The titular neighborhood of Frank Pellegrinos Raos: Recipes from the Neighborhood is Manhattans East Harlem, home to an Italian immigrant population. The area also boasts Raos, Pellegrinos Southern Italian restaurant that was discovered by local worthies and is now New York City's toughest reservation. The book, a follow-up to the bestselling Raos Cookbook, offers 125 recipes for the kind of fare offered Raos, and by Pellegrinos extended family and neighbors--dishes like Pizza Rustica, Penne Rigate with Cauliflower, Veal Milanese, and My Mothers Stuffed Calamari. This deeply satisfying, utterly unpretentious cooking is easy to do, but must be handled with care to avoid debasing an already hybrid cuisine. The book scores in this, offering exemplary versions of Old-to-New World dishes, and is neighborhood-authentic down to the use of American convenience products like garlic powder. Readers will also relish the wide recipe range, which includes sweets such as Simple Ricotta Cheesecake and Nonis Chocolate Ravioli, as well as Pellegrinos headnotes, which reveal who made what when. (Of the contributor of Wedding Soup, for example, he says, his grandmother and my grandmother ... both came to America in 1911 in the same ship.) This flavorsome background, plus homey photos and other memorabilia like Our Kitchen Table make this modest book particularly welcome. --Arthur Boehm

My Personal Review:
I second much of B. Marold's comments that this book is a must have for Italian-American cuisine, although I think this book and "The Rao's Cookbook" complements each other quite nicely. From a glance I notice there are not as many overlapping recipes between the two books that others imply - a few more "home" recipes here while "The Rao's Cookbook" tends to offer more traditional "red sauce" fares, and perhaps more recipes that are served in restaurant settings. For example, this book does not offer veal permingino while two Italian-American bread recipes are covered that do not appear on "The Rao's Cookbook".

I have read Lidia Bastianich's "Lidia's Italian-American Kitchen", but given that I myself already own The Rao's two cookbooks and a few works at the
extreme other end of Italian cuisine such as Mario Batali’s works and Giorgio Loctaelli’s "Made In Italy" and a couple of others, I think they have pretty much covered the grounds of Bastianich's book.

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