

We Try Out Sara Jenkins' New Italian Pantry App

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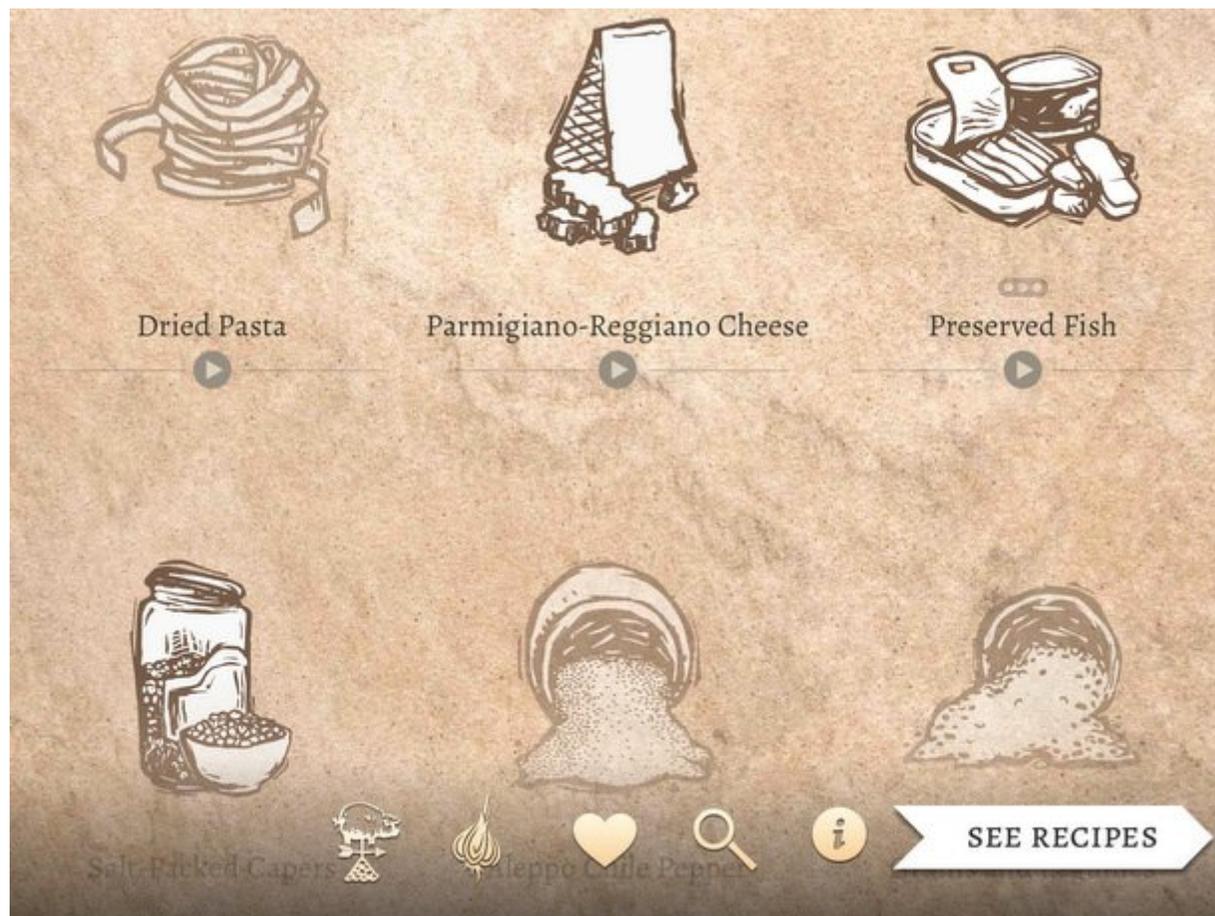


Whether it's a repurposed closet, a jumbled drawer, or an elegantly organized shelf, a well-stocked kitchen pantry can offer up one of the greatest tricks in a home cook's deck of cards—dinner from nothing. Pasta, anchovies, olive oil, and red pepper flakes? Dinner is done. Got canned beans, an onion, and perhaps some tortillas in the freezer? Taco night. Have rice noodles and soy sauce? Stir-fried noodles are in your future.

