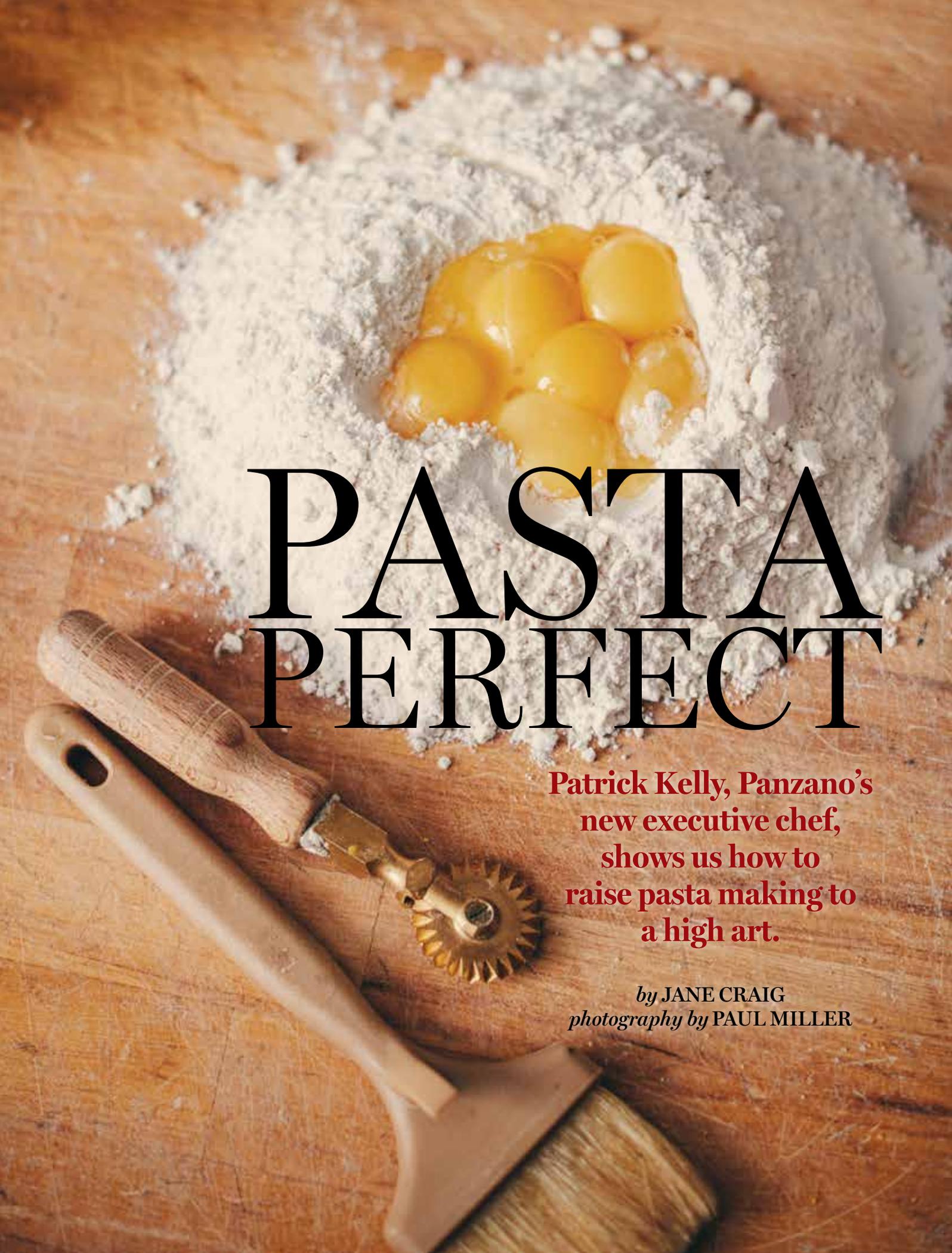


“

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—CHEF PATRICK KELLY





PASTA PERFECT

**Patrick Kelly, Panzano's
new executive chef,
shows us how to
raise pasta making to
a high art.**

by JANE CRAIG
photography by PAUL MILLER



PURPLE REIGN

Panzano's braised veal agnolotti with Parmesan fondue, sautéed mushrooms, shaved purple cauliflower and hazelnuts

