

## **Girls Night #226: How to Make Cooking More Fun and Less Stressful — with Bri McKoy**

0:00:05 - Stephanie

Hey friends, welcome to Girls Night. I'm Stephanie Mae Wilson and I'm so happy that you're here. Each week, I have a girlfriend over and we talk through one of the biggest questions we have about our lives as women. We're talking about friendships and faith and relationships and self-confidence, about our calling in life and how to live every bit of our lives to the full. Life is so much better and easier and absolutely more fun when we navigate it together as girlfriends, and I cannot wait to get started. Friends, I'm so excited about today's episode. Today we're talking about how to make cooking more fun and less stressful.

Now, if you've been listening to Girls Night for a while, you know that I absolutely love food. I can tell you exactly what I've eaten on every single one of my birthdays, and I'm pretty sure that great restaurants are my love language. The trick to this is that I would much rather someone else make food than me try to cook it myself. Can anyone else relate? But cooking is an incredible thing and it's something I want to get better at, and it's a necessity of our everyday lives, and so I wanted to talk with someone who can simplify this for us and help us become more confident in the kitchen, and today's guest is going to do just that.

Our guest for today's episode is Bri McKoy. I recently received Bri's cookbook in the mail and it's called the Cook's Book Recipes for keeps and essential techniques to master everyday cooking and I fell in love. Bri calls herself an accidental home cook, which she'll explain more in the episode, but she truly fell in love with cooking and is here to teach us some of the things she learned along the way. In this episode she shares how to make a meal plan, how to tweak recipes and your kitchen to fit your personal taste. She talks about the staples that we should all have in our pantry, and she even shares some of her favorite recipes from her cookbook. My mouth is watering just thinking about them. We finished this episode and we're both so hungry. Friends. If you're a beginner in the kitchen like me, I love that. There are ways to make this more enjoyable, and Bri is going to tell us how Friends. I am so excited for who you get to meet today. I'm sitting here with my new friend, Bri McKoy. Bri, thanks so much for coming on the show.

0:02:13 - Bri

Thank you so much for having me. I'm excited about our conversation, me too.

0:02:18 - Stephanie

I received your book. Before I get into this, tell us who you are, what you do and a fun fact about yourself.

0:02:25 - Bri

My name is Bri McKoy and I consider myself an accidental home cook turned cookbook author. I recently published the cook's book. That's my first cookbook, and a fun fact about myself is I think, like three years ago, this is one of the best things I think I've ever done for myself. Three years ago, I decided to get a laser hair removal on my legs and armpits and it actually changed my life. It is actually changed my life.

0:02:55 - Stephanie

That is like saves you so much time Showers are like I'm like, oh, wash my hair. I'm done Like is this what boys have always been doing?

0:03:06 - Bri

Right, this summer's are so nice because I'm never like. I'm not like, oh my gosh, wait, I have to go shave real quick or anything. I just like being smooth. I like I'm no shame to anyone who likes their hair Hair is great. I like to be smooth and so I'm like I'm not dealing with it anymore and I would get like razor bumps all the time on my legs. I have sensitive skin so I'm like this is the best. This is like the best kept secret. I wish someone would have told me about it. You know, I wish I would have done it sooner.

0:03:36 - Stephanie

I have looked into it. I have blonde hair, though, and it doesn't pick up Like it has to have some pigment, so I do have some darker hair on my legs now. So I'm like maybe now is my time, but blondes, it's like we're the exception to the rule. It stinks.

0:03:53 - Bri

It's so true, and I'm not a natural blonde, so it worked for me. You get the best of both worlds.

0:03:59 - Stephanie

I love it. I love it. That is so fun. That's. That is a really good fun fact and I'm very jealous. It's great. We went to the pool like not that long ago and I was like I'm going to shower real quick. My husband's like why we're going to the pool and I'm like I don't want to like fully explained, like yeah, you just can't go to the pool, my friends, you have to take care of some business first.

0:04:24 - Bri

Yeah, gotta take care of it Exactly. Oh my gosh, I travel when I travel no razor, no shaving cream. That's the other thing I'm like. I'm just telling you it is so worth it. It was worth every single penny, every single penny. But that is a good tip. If your blonde, if your hair is blonde, they shouldn't tell you though they should.

0:04:40 - Stephanie

they should be able to tell you like oh no, it's too blonde for this. That is, I love it. Everyone just added that to their their wishlist. Exactly, um Bree, I am so happy to talk to you. I was sent your book, which happens when you have a podcast. You get a lot of books in the mail, but it's very fun and I am like a want to be food writer, food show host, critic restaurants, like a restaurateur, but I don't like to cook.

0:05:17 - Bri

Like I'm not good at it but I love food.

0:05:20 - Stephanie

I love food, I'm so interested in it. All the shows I watch are about food. Like food blogs are like oh, it's just such a happy place for me and I just don't like actually make anything. Um, people who've been listening to the show for a while know this about me, but that's why, when I saw your book come through, first of all, it's beautiful. A second of all, like this might be one of my biggest weaknesses as an adult, and so that's why, like, I need to talk to someone who loves this and is good at this and can help us make this easier, because the shocking thing is that three times a day, we have to eat, like eat, and I did, and like my kids are hungry and I'm confused, like again, like didn't we just do this? So, anyway, I'm very much hoping that you can, uh, like, make this just a little bit easier for us.

