were expecting something different

Matthew: Right, so that's a Giulio- Giuliano Hazan from your conversation in 2024.

Now, did Giuliano Hazan always wanna follow in his mom's [00:02:00] culinary footsteps?

Dalia: He did not. So he grew up obviously watching her cook, and she taught him to cook, but his love was the theater. Hmm. He attended theater school, and it wasn't until Giuliano started helping Marcella at her cooking school in Italy that he fell in love with teaching the art of cooking, and he realized that cooking in front of people is a performance, just like performing in the theater.

Matthew: There's another clip I wanted to play from your 2024 interview with Giuliano, where he talks about school lunch and his mom's cooking.

Giuliano: So I had a little thermos, and my mother would put, uh, maybe, you know, some, uh, some meatballs and peas in it, or a veal stew, or eggplant parmigiana sometimes. And everybody would make fun of me at school, and I told my mother, "You know, I can't do this," you know, "This is terrible."

And so she said, "Well, you know, that's okay. Why don't you try the cafeteria?" Well, that did not last very long. I decided, okay, I would

endure being made [00:03:00] fun of, but at least I would eat well. So I went back to my thermos.

Matthew: Dalia, I'm sure a lot of people can relate to the feeling of being torn between trying to fit in with your peers and the comforts of home, but what does that little vignette tell you about Marcella Hazan's cuisine?

Dalia: It must be amazing because kids want nothing more than to fit in, right, with their peers, but if he's got the thermos of meatballs- Yeah ... he, I bet he was trading those. I could see that- ... being, like, a hot commodity in the cafeteria.

Matthew: Yeah.

Dalia: Yeah, so I mean, she's the grande dame of Italian cooking in the US.

She's no longer with us, but in some ways she's very much with us.

Matthew: Hmm. Now, how has Giuliano then turned cooking into his own career?

Dalia: So he's written five Italian cookbooks of his own. He has a cooking school in Italy, and he's got the perfect pairing because his wife, Lael, runs a travel agency called Gracious Getaways.

So they lead culinary tours in Italy, and I keep telling him, "Let me come and carry your bags." "I'll be that person." If you can't make it to Italy [00:04:00] with him, they also teach weeknight cooking classes out of their home in Sarasota.

Matthew: Have you taken one of those?

Dalia: I have not, but I need to. He did make me a very nice cappuccino when I was there.

Matthew: Indeed. Okay, well, let's take a listen to your interview with Giuliano Hazan from June this year.

Dalia: It is so cool to be back at your kitchen table with you. It's been two years? Yes.

Giuliano: Yes,

Dalia: it has. And it feels like no time at all.

Giuliano: Well, thank you for coming back.

Dalia: Oh my gosh. Thank you for having me. When we last spoke, I think you were getting ready to expand the classes.

So what's going on now?

Giuliano: Yes. So we have-- I teach cooking in Italy, and these are week-long cooking courses. People come for a week. During the day, we do field trips and visit food producers, and then in the evenings, we have hands-on classes. And when you came last, I was doing them in, uh, the Veneto, outside of Verona, and in Tuscany, on the Tuscan coast.

And since you've been [00:05:00] here, we've added a third location in Piedmont, where we go and have lots of, uh, white truffles. We only do it in October when they're in season, and wonderful Piedmontese wines. We visit Angelo Gaja's winery And have lots of Barbaresco

Dalia: Oh. We also talked about your famous mother. So for, for the one person listening who doesn't know who your mother was, give us the CliffsNotes version.

Giuliano: People say she's the one who introduced real Italian cooking to Americans when her first cookbook came out in 1972. Uh, it was a classic Italian cookbook. She also taught cooking. She had a cooking school in Italy. She... When she started, she was really the first one to do so. And, uh, last year, a movie came out about her, a documentary called Marcella, and it's available on Amazon and Apple, and we're very excited because it won the James [00:06:00] Beard Award for best food documentary of the year.

Dalia: Insane. Yes, we're talking about your mother, Marcella Hazan.

Yes.

Did you get to attend any of the festivities?

Giuliano: I did. I went to a lot of the premieres. It was shown here in Sarasota at the Sarasota Film Festival and film festivals around the country, so that, that was very exciting. Also, the Smithsonian has acquired what they call the Marcella Hazan Collection, and they just unveiled a special exhibit of 250 items to commemorate the 250th anniversary of the United States, and my mother's copper zabaglione pot was part of the exhibit.

Oh, that's so cool. Zabaglione is this frothy custard-like dessert that you make at the last minute and serve warm. You need a copper pot for it because you need to distribute the heat evenly. So that was very [00:07:00] exciting, and, uh, they asked me to come to the Smithsonian and do a cooking class to celebrate that.

Dalia: Oh, that's wild. Wait, you did a cooking class at the Smithsonian?

