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Many Beautiful Things

Vincent Schiavelli



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Vincent Schiavelli is known to most of us as a character actor who has appeared in such films as *Ghost, Man on the Moon,* and *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest.* Schiavelli grew up in Brooklyn, speaking both Sicilian and English at home. Some of his earliest memories are of sitting at the kitchen table while his grandparents told stories of the life and the people they had left behind in Polizzi Generosa, a small city in the Madonie Mountains of Sicily.

As Schiavelli grew older, those stories, and the city about which they were told, took on a mythic quality. When he was nearly forty he made his first trip there, and what he found was more extraordinary than the "once upon a time" fables of his childhood.

In *Many Beautiful Things*, Schiavelli invites readers to join him in discovering the people, culture, and food of the city that has, in essence, become his second home. Equal parts memoir and cookbook, it is the best of both. Schiavelli is an accomplished and elegant writer who evokes a foreign and often closed culture from a unique perspective: an outsider fluent in the language with still-strong familial ties.

The recipes -- which reflect the ancient influences of Greece, North Africa, and Spain -- are simple, rustic, and delicious, depending on local products and seasonal bounty. This is not your usual Southern Italian fare but a unique regional cuisine: Pumpkin Caponata, Ditali with Drowned Lettuce, Fried Ricotta Omelet, Potato Gratin with Bay Leaves, Almond Love Bites, Veal Shoulder Roasted with Marsala, and Baked Pasta with Almonds (rigatoni baked in a pork ragu with chopped toasted almonds) are just a few of the extraordinary dishes you'll find in this book, all of which can be reproduced by cooks with delectable results.

Schiavelli provides a comprehensive list of mail-order sources. And if you want to visit Polizzi Generosa, there's a guide on how to get there, where to stay, and where to eat. Illustrated with black-and-white line drawings by Polizzi's best known artist, Santo Lipani (who also happens to be an extraordinary cook), *Many Beautiful Things* is a feast, both culinary and literary.

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