How Meal Planning Simplifies Family Health With Prep Dish Founder with Allison Schaaf Transcript

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Introduction to meal planning and Alison Schaaf

How many times have you heard me talk about the importance of meal planning? It's one of the most underrated, underused health tools. I recommended all the time, whether it's on this show or when I'm guesting on other shows.

Can't believe I am finally getting to actually talk to someone that has made meal prepping their business. Alison Schaaf is the founder and CEO of PrepDish.

It is a meal-planning service that helps busy individuals and families save time while enjoying healthy, stress-free meals. And Allison is a trans chef and she's a dietitian.

She also is someone who struggled to have kids and has finally now has four kids. So she had quite a journey getting to be a mom and shares that as well, which I found very moving.

Welcome to Everyday Ancestral. I'm your host, James Berry, with today's guest, Allison Schaaf. What actually got you into going down the path of becoming a chef, and studying nutrition?

Yeah, it's interesting. You know, growing up, I was always involved in sports. And I think also my mom wasn't that into cooking. So I thing that kind of got me into a cooking like I can remember on Sundays, she wouldn't want to have lunch right after church.

I started kind taking on that role just because I'm hungry and I kind took over in high school doing part of the cooking, just I guess, practically. But I did have some grandmothers.

Both my grandmas are wonderful cooks. So I think I was always inspired by them and just had an interest with being in the kitchen. Gosh, even in junior high, I created a catering company, actually making cookies.

Maybe not the healthiest, but I remember selling them to my dad for his board meetings. It's kind of a double win for me because not only did my Dad pay for the ingredients, he also paid for whatever price I put on the price list.

That was one of my That's so great. Oh my gosh It were you an only child or did you have siblings?

Early cooking interests and culinary-nutrition training

I had two younger sisters, so I was the oldest child. So I think also, you know, kind of liked to help out in that sense too. But yeah, I got inspired to go on to culinary school.

I found a great program that combined culinary and nutrition. And I guess for me, just never quite understood how either of those can stand alone. If you're going to into culinary arts, I mean, and spend all this time cooking, wouldn't you want it to be something that's going to nourish your body and make you feel better?

Not just in taste, yes, but also in like how your buddy feels. And then, you know, same thing with nutrition. How can you talk about nutrition without knowing how to cook?

No one's gonna long-term follow nutrition advice unless it tastes good. So to me, it's just like the two fields. can't be separated but they often are, mostly are.

So, you know, I always kind of went down that path but also had this like entrepreneurial streak to me always. Like I was always creating businesses when I little and knew that I kind set out on my own path as well but just had the

interest in that culinary and nutrition piece.

What floors you go to? Johnson and Wales, it's a pretty, one of the main, you know, culinary schools. But yeah, gave you the requirements to go on and become a dietitian.

I had to, I went to Tufts then for grad school and they had a nutrition communications degree, which was nice because I, again, knew I wanted to do a different path.

And so I think having that communications piece just kind of gave me a better background to set off and be more creative in what I did. Yeah, that's fantastic.

I went to a program in New York that also fused nutrition with culinary skills. And it's always been the same thing as what you said, too. It's like, why are those separated?

But yet they really are. Yeah. No, I did internships at some famous spas, and I remember going in like, oh, this is going to be so great. These chefs are going be to so into it.

And I always would find there were one or two in the kitchen that were, they were into. But for most of the people, even at a health spa, it was just a job.

Like, there was a chef and it a was job and, yeah, maybe there are some requirements they needed to follow, so they did, but they didn't have that passion.

I was surprised at the lack of… I guess I just expecting so much more. And you got to cook for, you mentioned a rock star. Do you get to share who that is at this point?

Oh gosh, I don't know, probably not. I've never shared before. And I think they wouldn't mind since it's been so many years, but I lost touch. But yes, it was a famous drummer.

Oh, gosh. Him and his wife were so sweet. It was funny because they would be on the road and then he would get back and he'd always be so grateful. He was one of my most grateful clients, because after being on that road, he was just excited to get some nice, healthy home cooking.

But yeah, very down to earth. And I think, you know, with my personal chef services, I wouldn't be there physically cooking the food. I'd more do the meal prep, right?

So I, and they liked that. Like I kind of would set them up, but then they would have these like home cooked meals that the wife would prepare. So. Yeah, that's great.

Personal chef work and gluten-free discovery

Now what kind of, what sort of diet did you fall into right out of culinary school? And then what did fall in to prior to starting the business? Cause I know your business actually was gluten free.

You were doing gluten-free and paleo, right? Did you get home at a school already doing that? No, I actually myself was not doing any of that. But when I got into cooking for clients, having that dietician background definitely set me apart from other personal chefs.

So I really leaned heavily into that, started working with a lot of functional medicine doctors. And through that work, saw how important a paleo diet or an autoimmune protocol, especially short term could be to getting people on the path to health.

