

# LORENZO CARCATERRA

A MEMOIR OF FAMILY

*Three Dreamers*

BOOK CLUB KIT

# LETTER FROM THE AUTHOR

Dear reader,

*Three Dreamers* is about three women you will be thrilled to have in your company—my Italian Nonna Maria, my mother, Raffaella, and my late wife, Susan Toepfer. These three women, each in their own unique and individual way, saved my life and helped me to navigate my career as a writer. In the process, they also made me a much better man than I would otherwise have been. I know you will love to read about these three women and then get together—either through Zoom or (Lord willing) in person—pour your beverage of choice and talk about them late into the night. These women will stay with you as they have with me. Welcome them into your club. You will be more than happy that you did.

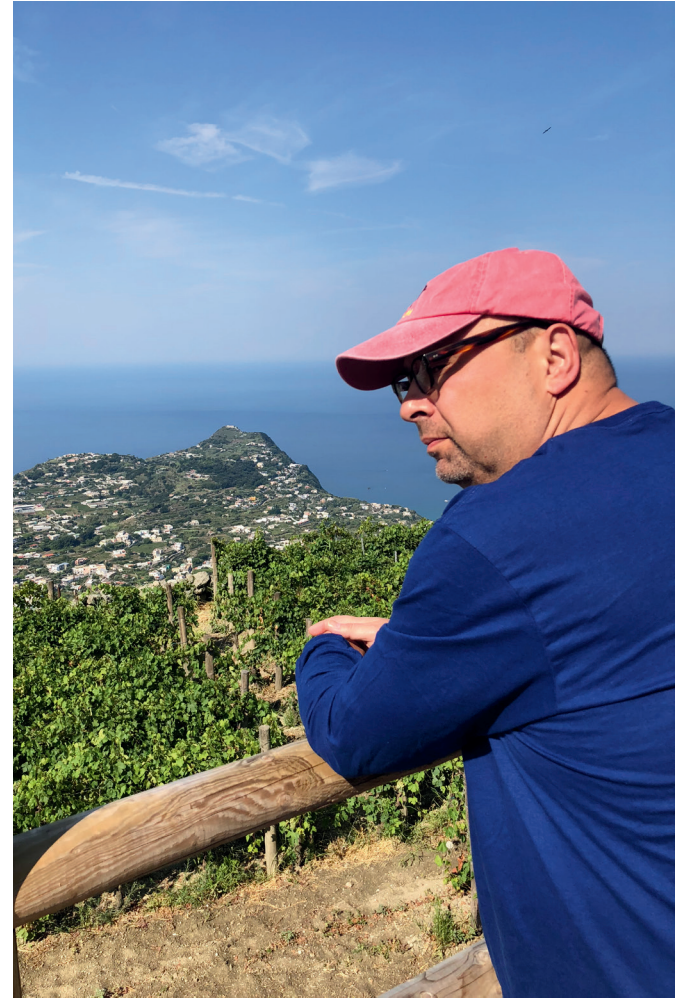
I love book clubs and appreciate what they mean for so many authors. You have forged a community that helps keep people reading and talking about books. And that is so very important to do, especially in the troubled times we are currently living through. My grown children are each members of book clubs and I confess to having sneaked in on more than one occasion to join them. I supplied the food and drink and was more than happy to join in on the table talk, eager to hear people debate the merits of a book, breaking down what it meant to them or how it affected them in some way. Whether they liked the book or not was not as important as to the fact they had read it and were discussing its strengths and weaknesses.

I think you will love talking about the *Three Dreamers*. And you might even want to prepare one of the meals that can be found in the book, especially in the Nonna Maria section. Or you can do what she did, drink either strong coffee or chilled wine, and enjoy the stories told around a table filled with your friends.

If you choose *Three Dreamers* for your book club, you have my thanks. And the company of three amazing women. Trust me, by the end of the night, you will have grown to love them as I have. Once met, they are unforgettable and they will, I have no doubt, make it a night to remember. Embrace them, trust them and let them take you with them on their life journey. You will be glad you took the time.