0:06:08 - Bri

Oh yes, that is the whole, that's the whole goal with the book. I mean, I was the same way when I started out. I was, like, what I bring to the table is I can eat. That's my gift. Like I love good food, I love to go to fun restaurants, I love to travel. Like, when I travel, it's like we're traveling to eat. Yes, that's the plan. Yes, and everything on the agenda is just for the next meal. Like, are we going on a hike? It's so that I can have my next like. So that I get hungry again, so I can have my time in between lunch and dinner.

0:06:37 - Stephanie

Yes, absolutely.

0:06:38 - Bri

Yes, yes, exactly. Um. So I was the same way. I was like and I really was like, I don't think I need to learn how to cook. I was like I think Jeremy can learn how to cook. That sounds fine.

0:06:49 - Stephanie

How did so? How did this all? How did you become like? How did you go from being like I mean, I love food, but I don't really like cooking to a cookbook author? It's also about your journey.

0:07:02 - Bri

That was yeah, it was I. No one saw it coming, literally no one saw it coming. Uh, but basically I was newly married to Jeremy and we were like very quickly going to go into what I call a high takeout debt, because we were just like ordering food every night. And Jeremy was like, hey, like there's a better way, we got to figure something out here. And I truly was like, oh my gosh, we're going to go, we're going to go hungry, that's what's going to happen. But he said like like I'll learn to cook or we can learn to cook. And I was like, yeah, you learn, you learn to cook.

And the problem with that was he I worked from home and he worked, he's in the military so he like went into an office and by the time he got home I was like so hungry, I was starving and that's, and so then I would have ordered takeout. And so I was like I'm going to do it, like I'm going to figure this out because, again, I want to eat. And so it was really like a mean student, like I was like I want to eat, so I got to cook food, so I went into Barnes and Noble and grabbed cooking light, which I thought was like like light cooking. I didn't realize it was healthy cooking.

0:08:15 - Stephanie

Oh yeah.

0:08:16 - Bri

Okay, oh, cooking light, like yeah, not heavy on the cooking. And so, yeah, exactly, I was like this is great. And then I was cooking through it and I was like this is healthy cooking, but still I was like there's still a lot happening, but still. And so I put my way through that cookbook and I realized like, oh my gosh, wait, I really like this. But like it became, it was like a hobby, it became very fun.

0:08:41 - Stephanie

Did you? When was this how long like?

0:08:45 - Bri

I think it would probably like six months into cooking I was like, oh, I love this. It just became it was like a very nice break from my work day and I would be listening to a favorite podcast or music or I kind of made it a fun little it may be a favorite drink while I was cooking and it just kind of became this more fun ritual and break from, like the grind of the day.

0:09:11 - Stephanie

Yeah, yeah, tell me so like how did this become your career then? What were you doing before? What does work life look like now?

0:09:20 - Bri

Yes. So I was working for a nonprofit that I really loved and when I got married I moved to Florida because that's where my husband was stationed and I just assumed that I was going to have to stop working for the nonprofit. But they were like, why don't you work from home? And I was like, perfect, love that. And so I started. I was working from home, still working for the nonprofit, and I was in the marketing department of the nonprofit is like the online marketing and so I was part of the blog that they had and social media outreach.

And so I started my own blog, kind of just to like know more about, like what a blog is, like what are we doing here? Like what are we trying to accomplish here? I should probably have my own blogs just so I can like poke around, and I decided to make it a food blog. So it really started out as like my stumblings in the kitchen and because I was connected, I started to get connected to so many people through my nonprofit work that were bloggers, authors, speakers. They started sharing my blog and they started sharing my Instagram.

And so then from there, probably like two years in, my blog changed from like stumblings in the kitchen and chaos in the kitchen. To well you all, I found out how to cook. Let me show you how. And so it became more like recipe driven and here's how to do this, here's how to do that. And then an agent asked me if I would like to write a book and I was like, ok. So I ended up leaving my nonprofit job and like putting all the eggs in the cooking basket, as you will.

0:11:05 - Stephanie

My gosh. I have heard that writing a cookbook is very hard because not only are you like writing, but you are recipe testing. Is that?

0:11:16 - Bri

oh my gosh it is so hard. It is so hard and I have written. So my first book was coming and it's a trade, but it's like a. Not it's a, it's a nonfiction book that's more like a food memoir. So there's many words like it's, it's a non. You know, it's a food memoir. It is my story of falling in love with cooking. So I've written one of those books and I wrote a cookbook. Fast forward several years later and I write this cookbook and I was like this book is going to kill me. I was like writing a book is hard enough, like writing a book is so hard and then you have to put into it, like the recipe, testing and creating the recipes and the food photography and the food styling and the layout of the book matters so much because you know people need to be able to like use it as a cookbook and it was so much.

0:12:06 - Stephanie

That is so much. Also, I did not realize that you have written a food, food memoir. That is my favorite category of book, like, if you ask me any day of the week, what kind of book do you want to read? I'm like a food memoir, and if it takes place, if it has any travel aspect, I'm like I'm so in.

