



KITCHEN STORIES: CHAPTER SEVEN

VALERIE BERTINELLI

FOR THIS L.A.-BASED CELEB, COOKING IS ALL ABOUT CONNECTING WITH FAMILY AND FRIENDS.

Text by **ANDREA CHIU**

YOU PROBABLY KNOW HER as Barbara from the 1970s sitcom *One Day at a Time* or Melanie from her recent hit show *Hot in Cleveland*, but Valerie Bertinelli's longest-running role is as a passionate home cook. She even fell in love with her husband, Tom Vitale, while they were making appetizers together. "The two of us kept trading glances and helping each other," she recalls in her cookbook, *One Dish at a Time* (Rodale). "Walls came down as we touched and tasted each other's ingredients." In fact, many of the meals she makes can be traced back to a happy memory. She's also turned her love of food into a second career with a Food Network show, *Valerie's Home Cooking*, now heading into its second season. Here, she shares her favourite family recipes and the memories that go with them.

From *One Dish at a Time* by Valerie Bertinelli. Copyright © 2012. Reprinted by permission of Rodale Inc. / Recipe and food photographs by Quentin Bacon / Lifestyle photographs by Brian Bowen Smith / Family and candid photographs courtesy of Valerie Bertinelli / Photograph courtesy of Food Network (this page)

My Family Recipes

ITALIAN FINGER SANDWICHES
CREAM CHEESE CRAB SPREAD
PASTA ALLE VONGOLE
MINT-CUCUMBER SOUP
LIMONCELLO
LEMON MERINGUE PIE

For recipes, see pages 128 to 132.



Recipe

ITALIAN FINGER SANDWICHES | PG. 128

“My mother made tea sandwiches for my father’s poker games, blending her English-Irish upbringing with my father’s Italian background. They’re simple: just use the best-quality meats and bread you can find.”

Valerie’s treasured family photos, and her mother’s handwritten recipe book. **Bottom:** Cooking with first husband Eddie Van Halen’s mother.



Recipe

CREAM CHEESE CRAB SPREAD | PG. 128

“My mother would bring this out for every single party. It was special because crab was expensive. She would change up the crackers or the bread, but it was a hit every single time because it’s so simple and it’s so tasty.”

Recipe

PASTA ALLE VONGOLE | PG. 128

“I’ve loved clams since I was a little girl. When I was growing up in New Jersey, we would go to a restaurant off the turnpike for their steamers. A girl at that age eating steamer clams? You didn’t see that very often!”



Valerie and her mom in their Shreveport, La., kitchen.

“My first memory of food would have to be sitting in my Aunt Adeline’s basement watching my grandmother roll out pasta. I think I fell in love with cooking the first time I watched her make cappelletti from start to finish. She put it in some chicken broth and handed it to me as a bowl of soup. To this day, it was probably the best bowl of soup I’ve ever had. My cooking has always been influenced by the other women in my life — my mother spent a lot of time in the kitchen. While I was at school, she’d be cleaning up the breakfast dishes and then prepping for dinner.

And I learned a lot from my mothers-in-law, too. My first husband, Ed Van Halen’s mother was Indonesian-Dutch and she taught me some amazing recipes [*find her chicken sambal recipe at houseandhome.com/sambal*]. My mother-in-law now, Helen, is Italian and she’s taught me more about Italian cuisine: cookies, salad dressings and the simplicity of it all.

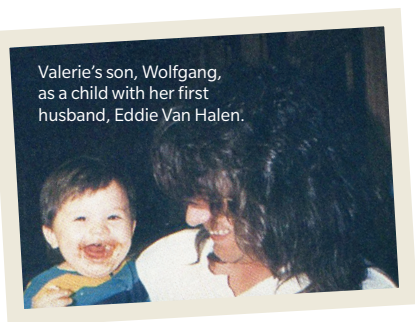
When I was growing up, we had a home-cooked meal every night. Dinnertime was family time. We all chimed in about how our days were, and there was a lot of laughter at the table. I try to re-create the same feeling now. Last Christmas, Tom and I rented a house up in Park City, Utah. Most of the kids came with us, and every night we cooked together. We joked and laughed, and ate good hearty meals, talked about our day and then played games. Food and family together: that says love to me.”



Recipe

MINT-CUCUMBER SOUP PG. 130

“I first had this soup at a book group meeting. The group has been meeting for 19 years, and the host always makes something delicious for us to eat, so it’s a great way for me to learn new recipes. My friend Julie (Wolfie’s kindergarten teacher) made this years ago. I don’t remember which book we were discussing, but I still remember this soup!”



Valerie’s son, Wolfgang, as a child with her first husband, Eddie Van Halen.

Recipe

LIMONCELLO | PG. 130

“I make limoncello from lemons grown in my own yard, but the best I ever tasted was in Italy. Tom and I were hiking through Cinque Terre, and an old man was selling his limoncello on the trails. As we were drinking it outside, we were surrounded by grapevines, and the water was blue and glistening. It was gorgeous!”



TOP: At home in her lemon orchard.
ABOVE: Valerie and Tom in Liguria, sampling the homemade limoncello that inspired her to make her own.

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Recipe

LEMON MERINGUE PIE | PG. 132

“This is such a delicious, light and tangy pie. Usually, my mother would save it for special occasions, but sometimes she would make it for no particular reason — except that she probably hadn’t made it in a while and was craving it!”

Mom's Flaky PIE DOUGH

This makes enough crust for two single-crust pies or for one double-crust pie, and you can store any unused dough in the freezer.

1. Put 2¼ cups all-purpose flour, 1 tsp sugar and 1 tsp kosher salt in a food processor and pulse until the ingredients are combined.
2. Slowly add ¾ cup unsalted butter in chunks, pulsing until the largest pieces are pea-sized.
3. Add ice water 1 tbsp at a time until the dough starts to clump together, approx 6-8 tbsp.
4. Put the dough on a clean work surface and use your hands to make it into a ball.
5. Divide the ball in half and wrap the portions in plastic wrap.
6. Refrigerate for 1 hour before using, or if using another time, cover it in an extra layer of plastic wrap and put in a resealable plastic bag and freeze.

LEFT: Valerie and Tom are enthusiastic cooks, so the kitchen of their L.A. home is designed for comfort and functionality. She wanted a large sink so it's easy to clean up big pots and a Wolf range — a playful reminder of her son, Wolfgang. During the day, natural light streams in through the skylight, and windows offer views out to the front and back yards, where their dog, Luna, can often be found relaxing.