Stay well, stay strong, stay safe.  
Lorenzo Carcaterra

# ISCHIA



# DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What was your favorite part of *Three Dreamers*? Least favorite? Why?
2. What surprised you the most about this book?
3. *Three Dreamers* is divided into three sections: Maria (about Lorenzo's grandmother, Nonna), Raffaella (about Lorenzo's mother), and Susan (about Lorenzo's late wife). Why do you think Lorenzo decided to separate his stories into different sections?
4. Were there any sections of the book that you wish the author had elaborated more on?
5. There are a number of themes intertwined in *Three Dreamers*: family, home, love, dreams/aspirations. Which theme resonated the most with you?
6. Over this summers there, Ischia becomes a home to Lorenzo, even though it wasn't where he lived most of the year. As Nonna says, "This island is a part of you...no matter where you go, where you end up, this place, this island, and the people you've met will always be a part of you" (48). Have you ever had a "home" like that?
7. On page 190, Susan and Lorenzo discuss the gaps in his education, and Susan says: "[The] blanks are easy to fill in . . . But what you've learned can't be taught." What life lessons did you take away from *Three Dreamers*?
8. Will this book leave a lasting imprint on you? Why or why not?

# FAMILY RECIPES: NONNA MARIA'S PASTA PUTTANESCA

"A good story is better if it's shared over a good meal and a glass of wine." –*Three Dreamers*, p. 44

This is for 3-4 big eaters or 5-6 portion control eaters (which excludes members of my family).



## Ingredients

1 large can of San Marzano tomatoes  
2 tablespoons of fresh oregano, chopped  
8 fresh basil leaves, chopped  
1 tablespoon of the juice from a jar of hot cherry peppers  
half a cup of red wine  
21 pitted black Italian olives  
7 anchovies cut into slivers  
half a cup of capers in their juice  
half a teaspoon of red pepper flakes  
half a cup of olive oil  
1 pound of spaghetti

## Directions

Fill pasta pot with water and bring to slow boil. In a large pan, prepare the sauce.

Cut two garlic cloves in half--flatten them with either palm of your hand or base of a knife. Saute in olive oil until garlic turns light brown. Add the wine and spices. Simmer over low heat, 30 minutes.

At 20 minutes, taste and add more spices and oil if needed.

Add olives, anchovies, basil, oregano, capers, red pepper flakes.

Turn pasta water to full boil. Toss in pasta. Do NOT add salt to the pasta water. Drain when cooked.

Ladle 3 large scoops of sauce in empty pasta pot. Toss pasta into pot and pour the rest of the sauce on top. Stir pasta and sauce. Enjoy.

Serve with a fresh loaf of Italian bread; bottle of red wine; bottle of mineral water; Ask Alexa to play some Neapolitan love ballads—it calms the sauce.

# FAMILY RECIPES: RAFAELLA'S SANDWICH

It usually feeds two--or, in my case, one very chubby and hungry Italian boy. – Lorenzo



## Ingredients

Large, fresh loaf of Italian bread (semolina would be preferred)  
2 large beefsteak tomatoes  
Red onion  
Hot cherry peppers  
Roasted peppers  
Marinated eggplant  
Basil  
Anchovies  
Italian olives  
Marinated zucchini  
Oregano  
Salt  
Pepper