0:12:25 - Bri

Oh same, I love a food memoir. They're my favorite because you feel, you kind of feel like you got a stamp on your passport in a way, mm, hmm, you're like I traveled, I ate it was great.

0:12:36 - Stephanie

It was great. It was great. Ok, I love that, I love that. So I want to get like as a person who's been in my shoes I'm going to not say our shoes, I'm going to assume better of my community and assume that they are not, as they don't struggle quite as much as I do. But for people who are in my shoes, where is a good place to get started? If we're like I want to learn to cook or I'm going to go into tie, take out debt, where do we start?

0:13:11 - Bri

So that's a great question, because I wrote the book for someone who literally was saying, like, where do I start? And back in 2020, right when the pandemic happened, you know, everybody was staying at home. Everybody was like I, like restaurants were closed, you know, and all of a sudden, all these people were like sourdough, yeah, yeah. And so I actually end up creating an

online class that taught people how to cook. It was like the everyday kitchen master class and it was five weeks and we, every week, we learned a lesson and then we made recipes that reinforce that lesson, and then the next week we would learn another lesson and make recipes that built on both weeks, and so until you got to the end, where you created a recipe that was using all of the techniques or tips or hacks that you learned, and it was just like building on each other, and so that's actually how I end up writing the cook's book.

So you could literally go from beginning to end through the cook's book and it's like here's your first building block, like learn this. Now let's make a recipe that, like, the first thing that we really learn about is salt, and one of the recipes we make is guacamole, and we make it without the salt, like I'm like make it without the salt and take, like so that you are like tasting through the experience, and there's all like fun tips throughout the book. Like you know, try this with that or do this with this with your knife or with that or whatever it is, and so you're just not. You're not just cooking, you're actually learning the art of cooking. I love that.

0:14:43 - Stephanie

I'm very sad I missed your class. I was very pregnant during the pandemic I guess I was newly pregnant in the beginning of it so I maybe wasn't the best candidate. I was like asleep and nauseous, but that's so cool, that's so. Do you still teach the course?

0:15:02 - Bri

Yes, I do. I release the course at the end of every year and people are able to go through it and it has like all these on-demand videos of me making the recipe. So, really like people make the recipe alongside me and we do fun things like taste our salt, make salt, that's really cool, that's really cool.

0:15:21 - Stephanie

Yeah, okay, I love that. Okay, so I mean, really, when we need, everyone needs your book, we'll link to it in the show notes. Thank you, but starting so like seasoning, is that a good place to start?

0:15:34 - Bri

Yes, that is. So. The first two things that I really teach in the book is seasoning and using things like salt and other herbs and spices. And then the second thing that we really talk about is you know. You know when you watch the food shows and they're always like taste as you go, taste as you go. Like all the time I'm like yes, but also we need to use all of our other senses that are available to us. So, like I teach the salt aspect and then I teach like how do we use our sense of smell, sight, touch, sound to also know how to be a good cook in the kitchen. Like when you put a piece of chicken breast in the pan and you hear that sizzle, like you know your pan is properly heated. Or if you squeeze a lemon and you're like okay, this lemon is really soft, which means it's probably extra juicy, which means if a recipe costs for a whole lemon, maybe you don't need to use a whole of your lemon because it's that juicy.

0:16:28 - Stephanie

Interesting. Okay, okay, talk to me about the difference between, or the progression, I guess, from reading a recipe to like knowing how to cook, is cooking through a cookbook, like because I feel like I've, I've, I can follow a recipe, I can make something that tastes good. Usually I did actually. Okay, this is the perfect time to tell this. So my husband is in charge of food in our house. I I tried for a long time was like he loves to cook and he's really good at it. So I'm like you go, you like he does meal planning, he does the shopping, he does, he does the food, I do other things, but he, the other night, the girl, my girls, I have toddlers who are just about turn three and they wanted to cuddle with data on the couch. And so I was like, okay, I'll make, I'll make dinner. And I was making grilled cheese. I can make grilled cheese. Okay, I have to say I know how to make grilled cheese. I've made it a million times, just like not lately. And so I was using a different pan, like a little pan and something about the little pan, because it was just like less cleanup, something about the little pan kind of threw me off and like I was trying to flip, like trying to be a little extra fancy about the way I flipped it. I was trying not to get cheese everywhere. Somehow.

In this I end up I'm also cooking on a new stove. I hadn't I hadn't done the stove yet, and so it got way hotter, way faster in this pan and this stove. So I ended up just absolutely destroying the first grilled cheese. Like it was black on one side, like you couldn't scrape it. My toddlers were not going to eat it, so I threw that away and was like hoping that they couldn't smell it, that they just like weren't noticing what was happening behind them.

And then so I'm making the second grilled cheese and I'm like just a little bit distracted, a little bit like discombobulated because of the black grilled cheese for the first one and because I have this really little pan. I ended up setting it down on our plastic cutting board. I'm like not even thinking about it and like I've never done something like this before, like I'm bad, but I'm not that bad. And then I'm like oh, oh, oh, and I go to like pick it up and it's stuck because it like melted on there. I mean, we salvaged the pan through the cutting board. It was a whole thing, but I'm like man, I'm bad at this, I am out of practice, all of that, all of that. So like, how do you like? I can generally, though, make a recipe and have it taste pretty good. I think I just have never been able to gain enough skills that I could do it without a recipe telling me exactly what to do. Like is that part of how do we get from one to the other? I guess is my question.