So that kind of got me inspired to do more of the dietary things. But then I think it was like halfway through the personal chef journey, my sister removed gluten from her diet because she was getting just terribly sick.

This was years before. It was kind a trendy year. I mean, I shouldn't say trendy because it's a real thing. Before was so mainstream and she got better almost immediately.

And it took a few years, but a years later I did an elimination diet. I really didn't have a specific issue that I had recognized or anything. But when I removed gluten from my diet, I think it's for 30 days, when tried to bring it back in, it was just very clear that gluten did not agree with my body.

And over kind of the next year, was actually my husband now, we were dating, and he came back home with me and looked at all these photos. He's like, that doesn't look like you.

And I'd never put it together, but pre-eating gluten versus not eating gluten allicin looked very different. There was a puffiness to my face, so much so that he almost didn't recognize me.

Oh yeah, that's really powerful. So just in case some people don't know what an elimination diet is, do you want to just share what you removed from your diet?

Yeah, so Dosh, I don't remember the specific one I did. So when you're doing an elimination diet, the idea is you kind of eliminate a bunch of items that might be causing inflammation or if you have a specific issue and then keeping them out for a set amount of time, usually about 30 days, and reintroducing one at a time over a period.

I do recommend it's something that's really helpful to do with a dietician or a functional medicine, doctor, practitioner of some sort, just to kind of help guide you through it.

Because I didn't have an exact issue, I don't know that I followed a very specific protocol that closely. Did you just follow the basics? Yeah. I mean, eliminated.

No sugar, no gluten, dairy, grains. You know, sort of like a paleo type diet. Autoimmune protocol or not. I can't remember. It's been so long ago, but I just I know that the only one that had the huge impact on me was Was the gluten and I had done some sort of blood test back then there were a bunch of Blood tests that people could do so Now skip ahead though, when you were, you have quite the story around conceiving and trying to conceive, which inspired you to start a website.

Would you want to just share what that website is so people can go and check out your story? I'll preface that it's primarily around miscarriages, but really powerful essays that you wrote just about your experiences.

What website can they go to to learn and, and and Yeah, it's miscarriagehokedesk.org and it outlines my journey to building my family. And yeah, we kind of went into it, my husband and I just not expecting any sort of issues.

I thought we were both healthy. We were and gosh, We just started running into this issue of I had one mis carriage and then another and another, and just kind kept going on.

In total, I have six losses and was just in shock after each one, just totally unexpected. It's interesting, even after you've had a few, it's kind of like you're more likely, statistically, to continue having them.

But each was just still so shocking and so unexpected, and I felt like I was, quote unquote, doing all the right things. And man, yeah, quite the journey.

Yeah, absolutely.

Infertility, miscarriages, and building a family

And that's kind of where I was going is that so many times like people in the field, particularly who are, you know, helping other people get healthy, who understand nutrition or you do you think you're doing the right things that how could this be happening to you so I imagine it was almost it felt almost like you were drowning even more you know because it's like I should know I Should be able to fix this and yet as your journey showed it wasn't always

just about the nutrition clearly Yeah, no, and it was, you know, I can't even sit here today and say that I know for sure, it's this, this and this.

You know that's the struggle with infertility is there's so many things that can be impacting it. And a 50-50 thing, right? Like there is an egg and a sperm and both are contributing 50%. So there are so things can going on.

I did figure out I have an autoimmune condition like a blood clotting disorder. So I was on blood thinners for most of my pregnancies, but still went on to have miscarriages even on the many of the pregnencies where I'm blood thinner.

I do think there were additional things that were going on as well. Well, and when people go to the site and learn more about you, what you wrote, they'll learn you did adopt a child initially and then birthed another child.

And then did you just adopt your recent two children? Yes, so in total we have three adoptions and one biological so far. Yeah, that's so powerful. But I'm just curious, does your journey with getting pregnant and then adopting, has that shifted your how you eat as a family and as individuals?

Gosh, you know, the biggest way that it's shifted how I eat, I don't know that my fertility journey I think in some ways with the fertility stuff, I actually learned to, well, now sort of loosen up because while I was going through it, was just so concerned that it was something dire related because that's where my head goes.

So I thinking in ways I've maybe loosened up a little bit on that side of things. I mean, the biggest thing for me now that we have kids is I just feel so strongly about the power of like sitting down for a family meal and that yes, that food being, you know, healthy and whole foods based and all these things is important.

But just as important is that we all sit down and that were calm when we eat. And sometimes I do look back and be like, well, was I like eating in front of my computer?

So was eating the right things, but in the wrong way, you It's so powerful now to sit down and, you know, with four kids, it's not always like calm, but you just sit and take a deep breath.

And sometimes my aura ring will say that I was relaxed. I'm like, oh, my goodness, like this is this, is what it is. Right. Is sitting down enjoying a meal with each other and connecting.

and I think that's kind of the power in food and why food is nutritious is not just the nutrients it providing, that it the connection. Yeah, the how, right?

