



## Miami! #7 (Recipe for Adventure)

By Giada De Laurentiis, Brandi Dougherty



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When Zia Donatella comes to live with the Bertolizzi family, little do Alfie and his older sister, Emilia, know what's in store for them. Zia Donatella is determined to show them how a home-cooked meal is better than even the best takeout pizza. And when Zia's plan actually transports Alfie and Emilia to famous food cities around the world, they learn firsthand how food can not only take you places but also bring you back home.

In the seventh book in the series, Zia turns up the heat when her secret ingredient sends the siblings to the "Magic City" - Miami, Florida! When they get there, they cook up an unforgettable adventure full of beautiful beaches, salsa dancing, and deliciously spicy Caribbean food.

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**Miami! #7 (Recipe for Adventure) By Giada De Laurentiis, Brandi Dougherty Bibliography**

- Sales Rank: #712964 in eBooks
- Published on: 2015-10-20
- Released on: 2015-10-20
- Format: Kindle eBook

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### Editorial Review

#### About the Author

Giada De Laurentiis was born in Rome and grew up in a big Italian family. They spent a lot of time together in the kitchen, which is where Giada discovered her love of cooking! Later, she honed her skills at Le Cordon Bleu, a very cool cooking school in Paris, France. Many puff pastries and a graduation later, Giada began working in a fab restaurant called Spago in Los Angeles. Shortly after, she founded her very own catering company. She is now the Emmy Award-winning star of Food Network's *Everyday Italian*, *Giada's Weekend Getaways*, *Giada in Paradise*, and *Giada at Home*, as well as the author of seven cookbooks. Giada loves the colors "pesto-green" and "eggplant-purple," and Nutella pancakes are her favorite treat to share with Jade.

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“You should have seen me, Zia!” Alfie said to his great-aunt. He scooted forward and leaned over the front seat of the car. Zia Donatella had just picked Alfie up from soccer, and they were parked in front of the school, waiting for Alfie’s sister, Emilia, to come out of her dance practice.

“*Dimmi*,” Zia said in Italian, turning in the driver’s seat to face Alfie. “Tell me.”

“Jackson and I were flying down the field, passing the ball back and forth. We had the best rhythm going. Then Jackson got blocked, but he passed and I scored a goal. It was awesome!”

Zia laughed. “*Ben fatto!* Well done.”

“It was only a practice game,” Alfie said. “But still! Coach Schrader was really excited about our teamwork, and I know we’re going to beat the Thunderbirds this weekend! It’s our first big game of the season, and they beat us bad last time we played, but we’re ready for them this time.”

“That’s great, Alfie,” Zia said. “It’s going to be an exciting game.”

“For sure,” Alfie said, smiling.

The passenger door opened, and Emilia slid into the backseat next to Alfie. Alfie sat back and put on his seat belt.

“*Ciao, bella*,” Zia said to Emilia. “How was your practice?”

Zia and Alfie listened for Emilia’s reply, but she mumbled something they couldn’t understand as she tossed her gym bag on the floor and fastened her seat belt.

Zia started the car and pulled away from the curb. They drove in silence for a while. Alfie looked out at the bright green grass and beautiful flowers on the lawns they passed. There had been a lot of rain this spring, and it seemed like everything had suddenly bloomed. Alfie glanced over at Emilia. She sat perfectly still. He could see Zia watching Emilia, too, in the rearview mirror.

“Everything okay?” Zia asked.

Alfie looked at his sister again. Even though she was a year and a few months older than him, and enjoyed reminding him of that every single day, right now she looked very small. Alfie thought she might cry.

“What’s wrong?” he asked.

Emilia stared at the seat in front of her and picked at the headrest. She was definitely holding something back. Finally, it all came out in a rush. “Practice was terrible! There’s no way I’m going to make the dance team. I’m the worst one—everybody is better than me!” Emilia buried her face in her hands.

Alfie looked at her, surprised. He hadn’t seen her this upset since the time she couldn’t go to her friend’s birthday sleepover. And he’d never seen her get upset over dance—it had become her new passion, and she loved it.

“Surely that’s not true, *ragazza*,” Zia said in a soothing voice.

Emilia dropped her hands from her face. “It is true! There are so many girls trying out this year, and they’re all really good. They all have their routines down pat, and I’m still not even sure what I want my routine to be!”

“When are the tryouts?” Alfie asked.

“Two weeks!” Emilia cried.

“That seems like lots of time,” Alfie said. He thought he was being helpful, but Emilia gave him a look like he wasn’t.

“The worst part is that Becky has this amazing dance move. I’ve never seen anything like it. And it totally ties her routine together and makes her stand out from the rest of us.”