0:19:06 - Bri

Oh, yes, I think that's a great question because I so I did end up cooking through that whole cookbook. And then I got another cookbook and I was like I'm really getting the hang of this. Like I was like I love this, I feel like I'm getting the hang of it. And then I but I was still like pretty frequently burning things, or like pretty frequently like I over, I severely over salted some vegetables, and I was like but the recipe said like what? I'm like, what are we doing?

I just was like how, how am I like, how have I cooked through a whole cookbook? How have I been cooking for going into two years and I still wouldn't know what to do if something went wrong? Yeah, and I was like there's got to be there's, there's another, there's got to be another. Like step here, it can't just be reading a recipe. So what I decided, or what I realized, is I had become a really good recipe reader, but maybe I had not actually learned like the science of

cooking. And so when a recipe said something and you know like maybe it says cook your chicken in the pan for six minutes on the first side, and I can clearly see that the chicken is burning, but I'm like no, but the recipe is not in six minutes.

Yes, yeah, it's like it hasn't been six minutes or whatever it is.

And so I was like, okay, I want. What I want to do is I want to learn a few techniques, a few like tips, tricks about cooking. And then I think that if I have those in my like cooking tool belt, I can probably know how to like appropriately read a recipe. Again, like like, if it calls for chicken breast, I have chicken thighs. Or if it says we actually there's a whole section in the book that goes through testing your oven and your stove top to know how hot and cold they cold, they burn or heat. Because that's the thing we've like, Jeremy and I have lived in so many different houses and every stove is different, like every stove is different.

So every time I move into, like, every time I'm in my new kitchen, the first thing I do is I test the oven, which you test with bacon, which is delicious, or if you're vegetarian, I have a big potato option and you can test it that way. And then the same with the stove. I test. I have like a water test that I do with the stove top. And so I know like, okay, the recipe says six minutes, my stove, my, my current stove, burns so hot, so fast. So I'm like either knowing that I need to flip the chicken sooner, or when it says medium high heat, I always know, like I'm on medium heat, like this thing is too, this thing's too hot, I'm never turning it to medium high.

0:21:34 - Stephanie

I am so justified in this moment I'm like okay, my first time on a new stove. That was not my fault.

0:21:42 - Bri

Oh, no, no, it is so tricky, especially if you have been cooking with the same stove for a while. Then you just you automatically learn like I flip the grilled cheese in three minutes or however long it is. Oh, but that's kind of where I, that's where that shift came for me. So once I like learned all those and I teach them in the cook's book, then I'm like that's where you go beyond recipe reading. That's where you're like okay, I know what to do now. Or I'm reading this recipe and you know, something I say in the cook's book is the recipe creator. So, for example, me creating like I don't know how hot your stove runs, I don't know what kind of salt you use, I don't know if you like spicy food or not spicy food, but if you know those things, then when you read my recipe you can adjust for what you know, your joint, in your own kitchen, with your own tools.

0:22:33 - Stephanie

Yeah, yeah, that makes sense. This is so random, but for some reason I don't like. I don't have a sensitive stomach to anything except for garlic and onions and a lot of. I know I can think Italian food and stuff, but if it's like really garlic, you're really really oniony, it'll bother me, and so anytime I'm making something and it's like you use a whole onion, I'm like I'll use a quarter of an onion. But that's a good example of like that totally makes sense. You don't know if they like spicy things or not, and so you have to know yourself.



0:23:08 - Bri

Yeah, yes, I feel like learning your pants, your stove, your palate. Then it's like now you have, I was gonna say, recipe for success, which was just too on the notes.

0:23:19 - Stephanie

It's just too perfect. It's just too perfect. What about? I can get into cooking if I have a free afternoon and something sounds good and I don't have anything on the calendar or a deadline or whatever. But that is never the case, like I never have that much free time. So how do we? I guess is there a way to make cooking faster or does or make it more enjoyable in a smaller amount of time. How do we do this when we don't just have a free afternoon to make a mess and enjoy?

0:23:57 - Bri

Well, I think part of that is definitely the meal plan, cause I'm like if I don't have a meal plan, then that is definitely when stress and chaos come into the picture, cause I'm like, oh my gosh, what am I gonna make? Or whatever. I always like to put things on my meal plan that I know I'll get excited about, and so that helps too, cause I'm like, for example, we always do Friday night pizza night, and actually Jeremy makes the pizza, not me, but it's just like I get excited about it every single week. Or you know, like people like taco Tuesday and it's just like you just know, every week and you kind of get excited like, oh my gosh, I'm not just tonight, maybe a margarita. So I always like like to put a little fun in my meal plan, which is perfect, cause usually when you're meal planning you do kind of have that time and energy to think through like the week and stuff, and so I try to put like a fun recipe or something that I'm gonna get really excited about, and I also try to do like, maybe two of the recipes are gonna be something that's more like a 30 minute meal, but then I'll make the other recipes, like Jeremy will cook on Friday. So I just know like, and that's that's.