Not only how it's prepared, but how you eat it. Now, so many families though, they struggle with the time and decision fatigue around meals. And I know that's why you built your company, what's your approach to bringing the simplicity without sacrificing nourishment?

Gosh, well, with simplicity, I think it's one realizing like at the core, a healthy meal doesn't need to be fancy. And in fact, the fancier I try and get, my kids may or may not push back a little bit, but the simpler meals they don't pushback on.

So, you know, like a salt and pepper chicken drumstick, always a winner, and that's salt pepper. I would love to have every meal be a bit more gourmet, Um, go over just as well and, you know, usually wanting to mix up the flavor combinations and do fancier sauces.

That's more for me. Um. So I think that's the first thing. And like starting there with a simple meal, that just like a great place to start. Because if you start trying to do too much, it makes it too easy to fall off and like be like unmotivated to it.

Now, you've talked about food is medicine. And I think very much you exemplify that as during your journey of trying to get pregnant and through that whole process.

What do you think modern parents are overlooking with current modern diets versus ancestral diets? Oh, gosh, that is such a question. You know, I thing part of it is just like thinking like what they're doing, like, I don't know how to say this in a nice way, but thinking what their doing is just, it's been normalized, right?

Like, oh, well, this is what a snack comes out of a package. My kids do not eat any snacks that come out like a little tiny package, if you just start there, to me, that's like the simple place to just like give them a piece of fruit, chop up a vegetable, those are our two options for snacks in our house.

Like we don' have anything that comes from a packet, And there's nothing inconvenient about eating a piece of fruit, right? Like an apple, an orange, a banana, those are convenience foods too.

So I think part of it's just like shifting your mindset a little bit around like what's convenient. And like, even if we're in the car, like we can still take fruit.

Like we don't need these packaged items. so I thing part if it just taking a step back and realizing like how far away we've come from what we should be eating.

Yeah, absolutely. And I love that you were like, you know, make everything. You're not saying you have to make every thing from scratch. It's like cause I think that's, that a trap everyone gets into, right?

They think. Oh, I have to be like a homesteader and I to make everything from scratch, but I've got a business, a husband, kids, and then I'm just stressed out.

But you're just trying to simplify and say, no, just cut up some cheese, have some fruits, cut some vegetables, keep it simple. Yeah, I see people. They'll do these like, you know, they'll want to create these, like healthy muffins and healthy cookies and they add shredded vegetables.

And I'm like that's fine. That's fun. If you want get your kids in the kitchen, do it. It's great. But let's just start with the basics of slicing some cheese and some fruit and there's your snack.

You know? And it's like you kind of go overboard in that other direction and it kind missing the point. Has becoming a parent changed How you eat like and how you even look at food have you do you think like becoming a parent has actually simplified your process of eating and and now you look good food.

It's added a little more structure. So my husband and I were always good about coming together, and he's also an entrepreneur and works from home. We were good at usually breakfast and dinner, coming, together and eating.

With kids, it's a lot more okay. I especially have one, if we do not eat dinner at five o'clock, he is going downhill.

Family meals, simplicity, and kids in the kitchen

There's no flexibility on timing anymore. That's probably the biggest one. Yeah, I mean, we always did start with the family meals, but now I really try and get in there and sit down.

You know, even if I can sit with them for lunch, it's great when Ican. And then also there are gone the days of like, you know sometimes if you're like oh, you know, not do a full meal tonight, but now I really do try and have something.

Although I will say every now and then I'll do like once a month on Sundays, like a snack board where it's just kind of like chopped up different things, whatever is left in the fridge.

And it' funny that that's like my kid's favorite meal of the week. almost like a crudite or, yeah, like that kind of thing. That's cool. Because even as a parent, I found that I'm just like, to your point, and I don't, not cooking as many gourmet food meals anymore.

I just kind like following kind formulas. It's like it needs a protein, it need a veg, some kind starch or something, if that's what we're eating. And we just build it that way.

Are you finding that, Are your kids, I know the oldest is six, you said, right? And then it goes down in age from there, but are you dealing with picky eating yet?

If so, how are coping with that? I definitely see it. It's interesting because from what I've observed with my kids I don't have any true like what you I would call picky eaters by any means.

I noticed when it happens, it's more like a developmental change of like, I want to be able to say this and have you listen. Like, oh, I don't want this tonight.

And I'm like, but he's had that several times before. So I was just like okay, and kind of, not ignore the behavior, more like acknowledge it. It's usually when they're saying it, for my one that says it it's not usually like a true I-don't-like-this.

I wanted to have this opinion and you listened to it." The one thing I have changed is I don't always like if I'm gonna do a pasta dish or like something where everything's mixed together.

I will sometimes separate out the ingredients because I find it's a little easier for them when like the Ingredients are separate. So that's the one thing I have changed or like maybe the sauce is on the side, you know, like if I haven't to make sure you don't Smother everything with it.