Giuliano: Yes.

Dalia: Where?

Giuliano: At the National Museum of American History, which is where the exhibit is.

Dalia: Oh, my gosh. That is so cool. I know the last time we spoke, the Smithsonian had just acquired a bunch of your mom's cooking utensils-

Giuliano: Right.

Dalia: Right ... but we didn't know what they were gonna do with them.

Giuliano: Right. Well, they're starting to do something. That's incredible. So it's great. It's very exciting.

Dalia: Okay, so she emigrated from Italy to the United States- Yes ... and you're a first-generation Italian American. What does it mean for you to be part of America's 250th birthday celebration showcasing Italian cooking?

Giuliano: It's very humbling. Uh, and it's, it's amazing that at least the S-Smithsonian thinks it has made an impact in Americans' lives, enough so to be part of this exhibit. [00:08:00]

Dalia: That's very cool. Tell me more about the cooking classes. I'm sitting here at your kitchen table, like five feet from where these amazing classes take place.

A lot of people listening are going to be interested in taking your class. How do they do that? What should they expect?

Giuliano: I have a website. It's giulianohazan.com. We have 10 people at a time. They're hands-on classes. People participate. We prepare a four-course Italian meal. Of course, we have to stop halfway through to have a little aperitivo and some hors d'oeuvres for some sustenance.

And then, uh, when the meal is ready, we sit down at the table, and we enjoy it along with Italian wine, and people are really enjoying them. Oh. They have a great time. Wonderful. It's a great, great night out or, you know, sometimes it's a daytime thing, too. During the winter, we do daytime classes.

Dalia: What a dream.

Have you noticed any trends in either Italian cooking or just what people are looking for in general when it comes to home cooking? [00:09:00]

Giuliano: Well, you know, there's so many more ingredients that are available to us now. Certainly, you know, when my mother first came to the United States, she was living in New York, in Forest Hills, and she trekked all the way into Manhattan to 9th Avenue because that was the only place where she could find an artichoke.

Can you imagine? So we've come a long way since then. Yeah. And people wanna know what to do with these ingredients and how to cook them, and people love Italian food, so they want to learn more about it and what it's really supposed to taste like.

Dalia: Mm. Ooh, say more about that. What do you mean what it's supposed to taste like?

Giuliano: Okay. Well, you know, if you go to most Italian restaurants in the States, it's really not the same as going to an Italian restaurant in Italy. Somehow the food seems to change once, uh, a restaurant opens in the States. And so what my mother taught, and what I continue to [00:10:00] teach, is the way that we eat in Italy.

I don't know. I think that, you know, chefs from Italy come here and open a restaurant, and all of a sudden they, they feel like they have to change things to adapt to what people are expecting. And I think people in general here tend to be expecting, well, larger portions for one thing, for sure. Uh, but just in general, it seems to me like it's heavier food, more sauce, you know.

My mother always used to say, "You know, it's, it's pasta with sauce. It's not the other way around." And so I think these are-- this is what changes when it comes here. So that's, you know, when I teach a class here, I really try to teach the way that we cook in Italy. Of course, it's with the ingredients that we get here, but still, it's the flavors that we would have in Italy.

Dalia: When I think Italian, I [00:11:00] want a huge bowl of pasta, but you're saying it would be just, like, a little appetizer.

Giuliano: It wouldn't be an appetizer, it-- but it, it's sort of halfway in between an appetizer and a main dish. Because the main dish is also not as large as a main dish normally is here. So the, the pasta course and the fish course would be pretty much equal in portion size and importance in the meal.

So you have a little pasta first, and you'll get satisfied, and you're not as hungry anymore when the second course comes, whether it's meat or fish, and you don't need as much.

So you're telling me

I've been- It's a healthier way to eat.

Dalia: You're telling me I've been eating too much.

Giuliano: No.

Dalia: Yes. It's fine.

Giuliano: But when you have the larger portion of pasta, you-- then you don't have something else afterwards, right?

Dalia: Yeah. Ooh.

Giuliano: Well, okay. Well, I'm I'm assuming things here, but-

Dalia: We'll redact this. Well, thank you. It was so nice to be here back at your kitchen table.

Giuliano: Thank you. Thank you. Thanks for coming.

Dalia: It was fun. My pleasure.

Matthew: That was Dalia Colon, [00:12:00] host of The Zest podcast on WUSF, chatting with Chef Giuliano Hazan. You can listen back to past seasons of The Zest on wusf.org.

Dalia: We've had so much fun catching up with our past Zest guests, and we're cooking up a little something special for you that we will be bringing you very soon. In the meantime, we hope you are having a delicious day. I'm Dalia Colon. I produce The Zest with Alexandria Ebron. We'll catch you later.