I know other friends that they're like, yeah, we take turns every other day, or you know, I cook for two days, then my partner steps in on the third day or whatever, and so I think that helps with burnout of like. Oh my gosh, I'm back in the kitchen. What I'll also do is I'll put like some real, really like low hanging fruit or easy recipes, like maybe a soup that uses a pre-bought rotisserie chicken. So it's like I'm just using that shredded chicken. I'm not having to make the chicken on my own.

Or I have a roast in my cookbook called get me out of takeout mode roast, because it's like whenever I fall into that takeout cycle and I just need like, I just need a home cooked meal that's gonna kick me out of that rut. It's this roast which is literally like a roast in a jar of pepperoncinis and it's not spicy and it's so good and it's so juicy and it is really good on nachos or tacos or over a baked potato. So like even just planting like some really, really simple meals, like two or three simple meals, I think helps a lot.

0:26:09 - Stephanie

So planting some really simple meals. I love that and I think that I'd never thought about that. When it comes to meal planning, what I picture and I don't know if I'm alone in this, but I picture like getting on Pinterest and looking up like a bunch of different things that you'd like to make, or even like looking through a cookbook and picking, like you know, seven things out and like that is so overwhelming. And then you have to figure out, like what ingredients you need for each one and then like how much of an onion did you use for recipe A and how much do you have left over for a recipe? Like it's just a lot of math, and but what you're saying is like pick out designate days instead, like Wednesday's easy day, or like Thursday's takeout, pizza's Friday, but we'll make it ourselves and like having some routine to it that that's what you're planning, not let me pick seven fancy meals and slot them into seven days.

0:27:11 - Bri

Oh my gosh. Yes, exactly when you, because I used to do that. And then it is so discouraging when you are cooking a new recipe and it doesn't turn out well, and the next day you're cooking a new recipe and maybe that and it's like like discouragement builds on each other, and so I think that keeps people from wanting to like show up in the kitchen. And no, it did it for me. I was like this is so discouraging. I spent all that money on those groceries all that time.

0:27:37 - Stephanie

And then you give up and it's like you have like three recipes of groceries just sitting in the fridge like chanting you.

0:27:42 - Bri

Oh, my gosh, yes. And then you get to the end of the week and you're like, oh, no, oh okay, they have to make all of these or none of these and start over Exactly.

This is the shame. The shame, I know, and I talk about that Like I kind of have a manifesto in the book that's like hold on to this as you like become a more confident, joyful cook. And one of them is like always, always plan wins, like always start with wins, because winning also builds on it, on each other. So if you can plan recipes that you were like I know I can nail this recipe and I know my family loves it Like that will only encourage you to keep showing up to the kitchen.

0:28:20 - Stephanie

Hmm, I love that. What do you do with, like, leftovers? Do you have a leftover strategy to like make one thing and cover more meals? I'm all about doing less work for more food.

0:28:34 - Bri

Yes, oh my gosh, I love that so much. I we eat our leftovers a lot for our lunches and so they kind of like they go pretty fast. But I do love like when I do a pot roast and I think this is also really helpful. I think, in like theory, sometimes I'll make a pot roast and I'm like this is going to stretch the whole week and then, and they all get to, like you know, day two or three and I'm like I don't want pot roast anymore, like I'm very over pot roast, and so what I have to do is I have to

decide what am I exactly doing with this pot roast every night, so that I don't just like keep serving this.

So the first night maybe it's like the pot roast over mashed potatoes, and then the second night it's like sheet tray nachos with like some pepperoncini or whatever. And then the third night maybe I like use it for some kind of like sandwich or barbecue sandwich situation. And so I do like to like it's like usually salad sandwiches, nachos, something over baked potatoes, and I just like we'll mix it up a little bit, like add a different sauce to it or add different like herbs or whatever, but I plan it like I plan it like it's a different recipe for every night, even though all I'm really doing is like pulling out the bag of tortillas.

0:29:44 - Stephanie

This is I can do this, this is good, and like with different sauces too, like that really changes things up. And I also I meant to say something about this when you said picking out things that you're excited about, like that's. The other thing is that when I picture meal planning or, like you know, having dinner on the table for my family every single night, like ah, it's always stuff I don't like, like, I'm like in my head, I'm like making like mushy green beans every night, because that's like what you're supposed to make or something. But like every time you say nachos, I'm like nachos, I can do nachos, like that's. So, yeah, making stuff that you're actually excited to eat and excited to make that's. I don't know why that doesn't. That's not obvious, but it's not.

0:30:28 - Bri

It's not it's really not, which is so weird. I feel like we just kind of grew up I don't, I don't know why Like, where did who taught us this? I was always like thinking about that. Like who taught that you know you had to cook these specific meals, or that you had to cook really big meals every night, or that you always had to have three side dishes, Like, or that you even. Something else that I teach in the book is about cooking early.