I put it on this side but yeah, I've really tried from the beginning, You know to always you just introduce them to everything early and often and really work on my language around meal times and how we introduce foods and of course having them involved in the kitchen and man that makes a big difference and Yeah, let's talk about that and I'd love to even dive in more into family meals around the table because that is so important.

Do you have any tips for people of how they can, like let say they are struggling to kind of get the family together or to establish routine dinners. But do you any any tip for how someone might go around and start to co-create that in their family?

Yeah, gosh, so much. One, well, one, having a plan for the week is good because you can step back, kind of know what you're going to have each night. So at least, because if you are going into it frazzled, it's going make it that much harder.

Like you need to be able to go into meal time, this is what we're having and at this time. And that way you've already set the tone for like, we are not going ask questions about this.

This is like what's happening. But yeah, the more you get them involved the better. I like to, you know, No kind of the meals that work. Like there might be a meal where you're just like, oh, tonight I'm like so tight on time and it's going to be frustrating.

But as much as possible, I get my kids in there and give them tasks and let them help out. And it just gets everyone on board with kind the whole cycle of diving into meal time.

Gosh so much so my six-year-old recently came to me and told me he was gonna make every meal for me And if I wanted to sleep while he cooked I could so you can tell but I prioritize it's like if you want to Sleep, I can cook He's already like from now on every I just need to see but every like every dinner preparation time I think I mean, that's hilarious, but he's always exhibiting You know how you talked about yourself when you were younger how yeah, like I'm gonna start taking over the cooking He is exhibited in those characteristics Yeah, we've had dumb talks about that because he'll want to just like come up with something new to create on his own and I'm like, okay, We can do this and i'm told in my view and said, you know, You remind me of me but and this is great, but we can't just You know 10 minutes before dinner create a whole new dish i've like if you want To create some list meet at the beginning of the day and decide like when and where and how it's going to work and um, yeah, he loves oh and so

we have a garden this year and that's been a really good because they'll go into the garden they love to pick things out of there and then You know, if an herb came from the garden, all of a sudden they want to try it.

But if it just shows up on their plate, they're like, I'm not touching this. Oh, okay. So help maybe establishing some kind of garden whether it's an urban one or in the back.

Yeah. In really helping them to see the food growing, you're finding that inspires them actually eat it too. Yeah, well the other day I brought in a zucchini from the garden and before I could even say anything, my four-year-old was peeling it and we cut it up and sauteed it.

And I'm telling you, I don't usually peel my zucchini. I dunno why I didn't peel it, it was so much better peeled. You know, the saute, and I think roasted it's fine, but saute zucchini, that's my new hack, courtesy of my 4- year- old.

Peel your zucchinis before you saute them. Do you have any rituals around the table? Do do you do prayer or do have, I know you sent your oldest to a Waldorf school, do do any Waldorfs songs or anything like that?

Yep, so we do a prayer before and we vary, sometimes it gets into an argument. you know, who gets to say the prayer of everyone joins in. But yeah, we have some of the Waldorf ones that we do, and then we're Christians, so we sometimes will do more of a Christian one.

And then one thing they do at Waldorff, it's the teachers that serve, but of course now he comes home. and he wants to serve. So we sometimes will have dinners where the kids will serve and they love that.

But again, we kind of have to, okay, We can't do that every meal because it's a process. It's so funny watching them imitate what they've learned, you know, because everyone has to stay seated and then he gets to call everyone to come up one by one and He serves them and we have like to light our candle if we want seconds and serve seconds for us.

Oh, wow. Now, I want to talk a bit about your company, but before we go into what people would experience with their company. How, if someone's not using your companies, how would you recommend they get started with meal planning?

Like, what can they use at their house or what steps would recommend that they take with what they already have? The number one thing is just, and I know it kind of sounds redundant, but like have a plan, you know?

And do it in advance, right? Like either Friday afternoon or Saturday morning, look at your calendar for the week, jot down an idea of what you're gonna have for dinner each night.

And you can do all the meals, But dinner's usually the one to start with. It's just having an ID of, what are you gonna to have, for a dinner. Each night will get you on the right track.

Even if it changes, at least that sets you up to one, be able to write a grocery list, buy the groceries. And then when you get to that time of day, if it's already written out, it just like having that one less thing to think about makes a huge difference.

Because if you're sitting there at five o'clock, I mean this is the biggest I think hiccup to healthy eating is at 5 o clock being like, oh my goodness, what are we going to eat?

Meal planning strategies and PrepDish overview

That's the hardest time to try and think of something healthy, you know, and that's, the easiest time, to, try to decide, Oh, maybe it will just like door dash, or whatever it is.

So the more you can have that plan and have some intentionality of how the week is going to go, The more likely you're at least going, gonna stick to it and a portion of it.

Yeah. So let's walk them through what they could do. If they're maybe starting that process on a Friday, what do you recommend they do? Are they looking at whatever cookbooks they have?

What's their thought process you recommended they had? Yeah, I'll tell you some of the things we think about when we create our meal plans at PrepDish.