For such a down-to-earth cuisine, pasta has a surprisingly patrician pedigree. Everyone from Marco Polo (who sampled pasta at the court of Kubla Khan but did *not* introduce it to Italy) to the ancient Romans (who fried their noodles) to Thomas Jefferson (so enchanted by the macaroni in Naples that he reportedly ordered a pasta-making machine sent back home to Virginia) has had a role in the cuisine's rich history.

So widely loved is pasta—and so diverse its lineage—that there are more than 600 shapes worldwide, from the totally tubular ziti to the curly strozzapreti (“priest stranglers”) to the perky orecchiette (“little ears”). Much of that—6 billion pounds a year, to be exact—is eaten here in the United States, where the most popular shapes, according to the National Pasta Association, are spaghetti, penne, fettuccine, linguine and lasagna.

Those standbys are all yummy, to be sure, but a little ... been there, done that. What if a pasta lover wants to elevate his or her game and create more exotic shapes at home? It's actually easier than you think.

Just ask Patrick Kelly, who, last August, took over as executive chef of the venerable Panzano in the Hotel Monaco, replacing the renowned Elise Wiggins (who in turn had followed Ben Davis and Jennifer Jasinski). “The beauty of Italian

food is that it's got so much natural warmth and soul to it,” Kelly says. “When you elevate it, it's still essentially a comfort food. And with pasta there are endless iterations of what you can do.”

‘ANYTHING’S DO-ABLE’

Panzano takes advantage of that versatility, making all of its pastas in-house, using two Arcobaleno machines—a sheeter and an extruder—that are like the Teslas of pasta making. The sheeter rolls out various thicknesses of pasta, then slices them into spaghetti, fettuccine and other “straight” pastas. The extruder, fitted with a range of funky-looking bronze dies, takes a mixture that looks more like sand than dough and turns out 28 shapes (see pages 58-59 for a peek).

But choosing the shape is only the start of the magic. “Anything's do-able,” Kelly says. “I'm a masochist through and through. We also can color the pasta in different ways. I make a cockscomb pasta that I add a little cocoa butter to, turning it a gorgeous brown. We have a bucatini that we mix with basil so it's completely green—and beautiful. Saffron and smoked paprika go a long way, too, in terms of coloring and flavoring.”

For the home cook creating a first batch, Kelly recommends making a basic egg dough (see page 62), working in small batches so it won't dry out and starting with flat noodles (like pappardelle or fettuccine) to get a feel for how pasta works. After that, you can graduate to folded, stuffed or extruded creations. Want to add spices? Do it to taste, Kelly advises. But once you get comfortable, you can add, say, a beet or basil purée (remembering to cut the amount of liquid in the recipe to accommodate).

“When making pasta, be adventurous,” Kelly says. “You have to take risks to learn something. Don't be intimidated by the process because, once it becomes intuitive, it's really not that complicated.”

‘I ALWAYS LIKED TO EAT WELL’

That Kelly ended up cooking high-end Italian almost seems pre-ordained: Born in tiny Fremont, Nebraska, he spent his summers on his grandparents' farm, where every Sunday the family would gather for massive meals. “That's where I learned what an egg should taste like, what a chicken should taste like, what a tomato off the vine should taste like,” he recalls. After moving at age 12 to Cheyenne, Wyoming, where his parents each worked two jobs and he had two younger sisters to feed, “I was already fully addicted to great food, so I'd get on the horn with my grandmothers—one quintessentially Midwestern, one Sicilian—and ask, ‘Grandma, how do you make pie crust?’ or ‘Grandma, how do you make meatballs?’ I always liked to eat well, and the joy of actually providing others with great food was really satisfying to me.”