So a lot of times and it helps if you not everybody's able to do this if they don't work from home but sometimes I will like literally cook the meal at 2 pm, Like if it's a soup or whatever, whatever, Like I've cooked the whole thing and then I put it in the refrigerator and then, when it's dinner time, I'm like, why are we going into our kitchens at 6 pm? We're tired, we're hungry, Like, or even doing something which Kendra from the lazy genius teaches a lot is like what can you do now, right now? So maybe in the morning you're drinking your coffee and you're like hey, I can shred that pre, that chicken, that rotisserie chicken in there, I can shred that right now, and so, or I can chop those vegetables right now, and then just they're already chopped and ready to go and I'm like, yeah, that's so smart. Why are we doing everything at 6 pm?

0:31:43 - Stephanie

Doing like cooking dinner at 6 pm is like the equivalent of going to the grocery store hungry and it's like we know better. You know you're coming out with Twinkies if you go to the grocery store hungry, but it's like we should know that if we are asking the what do you want to do for dinner question at six, it's like the only acceptable answer is tie, like the only acceptable answer is take out if you don't have something planned already.

0:32:06 - Bri

Exactly for sure. That's always going to happen. Oh my gosh, the amount of times that I was like oh sorry, door dashing wings. Yeah, we're just going to have to Uh-huh.

0:32:18 - Stephanie

The time for the conversation is fast yes, 100%, 100% that I want to ask because, even though I'm not good at this and even though I don't like this in my head, I love hosting, I love my people, I love eating with my people and I want to be the kind of person who feeds people. However, if cooking for yourself is intimidating, cooking for lots of people is like 10 times as intimidating. So what tips do you have for us when it comes to like having other people at our house that we are in charge of feeding?

0:32:53 - Bri

Oh, yes, I also learned this the hard way because I would have. I was the person that would have people over to our house, especially like maybe new people, like we don't know them, their new neighbors or whatever, and I would be like I am going to make Duck confee. Never in my life have I made duck and I'm going to make a souffle. It's already low key, stressful, even like I'm an extrovert and I love being around people, I love meeting new people, but it's, it is stress, like it is already kind of stressful to be like we're having new people into our home and are we gonna click and like you know, is there gonna be judgment about my house or whatever. And now we're throwing in a duck, like what am I doing?

0:33:33 - Stephanie

Who added a duck to this situation Exactly?

0:33:39 - Bri

Like what is happening, and then I'm stressed out while I'm cooking dinner because it's obviously not coming together and I'm like so great. So not only am I now stressed about like everything that goes on with having new people to your house, now I'm gonna feed them bad food, and so what I decided to do is, especially for a new time, like if it's the first time that you're having someone over, I always know what recipe I'm gonna make. It's called and I actually call it first Hello, pasta in the book. Because it's like it's like Every single time I don't even have to think about it, which really makes inviting people over a lot easier when you just know I'm making.

Everybody loves this pasta. I know how to make it. With my eyes closed, it's really hard to mess up. So even if something did go wrong, it's like Probably still gonna be really delicious and it also Works with, like so many different Food needs, so I can make it dairy-free. If I need to make it dairy-free, I can serve it over Vegetables if someone can't have, you know, grains or anything, so so that really helps too. So I just have like I always say like pick one or two recipes that you are like I am so good at this and I feel so confident making this and just like Always, just not like I'm making this, this is what I'm making.

0:34:54 - Stephanie

I love that. And then last, you are a duck Master. Right, don't choose duck or don't do it. Talk to me about grocery shopping. Do you have any like grocery shopping master tips that we should know?

0:35:12 - Bri

oh Well, the first is I use this app called paprika. Have you heard of this app? No, it is my favorite. I have been using this app for like 10 years and so it's an app that you can put on your desktop. You can also get it on your phone and you can share it. So, like, jeremy and I have access to the same paprika app. And not only can you like have your grocery list so I have like Whole Foods, dearbergs, trader Joe's so you can separate out, like where you need to get certain things but you also can put recipes into it so you like can copy a URL and put the rest. It will just download the recipe into the app.

So when you go to say like, let's say you know, I'm like, oh, I'm having chicken pot pie soup tonight, in the app I go to the recipe and then it has a little like A shopping cart and I click on the shopping cart and it automatically fills all the ingredients for that soup.

And so all I have to do is go through and like unselect, like, oh, I already have the salt, I already have the broth, and then it lets you put which grocery store, which grocery store do you want to add these ingredients to, so you can say like oh, I'm these groceries, I get at Whole Foods or whatever, and then you can put it. And then they have a calendar view where you can put Like, so you can pull it up and say these are the, this is what we're making. So sometimes Jeremy and I will go in the grocery store and I'll be like I'll get, I'll get the dairy, and he's like I'll get the vegetables, because it separates it out by category also, so that way and you can see things checked off, so you can open it and be like oh, jeremy already got, he made it to the box pasta style.

0:36:48 - Stephanie

Oh my gosh, I.

0:36:50 - Bri

Cannot live without it.

0:36:52 - Stephanie

That is how, how, like I've used a couple different apps, but again it's like you have to select from a pre-populated list of recipes that are all very complicated and like not what I wanted to eat, and it's like so much food and it's so expensive because it's all the stuff you wouldn't normally buy and like the whole thing. It's like I have like a graveyard of kitchen apps and meal planning apps on my phone. This sounds and it just it's like anywhere the recipes from it'll, like it figures out.