Well, one, first, get in the calendar. So write out how many meals. You may be surprised like, oh, we have three events next week. I'm not going to buy.

We're not even eating at home or we're eating a family's house this night, whatever it is. Make sure you know how much meals you actually need so you're planning for the right number.

Start with the calender. But yeah, then from there, I look at it as protein, carb, vegetable, and the carb can be a vegetable as well. It just kind of depends.

So that's kind the first thing I think about. I like to switch up my proteins throughout the week. So, you know, beef, seafood, and then from there you can like chicken, pork, kind of whatever it is, but kind switch things up.

Although sometimes I'll do something like, a big roast at the beginning of the weekend and use those leftovers. Once you kind look at it, are there places where you could do things like that?

Like, can I double up on my chicken thighs and the next night have them on a salad and first night just have like a different way, you know, so figuring out that or same thing with like sauces.

I'll do that a lot. Like, OK, I'm going to make a chimichurri and have it over salmon on Monday. And again, with flank steak on Wednesday. So it feels like different meal, but making chimicheur like double batch of chimchiuri doesn't take that much longer.

You know just really kind of looking at the week so you can have this more holistic view of like what you're going have. In terms of finding the recipes, Gosh, I work so it's we have a recipe creator and meal plan editor.

She's also a chef and dietitian by background. Her background is more Mediterranean diet, but we will brainstorm and we actually look at our meals. like three months at a time.

So we'll plan three month at time just to make sure we get the right variety of not only flavors but just ingredients and are they seasonal. There's a lot of little like nuances that you can add to it but again in the beginning maybe it's like okay what are the four recipes that are really easy for me that aren't gonna make me stumble at five o'clock that I know my family's gonna eat and start there, you know, start with the really basic ones.

And then as you get into it, then you can add on and more of the nuances and maybe this week we'll try a pesto sauce or something. Do you find that there's a time frame for repetition?

Do people really need a different meal plan 30 days of the month? Or do you think it's actually practical to just have seven and just keep repeating that seven or mixing matching that 7? What do do recommend?

I find this is a personal preference and I haven't quite figured it out. I've heard some people say, I won't even eat leftovers. We wouldn't eat lunch if we didn't have leftovers, like lunch is always leftovers and then, you know, but then there's other people and it's like, okay, Tuesday's always tacos and Wednesday's, always stir fry and Friday's is this and maybe they vary the ingredients.

And I'm like I don't know that doesn't sound all bad, I personally like a little more variety and I enjoy it. And I also think, are you a live to eat kind of person or an eat to live kind person?

That can make a difference. I really enjoy, you know, trying out new foods and, there's something to be said even with the nutrition aspect of like having a variety of flavors and incorporating a right of different foods is going to

helpful from that aspect.

But yeah, in terms of what's the right balance, I think it's figuring out your family and who has the strong preference. Sometimes there's one spouse that really wants more variety, and sometimes there are people, honestly, that prefer less variety.

They'd rather kind of have the same thing every week, so it is just figuring where you guys are as a family. And what does prep dish, so we kind of laid out a lot of different things people have to think about when they're on their own.

So what is prepdish provide for people? So when it comes to variety, we do, if you want variety we can help. But we try and keep in mind that when subscribers are hitting us, some might be brand new or some have been with us for years.

We are always doing tried and true. in terms of like ingredients or approachable, I should say. But we provide meal plans each week. So we're giving a grocery list, meal prep instructions, and then night of instructions.

Basically taking that meal planning process I talked about earlier, but having it be done for you. Like, hey, if you want someone to plan out nutritionally, Nutritionally balanced meals with a variety of flavors that, you know, we feed our own families and just kind of hand you the instructions, then, that's basically what we provide.

And are people picking the diet that they want or are they all fitting a specific diet? So we have four different options to choose from. So one is paleo.

One is gluten free. And then there's a low carb one and a super fast, which is just family friendly, but like really, you know, trying to lean into the, okay, can you do one?

So actually our goal with that is one hour of meal prep or less to get you prepped for the week in terms of your meals. And do you find that, just out of curiosity, do find one is more popular than the other?

Like how are most people eating these days? So super fast is the most popular and we do look, we really surveys and cause I've wondered that too, like, okay, is it time to like cut one of them out?

Because I think like 60% of our, and some people switch between them. I know for sure there's some of that, but like sixty percent use superfast, But the other three, it's split so evenly.

So I can't really drop any of then because they're all being used, you know? And especially the paleo one, I tried to figure out if it a, if I needed to change the name on that or anything, but I think for the people that are looking for, if they need grain-free for some sort of health reason, then they kind of know to look for that term, even though it's not the same in terms of trendiness or whatever as it was back when I started several years ago.

It sounds like you do incorporate seasons into the meal planning, correct? Yes, yeah, for sure. And even like things like in the summer we'll incorporate some grilled items, always with the option to use your stove.