## Directions

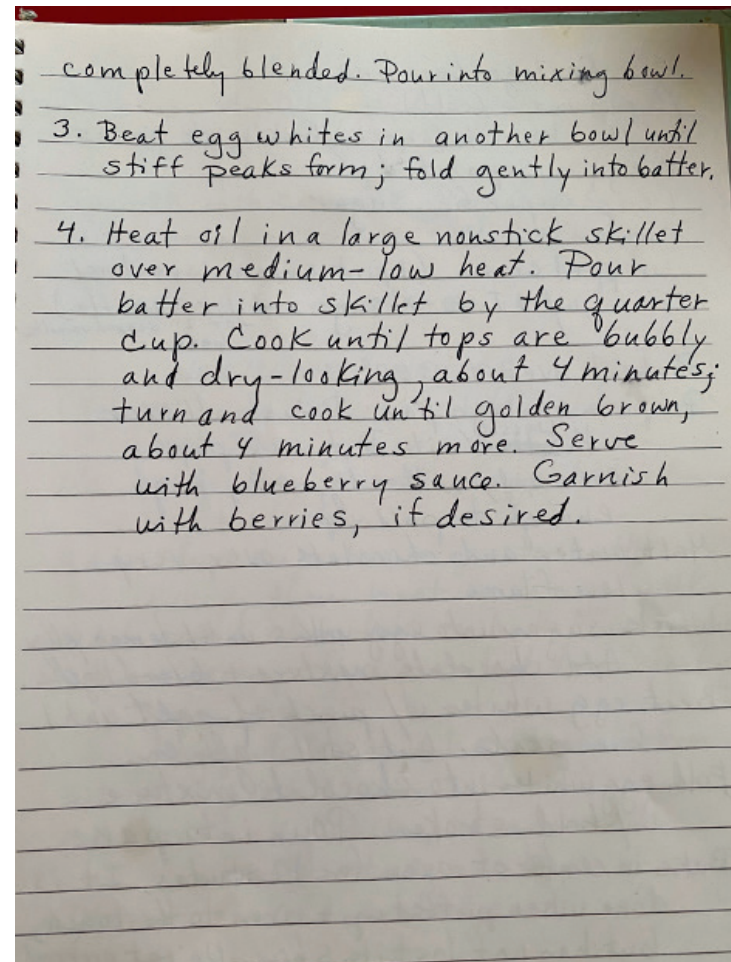
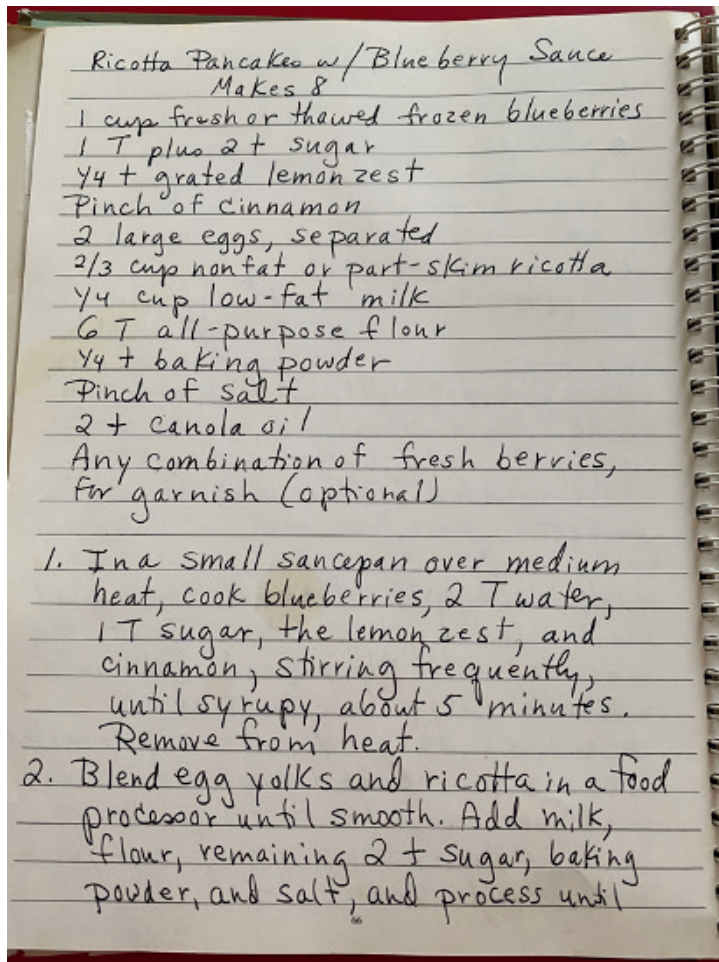
Heat bread for about 5-7 minutes in oven. Cut bread down the middle and take out some of the excess pulp.

Take two large beefsteak tomatoes, cut them in half and squeeze the juice onto both sides of the bread.

Then cut up and cover the bread with the following: slices of fresh tomatoes; slices of red onion; chunks of hot cherry peppers; slices of roasted peppers; slices of marinated eggplant; cut up fresh basil; six anchovies (optional; not for everyone); a handful of cut up Italian olives; a handful of marinated zucchini. Add spices: oregano; pepper; salt (unless you included the anchovies).

Cover the toppings with fresh olive oil and just a thin line of balsamic vinegar and close the bread. Cut the loaf of bread in half and serve. Enjoy. If you're at work, mineral water goes well with it. But a glass of chilled white wine helps.

## FAMILY RECIPES: SUSAN'S RICOTTA PANCAKES W/ BLUEBERRY SAUCE



# JOURNALING PROMPTS

Talking about the three women, their stories and their lives, will lead you to remember and embrace the ones in your own life who helped direct you or shape you or influence you in any way, most often for the better. It could even be the very people sitting around your table or, even more importantly, the ones who touched your life but can no longer be told how much they helped you and how much their valuable lessons meant to you. —Lorenzo

1. What does home mean to you? Where do you feel most at home?
2. What does family mean to you?
3. *Three Dreamers* tells the story of three women who shaped the author's life. Who have your three most formative relationships been? In what ways did they influence you?
4. On page 31, Nonna says: "Life will give you all the great stories you need." Consider your life so far with a memoirist's eye: what great stories do you have so far? What type of great stories do you hope to experience?
5. Location is a significant part of *Three Dreamers*. Are there locations in your life that are similarly important and defining in your life? What do they represent to you?
6. In the spirit of the book's title, are you a dreamer? What do you dream of?