0:37:23 - Bri

Yeah, it just you put it in the URL and you just say download and it pulls the whole recipe. Sometimes there are some sites but I have found very few that are like, oh, they won't allow

paprika to download. But I think I found out once or twice like all of the recipes I have live in paprika. I think it is like I think it's like nine dollars, which usually apps are free, but I'm telling you like it is worth every single penny. I, you would not know, I do not know how to meal plan without it and like grocery shop without it.

0:37:55 - Stephanie

I am so glad I asked okay, we will be purchasing this and we will have it in the show notes. Everyone, you're welcome. That's amazing, yeah, um, what are some things that you have in your pain that like we should have in our pantry? Most of the time because that's the worst thing is you're like, oh, I mean, I'm inspired to make something, and then you want to make something and you have like none of the stuff you need and and like none of the basics. So what, I guess what are like keep on hand basics?

0:38:25 - Bri

Oh, yes, I always have, Obviously like my salt and pepper, like peppercorns always have that always. And kosher salt, diamond crystal, colt, diamond crystal, kosher salt is like the best salt for cooking. So I always have that. And then I always have like boxed pasta because pasta is so easy. You usually especially if you have like butter or garlic Like that's so easy. So I always have a box pasta. I always have boxed stock for like quick, quickly throwing it together.

Suits, I always have a jar of sun-dried tomatoes. I know that's the set. Some people are like I don't like those, but I love it for soups. They make really flavorful soups and pizzas. I also always have capers, which I love because they have like that salty bite to it. So you just throw it on chicken or even throw it on salads and it's like so good.

I always have Frozen garlic cubes on hand. Those are from like Trader Joe's. What this is. This is life-changing. Okay, this is another thing that Kendra from the lazy genius shared and I was like what I what?

So with garlic, I'm very passionate about fresh garlic because I think jarred garlic tastes very different. If I understand people who use jarred garlic because like life is busy or whatever, I'm like a hundred percent, use what you got to do, especially in the season of life You're in. But it does taste very different from fresh garlic. So People are always like, well, what if I can't? Like I just can't be Falling around with fresh garlic and I'm like I have not found a good alternative.

Enter these frozen cubes. So it is, they're in the frozen section of Trader Joe's, but also now I've found them at Whole Foods. I found them at Target and and they just it's like you pop it out. It's one cube equals one clove of garlic minced, so that's really easy to. So if a recipe calls for, like you know, two cloves of garlic mince, you just pop it out and you just add it to what like in your saute pan, in your soup. They also have frozen ginger, which I love to have on hand, because I feel like with ginger I always buy. I end up buying the whole ginger and then I'm like I'm not gonna use this for ginger.

0:40:26 - Stephanie

Yeah, it's a lot. It's a lot.

0:40:27 - Bri

It's a lot and people are like mince it and freeze it and I'm like, no, I'm not gonna do that.

0:40:31 - Stephanie

No, that's not.

0:40:32 - Bri

that seems like a lot yeah that seems like a lot, or keep it in the freezer and I'm like, but then I always find, like this weird J. I'm like how long is that ginger been in the back of my freezer for? So they have them frozen ginger cubes too.

0:40:43 - Stephanie

That is. Is there anything else like that, that where it's like this comes pre chopped or pre something, get that, oh my gosh, I don't.

0:40:53 - Bri

I have not found anything like that. I'm, I'm. I was kind of like it'd be nice if they did maybe some fresh herbs, but I don't know, like it's, a quality is still there, so maybe that's why they're I'm like man, it'd be so nice because I feel like it's those fresh things that really add a lot to just like fresh cilantro, fresh basil, where you're like you don't always have it on hand, yeah, and you're like, ah, this, like I could have thrown together a caprese salad soap, but I don't have any Basil, but I have all these tomatoes, yeah, you know, yeah, but though I think that has been the best, I think the other one that is really nice is like if you don't always, if you find yourself like always been like I don't have chicken stock, like I need chicken stock, is getting like the boy in cubes, or even the Like the paste that they need, because that is like Shelf stable and so you can always be like I can throw together stock real fast, yeah so I love that one.

0:41:49 - Stephanie

Okay, that's a good, that's a really good list. And we have a Italian food is like my go-to it's. I mean, it's like the only thing I make, it's my favorite thing to eat. And so we always have, like you know, good pasta and the pantry. We always have good sauce. You know, we always have kind of I can throw together some sort of caprese, anything, as long as that has, like tomatoes and fresh mozzarella. That's like I can really hook you up with that. Oh, that's so good. What's your favorite kind of food to cook and what's your favorite kind of food to eat?

0:42:20 - Bri

Oh my, favorite, I Think my favorite kind of food to cook, which I'm like, what is this category? It would be like meals that are very time-intensive, which is so funny. But because I love cooking so much, like I love it, and so you know, like we're a risotto, like I love just like Stirring the risotto for 30 straight minutes, you know, just getting like a glass of wine or like listening old podcast and just like and like really enjoying the experience of like adding the butter and the onions, or Like making a Like tipsy braised short ribs. That's a little bit intensive because you're like

searing the meat and then you're like Socking the veggies and you're making the sauce that goes on it. I just like, I'm like, oh, is this gonna take me an hour? I can't wait.

