

## Cookbook watch: 'Zuppe' from the American Academy in Rome

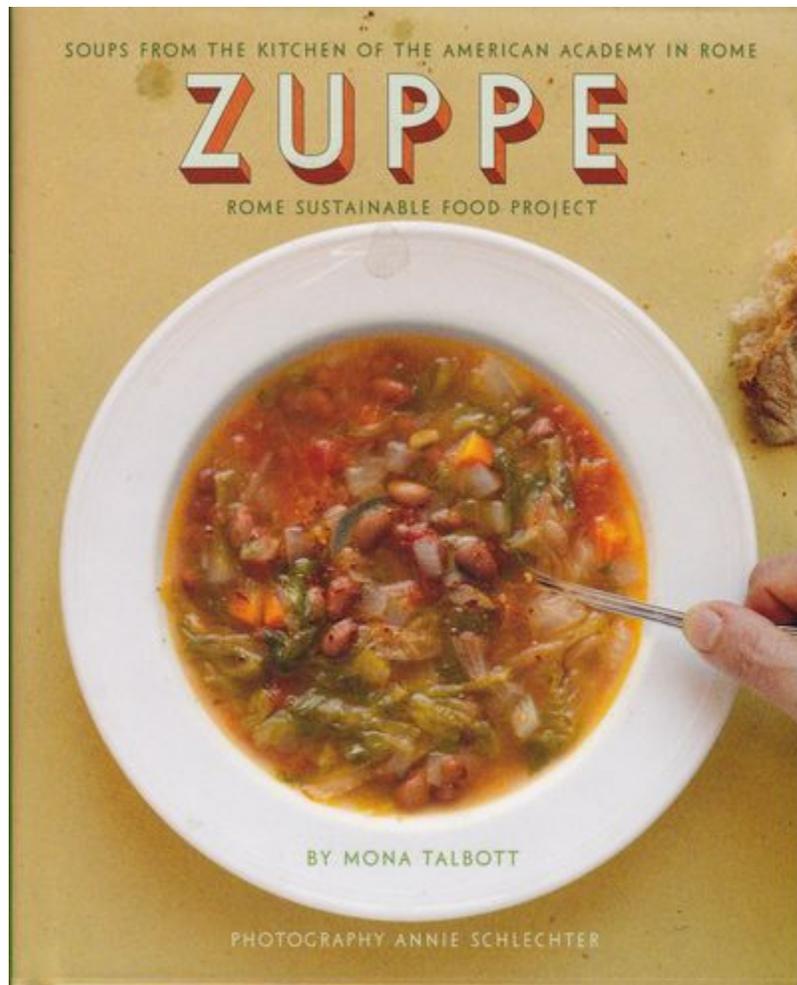
latimes.com



I can still taste the soup a Roman friend made for me 20 years ago. She'd just been up in the mountains in Umbria, to the 5th century town of Norcia, and brought back tiny Castelluccio di Norcia lentils and slender wild boar sausages. Norcia is famous for its salumi, particularly wild boar prosciutto and sausages.

She cooked up the lentils with a soffrito of vegetables, and sliced in some sausage. Then she set the table with wide, shallow soup bowls, laid a slice of bread in the bottom of each, broke an egg over the top and ladled the soup over. She poured a thread of new olive oil over and handed us each a big silver soup spoon.

On that bitter cold day: heaven.



I was reminded of that soup when I picked up a copy of the new cookbook "Zuppe" from Mona Talbott, head of the kitchen at the American Academy in Rome and executive chef of the Rome Sustainable Food Project. This small, lovely book includes 50 soup recipes, enough to keep you cooking for a good long while. They're divided up seasonally, so right now (spring), I'm looking at chickpea, cabbage and artichoke soup or risi e bisi, the famous Venetian rice and pea soup. But considering the fava beans waiting to be harvested in the garden, I'm going with fava bean, English pea and chicken meatball soup. I've also got nettles, so maybe her nettle and potato soup.

She's also got a spring lentil soup, this one with carrots, a little white wine, onion, garlic, smoked paprika and toasted ground fennel seeds punched up with lemon and chili pepper flakes. I can see that one in my future too.

