

MARIA'S

VOV

Eggnog liqueur and variations

Maria is one of our Star Grannies, who appears regularly in our videos. She is now 93 years old and still going strong. Most recently she shared her recipe for *Vov*, an eggnog style liqueur that she makes every Christmas. Vov is in fact the brand name for the first ever commercially produced zabaglione. It has an interesting backstory: it was given to troops—with added chocolate—during the First World War, and called a "*vino alimento vigoroso*" or "vigorous food wine." It was considered nutritious and a meal replacement for combatants fighting in the Alps.

A note about 90 per cent proof alcohol: you can find this on the bottom shelf of the bakery section in most Italian supermarkets. Everybody knows it is not a drink, and it must be diluted first, otherwise you'll end up in hospital. Thus, it is not for sale in many countries. Its presence is to preserve the eggs and make the drink a little bit more "boozy". Use vodka or grappa instead. Also please don't be tempted to use vanillin, a cheap vanilla substitute. I think it's a horrible flavor, but it's especially nasty in this drink; choose beautiful real vanilla instead!

Makes 4 cups (35fl oz/1 liter)

2 cups (17fl oz/500ml) full-fat milk
2½ cups (1lb 2oz/500g) sugar
1 teaspoon vanilla extract
6 extra large (UK large) egg yolks
7 tablespoons (3½fl oz/100ml) 90% alcohol (or vodka)
7 tablespoons (3½fl oz/100ml) Marsala wine

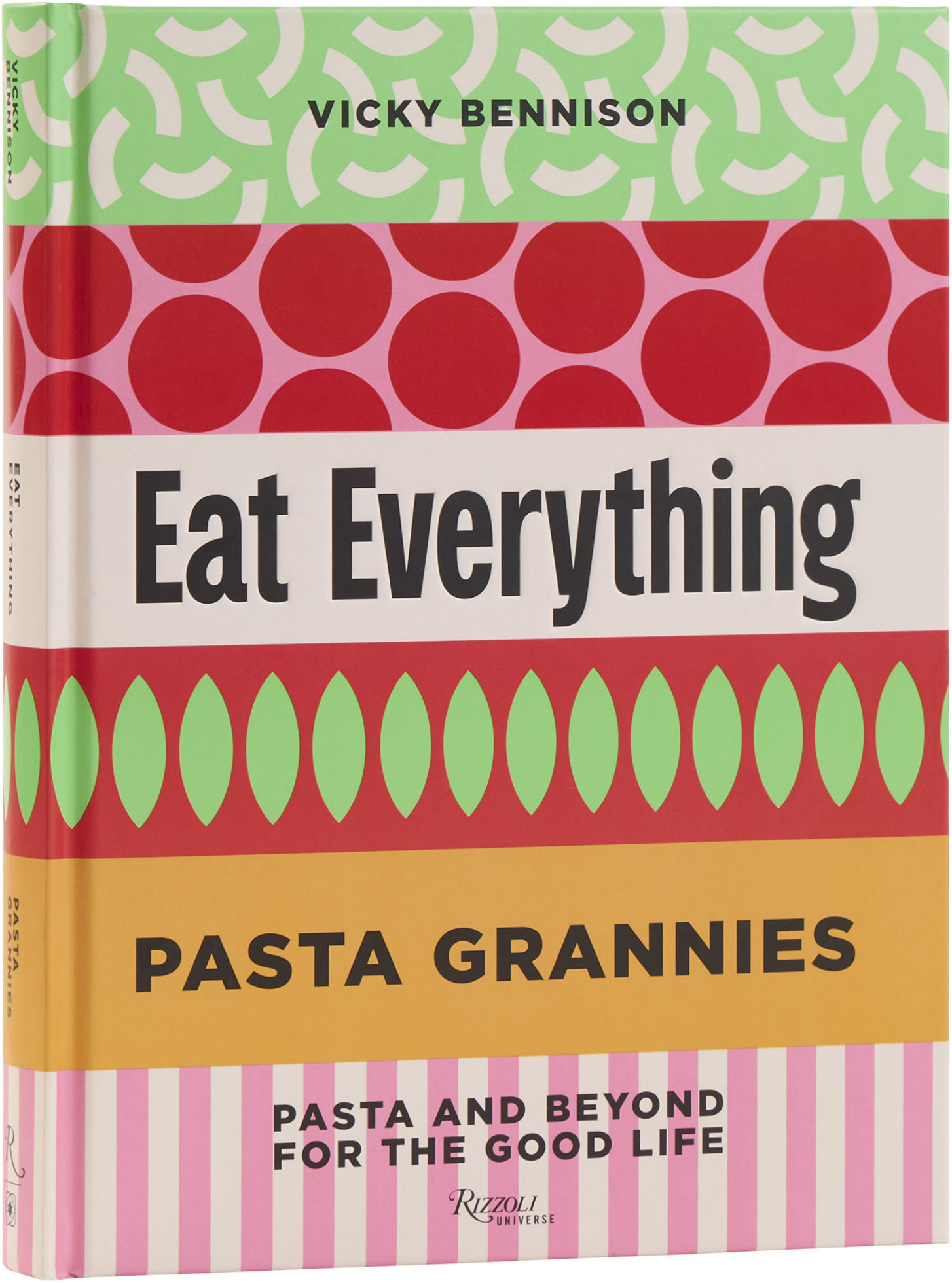
Boil the milk for 15 minutes. Let it cool slightly, then add the sugar and vanilla extract, stirring until dissolved.

Separate the eggs. Gently whisk the yolks for a few minutes, but don't whip them.

Once the milk has cooled, add the alcohol and mix well, then add the Marsala. Finally, incorporate the egg yolks. The liqueur is now ready. Stir it occasionally for a few hours before bottling to ensure it doesn't separate. Or you can enjoy it right away!

Note: With this method, the egg yolks are not cooked and you need to be certain of your egg source. Maria recommends having your own hens and using eggs laid that day. Here is an alternative method, which pasteurizes the yolks, for those of us who aren't that lucky:

Warm the milk with 1¼ cups (9oz/250g) of the sugar in a non-stick saucepan until steaming but not boiling. Whip the yolks with the remaining sugar in a bowl big enough to accommodate the milk. Once creamy, slowly add the hot milk to the bowl, beating the mixture as you do so. You're making a custard in effect, and if you have a thermometer, the temperature of the sauce should reach 158°F (70°C) and start to thicken. Then let it cool. Stir through the vanilla extract, the Marsala and the alcohol. Let it cool completely, then decant into preserving bottles. Leave them in a cool, dry place for 2–3 days before drinking, or pouring over ice cream.


VICKY BENNISON
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