



[Back Pocket Pasta: Inspired Dinners to Cook on the Fly](#), by Colu Henry. Copyright © 2017 by Colu Henry. Photographs copyright © 2017 by Peden + Munk. Published by Clarkson Potter/Publishers, an imprint of Penguin Random House LLC.

### Our Summary:

Like many modern cookbooks, [Back Pocket Pasta](#) promises to help every busy person get a satisfying meal on the table in a short amount of time from the ingredients you have on hand. [Back Pocket Pasta](#), however, has the unifying, undeniably pleasing, central ingredient of pasta. And, it's not pasta you have to make. Simply buy your favorite brand and style (though the author does suggest hers and a preferred style for each recipe) and you are on your way to a delicious pasta meal.

### What you need to know:

**Get it:** [Back Pocket Pasta: Inspired Dinners to Cook on the Fly](#), by Colu Henry. Copyright © 2017 by Colu Henry. Published by Clarkson Potter/Publishers, an imprint of Penguin Random House LLC. February 28, 2017 Hardcover \$28.00 ([Amazon: \\$18.26](#); [Kindle \\$14.99](#))

**See it:** 240 pages with color photographs of almost every finished recipe.

**Make it:** 98 recipes from 4 primary chapters including *Mama's*, *Powers Street, Brooklyn*, *Hudson & the Valley*, and *Travels Near & Far*, which do nothing to help you find a recipe other than suggest (maybe) a theme for the recipes in that chapter; a *Recipe Index* is provided at the end of the book segmented by main ingredient, such as *Meat* or *Vegetarian*. Also included are salad/side recipes and some cocktail recipes.

### Our Review:

Have you ever wanted to make a restaurant-styled pasta dish? Something full of flavor like *Crab Fra Diavolo*? Or an inspired version of a pesto? Or even something fun like a play on a “BLT”? The idea is great, but figuring out how to pull it off isn't. Despite the seemingly ease of cooking pasta and combining some obvious ingredients, a recipe to guide you gets the job done – easier, and probably faster. In Colu Henry's [Back Pocket Pasta](#), that's exactly what she's done! Each recipe is familiar, and each recipe is likely to be met with an enthusiastic, “so that's how it's done!” as you wander over to your pantry to figure out what's for dinner.

Henry coined the phrase “back pocket pasta” while working in both food publishing and public relations. Like all of us, at the end of a busy day she wanted an easy meal that didn't require a trip to the grocers on the way home. Pasta was her answer. In the time it took her pasta water to boil, she had found a handful of ingredients in her refrigerator and pantry that when cobbled together managed to hit the mark every time. The weariness of the day melted away in between satisfying bites. From that the hashtag “back pocket pasta” was born, and so too was this book.

Much like other books reviewed and cooked from on the podcast site [Now That's a Mouthful](#), simplicity isn't always easy. Colu does require you to shop seasonally – not hard since we all



probably visit the grocer at least weekly or have some kind of backyard garden; and keep a well-stocked pantry. If not, she provides her ideas of what you need, and if you shop weekly, will take you little more than a few weeks to put together. The result is Italian-style and home-cooked flavored pasta dishes like *Tonno (tuna) & Tomato with Sweet Onion*, *Pasta Puttanesca*, *Summer Corn & Tomato Pasta*.

But [Back Pocket Pasta](#) also stretches you. Henry suggests each recipe is more of a guide, which is good because her recipe writing sometimes leaves you scratching your head. She'll be talking about the boiling pasta water when she tells you to add the next ingredient, forgetting to mention that it's to be added to the sauce. Or she mixes up the order of things. And while they are little, but obvious, mix-ups, it seems counter-intuitive that you should have to rethink what the author really wants you to do while you're cooking.

Still, all may be forgiven when you arrive at creative recipes like *Brown Buttered Squash Bake* or *Baked Ziti with Crème Fraiche & Spinach*, or similar to Anna Jones' [Kale, Tomato and Lemon Magic One Pot Spaghetti](#) discussed on the podcast [Now That's a Mouthful](#) from [A Modern Way to Cook](#), Henry offers *Lemony Spaghetti* making her lemony sauce with a cream base. Just be sure to read everything first and make sure you're confident on how to proceed.

There are recipes that span the globe and keep you inspired regardless of the season. And, though [Back Pocket Pasta](#) does rely on many fresh seasonal ingredients, including tomatoes, most recipes with a tomato-based sauce rely on the popular and ever-reliable canned San Marzano tomatoes. Then again, this is about fast, quick pasta dinners, not spending a day making a homemade tomato sauce, or rolling fresh pasta.

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[Crab Fra Diavolo](#)

[Rigatoni with Roasted Cauliflower & Crispy Capers](#)

[Pasta with Shrimp in Tomato Cream](#)