Oh, it's very bizarre, but I think it's also like those dishes tend to be like very rich. I love a like, I love a rich like with the tipsy brace short ribs, when, like, the meat is just falling off the bone and there's like these creamy mashed potatoes and you're, oh, I love rich food, like I love it so much. Everyone's so hungry.

0:43:36 - Stephanie

now I'm so hungry. Is that your favorite? Like if you're gonna go out or if you're gonna eat something that someone else has made, what's your go to? I?

0:43:48 - Bri

would say it's, it would be seafood, okay, because I do like making fish at home, but I don't make a lot of like shellfish, like the crab or the lobster, or even like shrimp very rarely, or I just or maybe it's like oh, the shrimp at my grocery store is always a little fishy. So when I'm in it, when I'm at a restaurant or like when I want to go out to eat, I'm like I want to go somewhere where it's like really good. I want to seafood tower or seafood boil or sushi like I love going out for like the best, freshest sushi, that's cool, that's really cool.

What about you? What is your favorite when you?

0:44:30 - Stephanie

go out, oh gosh, everything. I really, I really love like any sort of Asian food and, yeah, pasta. Anything Italian is also like a total go to. So good. What's your favorite recipe in the cookbook? I want to like have that circled so that I can try it. Oh my gosh.

0:44:56 - Bri

Okay, well, I think that it is the tipsy British one Okay, it's so good and it's actually like, even though it takes some time, it's actually really simple dish. Okay, like, there's not a lot, so I would say that. Or the other one that I really like is my sweet potato shepherd's pie. It's like it's also that one is really simple and it's like so rich and delicious, and people who are like, oh, I don't really like shepherd's pie, fall in love with this one. So, to include my husband, my husband was like, when he came home one day, I was like, look what I tested, and he was like, oh, I don't like shepherd's pie. Now it's his favorite dish. Oh, all right, all right. Oh, and there is this one you will left. There's a Thai basil stir fry in there that comes together literally in like 20 minutes, like it's so fast and it's so good, and you serve it on coconut rice.

0:45:48 - Stephanie

Okay okay, sold, sold, sold, sold, sold. Do you have any?

0:45:53 - Bri

just last encouragement for, for, like anyone who's feeling intimidated by this whole thing or overwhelmed, oh, yes, I would say one thing that I always like to tell people, because it's kind of



a message I told myself, is that I was always like I'm just not a good cook, like I'm a bad cook. I'm like that's just, it's just part of my DNA and I really was like wait, I don't think that's true. I don't think that someone is a bad cook or, you know, not a good cook. I think you just haven't learned some of the tools yet, which is what it was for me. I was like I just didn't know that ovens run differently. I didn't know it, and so sometimes, when you don't know something, it's easy to immediately kind of be super discouraged or just be like this is just not a skill set I have, and so I would say like, kind of reframe that talk of, like I just haven't learned that yet. Well, that's a Shana name.

I like this book. Yes, it is, yes, it is. I love that book, by the way. But like I just haven't learned that yet, like it's not that I'm a bad cook, it's just I haven't learned the appropriate or helpful skills for how to cook and then start somewhere. Just pick somewhere you want to start If you want to cook through a cookbook. I highly recommend cooking through the cookbook. I think that's a great way to start. Yes, but yeah, just start somewhere. And just start like being like and every failure is a lesson learned, like I always say that something that failed, like I burned, I over salted, I under salted. I always feel like I graduated from a class I didn't sign up for, but I like I learned a very important lesson. I'm like, oh, that's all is salty, or that Evan runs hot and so, instead of looking at as like wow, I really messed that up, you can be like well, now I know something that I didn't know before.

0:47:41 - Stephanie

I love that. I love that I graduated from a class I didn't sign up for now I know something I didn't have before. I love that. You are a total delight. I'm so excited about this book. Thank you for letting me, like, sneak into the world of food and and enjoy it, even though I'm like I don't know, don't have my, I don't have my credentials yet, but I'll, I'll get there.

0:48:05 - Bri

You'll get there. Oh, thank you so much for having me. This was really fun, and now everybody knows about paprika Everyone knows about paprika.

0:48:12 - Stephanie

We'll have everything linked in the show notes, you guys don't worry. Thanks, bree, thanks you guys. Isn't Bree amazing? I just love her and I love this conversation and I'm so happy I got to share it with you.

One thing I wanted to mention quickly is that I know we talked about a lot in today's episode, and so if you want to find the links to any of those things, all you have to do is go to my website.

It's [girlsnightpodcast.com](http://girlsnightpodcast.com), and for every episode we have a blog post with the show notes. All the links will be there for everything we talked about, including all of Bri's contact info, so you guys can follow her and see y'all can be friends. The other thing I wanted to mention is that, if you haven't had a chance yet, it would mean so much to me if you would take just a second to leave us a rating and a review on iTunes. We've gotten so many amazing 5 star reviews from you all and you've left the sweetest comments. I cannot tell you how much it means to me, and

it also helps out the podcast more than you can imagine. So if you haven't yet, please take just one quick second to leave us a rating and a review. Thanks so much. All right, friends, that's all we have for today, but we'll be back next week with another episode of Girls Night, and you are going to love this one. We'll see you then.