But the winter there'll be like some hearty stews. I mean, we're not going to do that in July. You know, will bring in more tomatoes in this summer. Squash in the fall and yeah, we're definitely like watching the seasons and even over the holidays.

We'll be like, oh and here Two of the plans will give dessert options And so we'll maybe do something like oh if you'd want to bring something to a Christmas party Here's a flourless chocolate cake you could make so We're really kind of keeping an eye on the season's but you're focusing mostly on dinner, correct?

Yeah, so dinner, the gluten-free and pale are both set up where there's one salad that you make for the week. I really love having just one side salad I do for a whole week, and then there is a snack, breakfast and dessert.

But the way those work, everything is numbered, if people want to make that they can, but if not, they just kind of ignore that number when they're going through the process.

Oh, see, you are supporting people through their whole day of meals if they want. Yeah if want, yeah. Ah, that's great, it's really great. I'm curious, how does, do ancestral foods have any place in your meal plans or have you built any into them?

What, so what would the ancestral feeds ear? Well like, you know, any more whole animal parts, like organ meats or even like bone broths or anything like that?

You know, not as much, mainly because sourcing them, I mean, you know I include them in my diet. So I'm a big fan of bone broth and I make it a few times a month.

And I do talk about that a lot and like, okay, if you wanna do it, here's how you do. You so when it comes up on a recipe though, we just call for broth, and they can decide if they wanna base do store bought.

broth is one for sure that's kind of my personal one of like, oh, you should make your own broth. And then Oregon meats, I don't know that we've done as much with, and I'm trying to get other ancestral things, in terms of I don't know.

We talk about some of the, you know, using more Whole Foods or like even things come up like, hey, I bought a whole cow.

Seasonal planning, prep tips, and kitchen tools

How can I swap this? And so we have those discussions with people, but more like to the side versus like as the main thing. So, yeah, mean, would I would love to incorporate some that stuff.

I think maybe that's not quite where my audience is though. How granular do you get around preparation? Do you recommend people soak things? Um, yes and no, like beans.

So a lot of that stuff, again, we're kind of like in the area of, will have either blog post or podcast episodes where we'll talk about, hey, here's the preparation and all that.

But then on the meal plans, it's like, okay, if you wanna get it done quickly, you know, Here's how you do it as well. We've kind had to find that balance of making it approachable, Like I said, for the new customers, but then people who have been with us for a while, and I know people on our, like Facebook group like maybe they belong to like a farm thing and they get something and They're looking for a substitution and stuff like that.

So we try and support them wherever they're at on that side of things Yeah, I imagine most people that are coming here just look are really looking time time hacks, right?

Like things that will speed up the process and make it easy Do you have any prep tricks that you can impart? You know, maybe maybe three or three that people Yeah.

So again, I think one, it gets back to that intentionality. When you are sitting down and like looking at your week and planning it and when you're looking a recipe, see, are there some ways that I can make this week easier for me?

So, again like making that big roast and using it for a few things, making a sauce and making it once. Like if you want to experiment with something new and some new flavors, Don't do like three different sauces for that week.

Do the same one for the next week, try a new one. Batching your vegetable chopping is like one of my best hacks because there's just something about opening your fridge and having that onion already be chopped at dinner time that just makes dinner that much easier.

I can chop an onion in like, I don't know, under two minutes, but it's so nice to just toss the pre-chopped, you know. It's kind of like that, how they started the cake mixes.

Like people are more likely to make a cake when all they have to do is add three ingredients versus 10. So I think if you can set yourself up to have dinner be a little easier by doing all of your chopping in advance, then you're going to enjoy it and be more like to to it make it a habit.

Any preservation tips? So when people bring in their groceries, are you a proponent of, do they take it out of the plastic bags? How do you recommend they store it in the refrigerator?

It depends a lot on like per produce. I will say when we're, and so this is another thing, if you're creating your own meal plans, when were doing ours, we are specifically looking at like, okay, day four or five, what are you gonna have versus day one?

So that is something we do take into account of like okay is that salad really gonna be good on that day? No, let's move it to this day and let say the thing that has like carrots in it for the last day.

Same thing like if your getting fresh some fish, not going to have that on day three. Fish is always like our first one just you know to try and account for that.

So but yeah and then in chopping the vegetables, most vegetables do pretty well. There's a few exceptions of things that don't last as long. We have gone back and forth on this and like done some experiments.

we've talked about doing just this full-blown like year-long experiment of chopping and seeing how long they last because it just The problem is it varies a lot because you don't know if you're going to a grocery store, you know, I could buy a carrot that's, two weeks older than the carrot you buy.

Or same thing, like I get a head of broccoli and it's already like not looking great where someone else gets a broccoli. And it lasts two more weeks in their fridge.

So I can have some generalizations, but you do know the produce that you are buying, how old it is, unless you picking it out of your garden. Should they store certain produce specifically?

Like should asparagus be stored in a glass of water? How about herbs? Do you have any recommendations on those? Herbs, I do like to store just in cup of a water like standing up.