After working in high school as a busboy in a local Italian restaurant run by three Sicilian brothers, then graduating with a business and economics degree from the University of Wyoming, Kelly couldn't shake the idea of being in the restaurant business. But it was only after

THE LONG AND SHORT (AND ROUND AND SQUIGGLY) OF IT

“We've tried every single shape known to man,” Panzano executive chef Patrick Kelly says. Turn the page to see some of his faves.



continued on page 61



agnolotti stuffed with veal



creste di gallo



pappardelle



faro fazzoletti



ridged macaroni



rustic gemelli



perciatelli



campanelle



ravioli stuffed with beet greens



fusilli



terzetto



rustic fusilli



spaghettoni



lumache



strozzapreti



lanterne



spaccatelli



capellini



linguine



sagnarelli



ziti



fettuccine



casarecce



trenne



basil bucatini



cheese tortelloni



torchio



doppio ravioli stuffed with polenta and lamb



bigoli



FIVE EASY SAUCES

Let's take it from the top for the home cook

1. **CALABRIAN CHILE POMODORO:** Chopped onion, chopped garlic and high-quality San Marzano tomatoes, simmered and passed through a food mill. At end, add chopped fresh tomatoes, a taste of Calabrian chile, salt and pepper to taste.

2. **SIMPLE POMODORO:** Chopped onion, chopped garlic, high-quality San Marzano tomatoes, simmered and passed through a food mill, finished with fresh basil, salt and pepper to taste.

3. **PARMIGIANO REGGIANO FONDUTA:** Half heavy cream, half milk, simmered and put in blender; add grated Parmigiano reggiano until it thickens (can add egg to thicken and stabilize). Top with black pepper and shaved Parmesan.

4. **PINE NUT AND BASIL PESTO:** Basil, pine nuts, high-quality olive oil, Parmesan, all put through food processor.

5. **VEAL BOLOGNESE:** Veal short ribs, seared; chopped carrot, celery, onion and garlic, high-quality San Marzano tomatoes, dry white wine (with no oak); add veal, beef or chicken stock and braise until tender. Run veal and then vegetables through meat grinder. Finish with Parmigiano reggiano.

casually picking up a Charlie Trotter cookbook that he was truly hooked. “Reading it blew my mind,” he says. “I was like, ‘Holy cow! You can do that? I don’t even know what a squab or truffle oil are! I’ve gotta check it out.’ That’s when I knew I wanted to be a chef.”

After graduating from the Culinary Institute of America (on weekends he’d work for free as a stagiaire in New York restaurant kitchens to gain big-league experience), Kelly cooked in a who’s who-worthy lineup of restaurants, from Chicago’s four-star Spiaggia to Napa Valley’s Redd and Angèle, to San Francisco’s La Folie, where he worked under Roland Passot, the chef he describes as his mentor. “He’s a master technician,” Kelly says. “We were doing four-star Michelin French in a shoebox—so intense and with such high expectations.” After going back to Angèle as executive chef, and seeing it named one of the top 100 Bay Area restaurants, Kelly went to work as executive chef at the Claude Lane Restaurant Group (later Au Bon Repas), then jumped to Lure+Till at the Ephiphany Hotel in Palo Alto before coming here.

The Bay Area, Kelly says, is a “cook’s paradise. With the insane farmers’ markets, it’s like cooking in the Garden of Eden.” But he and his wife, chef Bridget Batson, were eager to join the culinary scene in Denver. (She now works as the chief culinary officer of Denver’s chef-prepared dinner delivery service SupperBell.)

“We’d been looking to get to Denver for years,” Kelly says. “We were watching the restaurant scene here evolve—looking at flavor combinations, plate-up techniques, people’s backgrounds—and the talent in Denver was shining as bright as it ever had. I’ve seen some restaurants in town that would be relevant restaurants in any city in the country. What we have going here is really awesome.”