It is with this purposeful pantry ethos that cooking apps like [Sara Jenkins' New Italian Pantry](#) seek to engage. Designed exclusively for the iPad [by the founder of Tasting Table](#), this is the first in a new series of ingredient-driven, technique-based cooking apps with the aim of getting folks comfortable with spontaneous cooking. Jenkins, the chef and owner of [Porsena](#) and [Porcetta](#), was a solid choice to host the Italian version.

The app is based around Jenkins' selection of 16 key pantry ingredients like pasta, preserved fish, garlic, and Parmesan cheese. Most of her staples are obvious choices, but she does include some wild cards in the mix such as aleppo

pepper and bottarga. Not all on the list are cheap (cough, bottarga, cough), but they are each multi-purpose and versatile. Toggling through the home screen leads to informational videos on each ingredient; if you know anything about Italian food, you won't learn much from the videos, but it is still entertaining to listen to Jenkins rant about store-bought chicken broth.



You can search for recipes (there are an impressive 75 or so included) by selecting any number of pantry items from the home screen to find recipes that include each of them. About half of these recipes will call for a fresh ingredient or two, so they're not all completely last-minute. The app also has a search bar, so you could also pick up a vegetable or cut of meat from the store and go from there. Each recipe page opens with a quick summary of ingredients—good for grocery shopping.



Home-Style Porchetta

YOU WILL NEED

Pork shoulder
Sage
Rosemary
Garlic
Fennel pollen
Coarse sea salt
Black pepper
Extra-virgin olive oil
White or red wine

SERVES 6

The recipes themselves are relatively **simple and easy to follow**. I had a lovely pantry-based dinner of spaghetti with anchovies and bread crumbs with a side of roasted cauliflower with lemon straight made entirely with food from my pantry and fridge. Neither dish was mind-blowing, but they were recipes I'd certainly make again late on a Wednesday night.

Most recipes include a timer feature as well as (gorgeous) photographs of any complicated prep work needed. Be warned, though, if you set a timer for one recipe and then move to another page, the timer shuts off. For many recipes, this quirk isn't an issue, but for a few with recipes-within-recipes, you'll need to flip back and forth and will lose track of the timer.

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Porchetta was a childhood favorite of mine. We'd grab some for lunch or dinner at roadside stalls all over Tuscany and Umbria. I love it so much, in fact, that in 2008 I opened a shop dedicated to the dish in Manhattan's East Village.

Preheat the oven to 250°F. With a butcher or utility knife, score the pork skin in a crosshatch pattern, about 1 inch apart.

...y and garlic
...n a small bowl and
...nd pepper.

...out 10 incisions
...ver the pork and
...u'll use about one-
...pork with kitchen

HOME-STYLE PORCHETTA

♥ ADD FAVORITE

⏸ TIMER OFF

INGREDIENTS

One 4-pound boneless skin-on pork shoulder (not tied)

20 sage leaves

Leaves from 3 rosemary sprigs

2 garlic cloves, coarsely chopped

2 tablespoons fennel pollen

1½ teaspoons medium-coarse sea salt

1½ teaspoons freshly cracked black pepper

ROMA CLEAR, 34 °F

My only other gripe with the app is that neither bread nor polenta are included in the main pantry list; both seem pretty fundamental to a well-stocked Italian pantry. Bread shows up in a couple of forms throughout the recipes, but polenta is nowhere to be found.

Still, **for \$3.99 The New Italian Pantry app is a great deal.** Its photography and extensive recipe list alone place it more in the category of "short cookbook" than a "how to" app, making it a good buy for novices and experienced home cooks alike.