I find that that helps. All the others, I don't really have a lot of strict guidelines on when there's things. Potatoes, usually cut in advance. Those turn brown.

I mean, those are not good meal prep things, the things you can do with the potatoes, bake some potatoes and then use them later. Salad, even just as simple as flipping it so it's upside down, it lasts longer.

You know what I'm mean? If you flip the tub upside-down, because it has been sitting upside for so long that it won't flip it. Yeah, obviously drain it first with the water right before you do that.

Yeah. But that's smart. Because the part that has been sitting is going to release more water and or turn brown faster. That's a really good tip. Do you find any tips for when people are cutting onions so they don't get the teary eyes?

If you stick them in the, the thing I've found that works best, stick it in a fridge before you chop it, at least an hour before your chop, and that helps to reduce it.

I'm a big crier with onions, like I really struggle, I don't know what that gene or chemical is, but whatever it is I got it! Get out, you know, get out the stored, emotions whenever you're cutting the onions.

What about cookware wise? Are you a stainless steel girl or cast iron? What's your favorite cook ware? Those two. I do cast-iron and stainless-steel. very well this is controversial but not into the air fryers they're just there's not one that has great materials actually i did buy one it's like made of glass but it didn't really work that well so the yeah stainless stainless steel and cast iron any appliances that you think are non-negotiable I think having at least a high-end blender or food processor, both is great, but you need to have at one of those to make like sauces and stuff.

That's the main one. I'm trying to think. So my biggest thing in terms of what you to need have high quality, like a chef's knife, a really good chef knife is probably going to cost you at $100, $80 to $ 100. but that's important to have.

And then a really good cutting board as well. Like it needs to be a decent size and not plastic or glass. It can be made of bamboo or wood of some sort, but no glass or plastic for the cutting boards and a big size.

Yeah, nice. Do you wear an apron when you're cooking or do you not wear any apron? I should wear an apron, I do not. Every now and then I, if I'm doing a big baking session or Thanksgiving Day, sometimes I'll put one on if it's, you know, depending on what I am wearing and all that sort of, maybe if i'm hosting people then i'll wear one, but no, not usually.

Yeah, i am notorious for not wearing them and of course my clothes get stained. I know the oil stains are the worst. That's where I'm like, I should wear one because when you get a little oil stain on your shirt, those are really hard to get out.

But you know what one thing that helps? This is a crazy tip, but you actually use like Dawn dish soap because it's designed to help pull oil. Yeah, so you actually put it on the oil spot and it used and then and you rub it in and Then put in your washer and usually will come out just like it does On your cookware, isn't it?

I have a few shirts that I'm having mine this yeah. Yeah. It's really it's a really fast thing any other kind of Trying to think. So I always get asked these questions and rarely do I get to ask someone else these culinary tips.

Well, let me start here. What do you listen to when you're cooking or do listen anything? I used to, but now my kids are always in the kitchen with me.

So I find that if there's already the noise of the kids, I use to listen more to podcasts and stuff. And I also find in mornings I like listening to music, so Saturday morning breakfast I do.

I think the afternoon, because I'm so tapped out, prefer more quiet than even music or something like that. Yeah. So yeah, I don't listen to much. Yeah, but conversation with my kids, like I've learned now kind of like four to five is time to spend with kids.

I started to view it as that because I think for me in the past I was like, oh, need to make dinner at this time. And then it was me making dinner and them wanting my attention.

Now I'm like okay, know I can get dinner prepared in this timeframe. But I really shifted my mindset of This is me spending time with my kids and we just happened to get dinner made like together.

So and that's helped a lot with. My patients. Yes, that's such a good one. I went through that as well. When I had that other kind of get it done mindset, I would get so frustrated and yet that was exactly the wrong thing to do because you want your kids to be, to your point earlier, you wanna your kid to get involved with the cooking.

Homeschooling, business balance, and closing thoughts

You want them to curious about these things. And once I changed my mindset of like, no, this is quality time and this just what we're doing with that time.

And yes, everything went slower, but it was so much healthier for me mindset wise. So that's really encouraging

that you felt that too. Yeah, and I've learned to just really pause and be like, when I try and like tell them they can't do something in the kitchen and being like but why not before I say no to something.

And I have been amazed at how capable they are of doing things, you know? My six-year-old, he's on the stove cooking eggs by himself. He does things in an oven by myself.

My four- year- old is like really good with a knife and both of them can like chop a sweet potato. And it's a little terrifying at first, but I've monitored them enough and watched them, enough that I know I'm confident in their skills.

They're confident their skill. And yeah, they're just capable of a lot more than I think I initially would have thought. Just by kind of biting my tongue and sitting back and being patient.

It's like, oh, wow, They can actually help out. Yeah, that's great. Well, you mentioned that you're going to be entering homeschooling next year for the kids.

And I'm curious, like, how are you preparing, to run your business to still be a mom of four kids and then to homeskool? I am assuming you are going running the home school as your husband.

