

Real housewives do cook

'Housewives of New Jersey' star talks about cookbook and keys to happiness: 'good friends, good family, good food, good sex'

July 20, 2010 | By Elizabeth Kern, OF THE MORNING CALL

Teresa Giudice — who is best known for flipping a table in anger on the Bravo series "The Real Housewives of New Jersey" — has a personality bigger than her hair.

She's blunt and talkative during a recent phone interview, at one point summarizing the keys to life. "What's there to life? It's good friends, good family, good food, good sex."

Now adding author to her resume, the slender reality TV star is sharing her healthy recipes to give Italian food a good name again. Fans of the series will want to pick up a copy for an inside look into Giudice's home life and get the "skinny" on what to eat and what Americanized Italian food to avoid.

"Skinny Italian" (\$19.99, Hyperion, 256 pp.) has simple and easy recipes to follow as well as pictures of food, family and friends. Giudice plans to be in the Lehigh Valley to sign copies Aug. 9 at Gio Italian Grill in Macungie.

She talks about the Bravo series, food and more during a 40-minute interview.

Q: You're known for telling it like it is. Why did you write a cookbook and not a juicy tell-all memoir?

A: From the first season, there were only six episodes so people really didn't get to know us. This season there's like 16. So everyone is really going to get to know us. I just really wanted to show the true me — that I'm first generation here, my parents are off the boat, that I do cook for my family every day. I make them good nutritional, healthy, authentic Italian food every day. I just wanted to share with everyone all our great recipes.

Q: What's a good recipe for beginning cooks to try out?

A: I have to say, the whole book is very, very easy. There are not too many ingredients, it's simple and it's clean. I remember when I first got married, I bought cookbooks and they had a million ingredients in them and all these weird ingredients that I've never heard of. Then after making all that food and spending all that money and the time, I would try the recipe and it would taste gross.

If they want to start off with my favorite recipe, it's called Teresa's Favorite Tagliatelle. It's easy to make and delicious. And it's even great the next day and my kids love it.

Q: Your book has been on the New York Times bestseller list for multiple weeks now. Were you expecting this response?

A: Yes, of course, you never know what's gonna happen, but I figured once everybody would even just try it. It's not like my book is a diet. I'm not into diets. People stick with a diet for like a little bit and then they go back to the way they normally eat.

My book is that you eat healthy, authentic Italian food that is good for you. You buy all fresh ingredients. You eat portion sizes; You won't eat like a big pasta bowl. Instead you eat like an appetizer portion.

Q: In the book you reference Bethenny Frankel [chef and member of "The Real Housewives of New York City"]: "Bethenny, honey, you really want me to order a steak and only eat three bites of it?" Have you gotten any feedback from her?

A: Well I mean that's just my opinion. Who goes out to dinner and eats three bites of steak? Who would spend the money on steak and then eat only three bites of it and then throw the rest out? Who does that? Maybe she does that. I mean when I go out to dinner I like to eat my dinner. Why should you deprive yourself from food? I think that's one of the joys that God created for us to eat good food. What's there to life? It's good friends, good family, good food, good sex.

Q: What's your favorite meal to cook for Sunday dinners?

A: Pasta with red sauce. I make meatballs and we put bresaola in it. We put ox tail bones in the sauce. They make the sauce taste delicious. That's what we eat on Sundays. Pasta, of course, always pasta.

Q: On Twitter, you ask fans for their opinions on what they'd like to see in the second cookbook. How will that one be different?

A: Everyone is like, "We need more recipes, we've cooked everything up." We're not sure of the title yet. I don't know if I'm gonna make the next book skinny. I might just make it a lot of our Italian recipes. Not all Italian food is fattening. There is eggplant you can make, great eggplant parmesan. You can make it a lighter version. You don't have to use the heavy ricotta cheese; you can use the lighter ricotta cheese.

Q: Each of your four daughters (Gia, 9, Gabriella, 5, Milania, 4, and Audriana, 10 months) has a sauce named after them. How did you decide who got which one?

A: I tried to make them the ones that they really like the most.

Q: I can tell you are very attached to your family. Is traveling for the book tour difficult? Have they accompanied you on any trips?

A: My husband comes with me on the weekends. If I have a book signing on a Friday or Saturday, then he comes with me and afterwards we go out to dinner. Then Gia I would bring her with me on a Sunday. Because Milania and Gabriella are so close in age it's like I can't bring one without the other. I think they are just too little now.

Q: What are some of your cooking memories with your kids?

A: Every time I cook, I have this little kitchen table in the kitchen. They grab one of the small chairs and they come right next to me by the island when I'm preparing something. If I make chicken cutlets, because that's pretty easy, I let them put it in the egg and then put it in the breadcrumbs. They enjoy it and I think it's bonding time between the two of us. That's what my mom used to do to me.

Q: What herb/spice do you feel is essential to Italian cooking? Do you prefer to use fresh herbs?

A: Yes, always fresh. Like fresh parsley, fresh basil, that's the most important, fresh basil. Never use the dry stuff that you buy at the supermarket, always use fresh. Fresh garlic, fresh onion, don't use the powdered stuff.

Q: In the book, you talk about the difference between Italian and American-Italian. Have you and your family found any authentic Italian restaurants to eat at?

A: Well, Gio is great. I mean they are a little far for us, but they cook like we do. Francesco's in West Paterson [N.J.], they're pretty awesome. We opened up a restaurant also in Hillside called Giuseppe's Homestyle Pizzeria.

Q: What's the greatest pleasure you get from cooking for your family?

A: Even my mom taught me, when you cook you cook with love and it comes through in your food. My kids they love when I cook for them. Sometimes I get in the mood for Chinese food, but for some reason my kids don't like Chinese food. They're like, "No mommy we love when you cook for us." They love when I cook for them so that makes me want to cook for them even more.

Q: Any other projects on the horizon?

A: Yeah, I have a make-up line coming out with my make-up artist. It will be out soon. It's called TG Fabulicious.

Q: You've had a lot of recent attention in the media about your personal finances. [Giudice and her husband reportedly filed for bankruptcy protection last year.] Do you consider this to be a downside of fame?

A: Of course. That's no one's business. Obviously we know who put that out there; it was my husband's ex-partner. Let's just leave it at that.

BOOK SIGNING

•**What:** "The Real Housewives of New Jersey" star Teresa Giudice signs copies of her cookbook, "Skinny Italian."

•**Where:** Gio Italian Grill, 6465 Village Lane, Macungie.

•**When:** Two events on Aug. 9. A meet-and-greet and book signing 4-6 p.m. Then a meet-and-greet, book signing, hors d'oeuvres from Teresa's recipes and a cash bar 6:30-9:30 p.m.

•**How much:** 4 p.m. event costs \$20 plus tax (price includes copy of "Skinny Italian.") The 6:30 p.m. event costs \$35 plus tax