

# So You Think You Know Pasta

by Rachel Donadio

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Oretta Zanini De Vita, the pre-eminent Italian food historian, seems to have a tool for every pasta: a centuries-old ravioli cutter, a wooden stamp that mints pasta like coins, a chitarra for creating thick strands of tagliatelle.

On a recent morning, as she leaned over a custom-made poplar-wood board and rolled out a simple dough of eggs and flour for a southern Italian-style strozzapreti, she took out a long, thin reed.

“If you don’t have a reed, you can always use an umbrella spoke,” she said cheerily, rolling flat strips of dough around the reed until the sides curled.

Ms. Zanini De Vita, a sprightly 73, has curly blond hair and bright blue eyes that light up when she gets animated — which is often. As she raced around her ground-floor apartment fetching ingredients and utensils, her white cotton smock trimmed with lace gave her the appearance of a cherubic altar boy.

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