So I'm gonna be running the homeschool. We've always worked with au pairs, so we do have some help in the house. So that's good, especially with the young.

You know, as we have age wise, it's six, four, the four year old's almost five. And then an 18 month old and a two month-old. Being able to have someone else that focusing on the two little ones is gonna to be helpful and then I can do the home schooling.

The thing that I found, cause even this year when the boys had school four days a week, when they were home, it was like, they're actually quite helpful, you know, like with the little ones.

You know it's like they can entertain the 18 month old in a way that like if they are not home you don't have that. So I'm really excited to see us just kind of come together as a family and like function as a whole.

But yeah, I mean, we have the childcare too. So when I work, like I'm very separate from them. I try not to work as much in front of them, it's like, okay, i'm going to leave the room and go and have my work time and then like come back.

You know, of course, if it is something in the kitchen or you know there are certain things, but for the most part, It's a separate task. Well, It's not easy running a business and being a parent.

So kudos to you for choosing this path, but I'm excited to hear how it goes for you with homeschooling as well. But I so admire the effort and the decision, because I really, I believe very firmly after having not homescooled and after a household of two parents that are entrepreneurs that I do believe having one parent actually run the household and kind of be present with the kids and the family and helping to build that safe space in the home.

is more powerful and more important than I think we give it credit for because I feel like that's been our downfall a bit is because we've been so focused on our businesses sometimes and our kids would see us working and they would think, well, you're always working not knowing, of course, that, this is how all parents that have jobs are doing it.

You just can't see them. Yeah. Right. And so it's confused them over the years. We've had to really do a lot of repair work around that and kind of like reclarifying what work is and how good they have it that we're actually around all the time.

Because we both work from home as well. But I do wish that one of us could have homeschooled or just really been in charge of the business, the home business instead of just always focusing outside of home.

Yeah, no, it's so much to figure out, you know? I've tried to read a lot of books since having kids on that whole thing. Because it is, your home is this whole business that needs to run.

There's this home management. I even had someone on my podcast, and she has, I think, 11 kids in homeschooled. And she talked about all the, because it so like systems.

So it was like, OK, what systems do we need to have into place? What are the rhythms? How do you run? And going back to the meal plan thing, it's like, you've just got to be intentional with that.

Like if you don't like something, then you got of here, why is it not working? And then go back and figure out the solution. But so much of that can be figured out.

You just have to give yourself self the space and time to do it. Yeah. Well, I'm excited to hear how it goes for you. I mean, clearly you're not going to just be doing that you'll also be running your business, but it sounds like you are going do like a, an off split, something like 70, 30 or 60, 40 or something.

Right. Yeah, no, I've been very intentional that the business is more like, you know, kind of 20 hours a week or less, depending on what we're going through.

And I have a great team behind me of people at PrepDish who have been with me for years. That's the culture that I created. Everyone on the team is a mom.

So, we all value that. We all know that family is first. But we are all passionate about Prep Dish. Like we feed our families these meals. So it's been kind of a cool journey to home.

And they all have older kids, so it is nice that they can kind-of help guide me because here I am with little ones. Are you done at four or are you thinking you'll continue?

Probably done it four. Okay. It's not a hundred percent. It is not 100%. Yeah. Well, thank you so much for joining me and for sharing your gifts with our audience.

We're going to have links to PrepDish and how can people kind of learn more about you on socials and whatnot? Yeah, so at PrepDish on Instagram, I have a podcast, Meal Prep Monday.

You're going to be a guest on there. So you can go check out that episode. And then we have two-week free trial set up, prepdish.com. I think it's prepdish.

com slash ancestral. so they can there, and I'll make sure that's set-up and that can be in the show notes. But that is a good way to try out the meal plans.

Even say after listening to this, if you want to just kind of see our system for two weeks and try it out, do that. I hope everyone does. I really do.

Cause like I said, I feel like meal planning is one of the most underrated and underused tools, but it truly does move the needle the Most in my, my judgment.

Um, having that plan knowing when and how the meals are going to get done. Not only is that keep you from eating out, which is not the healthiest choice because it's pretty impossible to be healthy when you eat out.

But also like you pointed out earlier, it creates irregularity so that the focus suddenly is less on, what are we eating tonight? And it's more on okay, this is what we're eating.

This is the time we are eating and now we get to focus on each other. So if anything, I would offer the prep dish helps families be with each. No, I mean, that's what I've come to believe as well is like, yes, i want to have nutritious meals and tasty meals, but what i care about the most that i'm giving people is sitting down and having

that connection with your family and that is healthy, you know, like yes nutritious healthy but also emotional and all of these other pieces that it takes to be holistically healthy.

Yeah, That's wonderful. Well, thank you and thank everyone for listening or watching. If you like this episode, please leave a comment. It really does help us know what is resonating with you.

And if you should so like to please share with someone else and maybe leave your rating. These are the ways to communicate with us what you enjoy and we will keep doing that.

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