Alfie and Zia were quiet. Alfie wasn’t sure what else to say. He didn’t want to set Emilia off again, but Becky was her friend—it seemed like Emilia should be excited for her.

“I don’t have a special move,” Emilia continued. “And if Becky makes the team and I don’t, I don’t know what I’ll do.”

Emilia put her head in her hands again and a little squeak escaped her lips.

Alfie wanted to say something else encouraging, but he wasn’t sure what. Emilia was quiet next to him. After a few minutes, he couldn’t stand the tense silence any longer, so he decided to change the subject.

“Um, what’s for dinner tonight, Zia?”

“I made some homemade ravioli today,” Zia answered.

“Yum!” Alfie said. Zia was an amazing cook and during the time she’d been staying with the Bertolizzis, she had made some of the best food Alfie had ever had.

“I just need to make a salad when we get home. Maybe you can help,” Zia said.

“Sure!” Alfie replied. Helping Zia in the kitchen had become one of his and Emilia’s favorite things. Alfie never imagined that he’d love cooking and learning new recipes as much as he did, but there was something about the way Zia described everything that made it extra special—not to mention extra magical! Alfie and

Emilia had visited some incredible places all around the world thanks to Zia's enchanted recipes. They were always eager to know where Zia's secret ingredients might take them next.

Alfie looked over at Emilia, expecting her to be thinking the same thing, but she was still absolutely quiet. He slumped back in his seat. He hated seeing Emilia this upset and wanted to help, but he just didn't know how.

Early Saturday afternoon, Alfie wandered to the living room, hoping to play video games for a while. His parents had rushed off to the office as soon as the breakfast dishes were done. They'd been working more than ever lately—including on the weekends. Dad had explained their tight deadlines earlier that morning, but Alfie thought he just looked tired and could use a break.

Alfie heard the music before he reached the living room and then stopped in the doorway to watch. Emilia had pushed the coffee table out of the way and was working on her dance routine. He was a little surprised by Emilia's music choice—he thought she'd pick something a little peppier than the slow beat of this song. But her dance moves looked good. She was such a perfectionist.

Emilia stomped over to her cell phone and stopped the song. Then she noticed Alfie.

"Don't watch!" she said.

"How come?" Alfie asked. "You look good!"

"No, I don't! I can't get anything right."

Alfie didn't understand why Emilia was being so hard on herself. He knew she was a natural dancer, and she had never doubted it before now. "But I've seen you do samba in two Carnival parades in Rio de Janeiro and do a hula performance in Hawaii with barely any coaching!" Alfie said, thinking about a couple of their Zia adventures.

Emilia sighed. "This is different. I have to do the routine all by myself. And everybody's supercompetitive and really talented. I'm just not good enough."

Emilia started the song again and glanced back at Alfie, waiting for him to leave. But Alfie stayed, anyway. Emilia's frustration with herself continued to grow. And it looked like she was trying to copy someone else's moves—Becky's, Alfie supposed, but it didn't look quite right.

Zia came into the room and stood beside him. Emilia switched off her song again.

"How about a lunch break?" Zia asked.

"Yes, please!" Alfie and Emilia said in unison. Alfie was starving, as usual, and he knew Emilia was looking for any excuse to take a break from her routine.

"Great," Zia said.

Zia put her arm around Emilia and led her into the kitchen. Alfie followed close behind. Emilia was still quiet. "I know you'll figure it out," Zia told her. "Don't get so down on yourself."

Emilia nodded and managed a small smile.

Alfie took his usual place at the kitchen island and waited for Zia to assign him a task. Zia opened the refrigerator and pulled out honey mustard, butter, some deli meat, Swiss cheese, dill pickles, and arugula. “What are we making, Zia?” he asked.

Zia then took some whole-wheat rolls out of the bread box on the counter. “We are making Cubano sandwiches with an Italian twist.”

“Cubano?” Emilia asked. “As in Cuban?”

“That’s right!” Zia answered.

“I’ve never had a Cuban sandwich before,” Alfie said. “Let alone an *Italian* Cuban sandwich!”

Zia laughed. “Well, you’re going to love my version.”

Zia put the cutting board on the counter and sliced each of the long wheat rolls in half horizontally. Then she pulled a couple of dill pickles out of the jar and cut those into long, thin slices, as well. Zia slid one roll toward Emilia, who stood beside her at the island, and the other to Alfie. “Spread some honey mustard on each half of the roll. Then add a slice of Swiss cheese to the bottom half.”

Once their ingredients were added, Zia piled several pieces of meat on each sandwich.

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