‘100 MILES FROM HOME’

When the Panzano job came open, Kelly applied instantly. “I knew I wanted to rock Italian cuisine again,” he says. The interview process was rigorous—“the most extensive I’d ever been through”—with Kelly cooking 14 courses in the tasting. (The fact that he blew one course, declined to serve it and was able to articulate what he’d done wrong may have helped him win the job.)

“Now I’m 100 miles from home, where my parents and my high school friends still live,” says Kelly, who bought an 80-year-old farmhouse in Golden with Batson (“it takes one to put up with one,” he jokes of being married to a chef), where they’re joined by their two dogs, Elvis (Elly Kelly) and Abner.

But, like any chef taking over a kitchen, he has a lot of work to do. Having kept two favorite dishes on the menu, the Cavolini di Bruxelles and the Caesar alla Griglia, Kelly has created a more developed cheese plate, added such antipasti dishes as a Parmigiano-reggiano custard, introduced duck breast and black cod entrées and, of course, played with the pasta, adding dishes including a saffron gnocchi with lobster and crab and a veal-stuffed agnolotti with shaved matsutake mushrooms and hazelnuts.

“I’ve got big shoes to fill. Panzano has had only four chefs in 18 years,” says Kelly, who did a major menu overhaul in October. “Italian is awesome, and there’s endless creativity with pastas. It’s an ingredient-focused cuisine, and I want to be as product-driven locally and seasonally as possible; I’ll never compromise on that. I came in August, at the end of the growing season, so it will be really telling in spring, summer and fall to be at the markets, get to know local farmers and get the freshest, most local stuff we possibly can.

“We’re modernizing the menu, but in the context of Italian cuisine, which is in essence very rustic. There should be no reason that *The New York Times* would look at Denver’s best Italian restaurant and say, ‘It’s OK. It wouldn’t make it in New York.’ No. Absolutely not. I want to be in that same conversation.”

“WHEN MAKING PASTA, BE ADVENTUROUS. YOU HAVE TO TAKE RISKS TO LEARN SOMETHING. DON’T BE INTIMIDATED BY THE PROCESS BECAUSE, ONCE IT BECOMES INTUITIVE, IT’S REALLY NOT THAT COMPLICATED.” —CHEF PATRICK KELLY



MAKE IT AT HOME

A SIMPLE EGG AND FLOUR PASTA IS EASIER THAN YOU THINK. JUST FOLLOW ALONG:



STEPS 1-4: Assemble your ingredients (4 cups 00 flour, 24 eggs, 1 teaspoon good-quality olive oil) and tools (pastry brush, fork, rolling pin, pastry cutter wheel). After pouring flour onto the cutting board, make a well in the center. Separate 22 eggs, and drop yolks into the well. Add olive oil, then knead mixture together, first with a fork and then with your hands, until you form a ball.



STEPS 5-8: Allow ball to rest for 30 minutes covered with a moist towel. Using your rolling pin, start rolling out dough until it is very thin, then trim off four sides to create a rectangle. Run the pastry through a home pasta roller (see below).



STEPS 9-12: After trimming the pasta sheet to approximately 4 by 12 inches, use the pastry brush to apply an egg wash to the pasta. Pipe the filling—Kelly uses veal here, but it could be a veggie or cheese filling, too—onto the sheet. Fold the edge of the pasta sheet over the filling two times.



STEPS 13-16: Using your fingers, pinch the ends, then pinch along the tube of pasta about every one and a half inches. Using the pastry cutter, trim off extra pasta, then make cuts to separate each agnolotti. Voila! You are a pasta maker!

KITCHEN HELPERS

PASTA-MAKING TOOLS FOR HOME COOKS

Items you may want to invest in (left to right): **KITCHENAID PASTA ROLLER**, \$139, and **KITCHENAID KPXTA PASTA EXTRUDER ATTACHMENT**, \$179, both at amazon.com or surlatable.com; **"ENCYCLOPEDIA OF PASTA,"** translated by Maureen B. Fant (University of California Press, \$43) and **"HANDMADE PASTA WORKSHOP & COOKBOOK,"** by Nicole Karr (Page Street, \$22), both at amazon.com.

