

Neko Dang: I'm Neko, I'm helping mama with her podcast, welcome.

Bowie Dang: And I'm Bowie, I'm helping mama with her podcast.

Jess Dang: So today's podcast is an interview with Mrs. Kimball, our cooking teacher. How are you liking your cooking classes?

Bowie Dang: Good.

Jess Dang: What do you remember about them? What do we say in our cooking class? Knife moves?

Bowie Dang: I stand.

Jess Dang: Yeah. And what do we say about our fingers?

Bowie Dang: Food moves, knife stands.

Jess Dang: Yes. And what about keeping our finger safe? Do we say hey, hey?

Bowie Dang: Out of the way.

Jess Dang: Yeah, all right. Would you tell other kids to take the cooking class?

Bowie Dang: Yeah.

Jess Dang: You would recommend it and say, "I would recommend the cooking class".

Neko Dang: What if they don't know it?

Jess Dang: They don't know about it? Well that's what we're going to do today. We're going to hopefully let lots of people know about Mrs. Kimball's cooking class just for kids.

Bowie Dang: Yes.

Jess Dang: And what have you learned so far Neko, from the cooking class?

Neko Dang: I learned that if you move the knife, then your eyes have to be down. Because if you cut yourself, it's going to be hurt.

Jess Dang: Yeah. We'll need a band aid for our boo-boos. Right? But you might cut yourself at some point in life and that's okay, right?

Neko Dang: Yes, it is.

Jess Dang: Yes. And what is one of the skills you've learned? What have you learned to do with bread? What are you doing with bread?

Neko Dang: I learned how to spread butter on it.

Jess Dang: Yeah. And are we also doing some peeling?

Neko Dang: Yeah, peeling.

Jess Dang: And are you having a lot of fun?

Neko Dang: Yes.

Jess Dang: All right. Excited for more lessons with Mrs. Kimball?

Neko Dang: Yeah, I love your lessons Mrs. Kimball.

Jess Dang: All right, well let's head into today's episode.

Jess Dang: Hi there, you're listening to episode number 32 of the Cook Smarts Cooking. I'm Jess Dang the founder of Cook Smarts and I'm here to help you become a more confident and organized cook in the kitchen. Okay folks, it is June y'all. Like how the heck did that happen? Who would have thought that we would have basically spent like half of 2020 so far in quarantine? I definitely feel a bit sad when I say that out loud, but at the same time it is two and a half months of my life.

Jess Dang: Yes, it's been two and a half stressful months, but a small percentage of hopefully what will be a very long life for me. I know that even though a lot of states have reopened or in stages of reopening, we're not out of the woods yet and probably far from it. Even as I'm drafting this intro in late May, I still am not completely sure if my kids will be able to return to some sort of childcare and preschool starting in June.

Jess Dang: I, however, will be able to get back into my co-working space, which is very exciting just to have some quiet mental space to go to. But that is all clearly dependent on whether my kids go back to some sort of childcare and school because I can't just leave them here with my husband who is in meetings and calls all day long. So, while drafting this intro, I'm sitting across the table from Charlie the baby. She's 13 months now, a little bit over 13 months.

Jess Dang: I had just made her a delicious lunch of spinach, ravioli, not from scratch. Just regular spinach, ravioli. We just boiled up chicken meatballs and broccoli and she's turning into a real ham and always wants to play peekaboo. So that's what we're doing right now, playing peekaboo while working. And that is basically how work has gotten done over the last few months during those, like in between moments of childcare.

Jess Dang: I've always been a multitasker, but to be forced to multitask basically nonstop for the last two and a half months has definitely fried my brain. And I feel the exhaustion from that and also a few more gray hairs have been found. And because of this exhaustion and just like frenetic-ness we had to tape this interview twice. You're hearing the recording the second time around, the first time around I squeezed this interview in during a short 45-minute window when my husband wouldn't be on work calls and could just take over childcare at that time.

Jess Dang: So I basically like ran into our bedroom office right after getting the kids home from our morning outing, and I didn't have any time to just like take a breath or even collect myself before I started. And I know so many parents are going through this right now. Just the rushing back and forth, back and forth between work and childcare, and more often having the two worlds collide of course. The first time we taped this I just felt like a crazy, crazy manic person.

Jess Dang: So I asked Katie if she wouldn't mind taping again and because she is just like the sweetest Midwesterner she said yes. And then you know, I mentioned this analogy of back in episode 29, a few episodes go. It just feels for parents right now we are being asked to run a marathon but at a sprinting pace with no rest stops. And by the way, "Oh yeah, the finish line keeps on getting moved." So yeah, it's just hard to not feel crazed right now.

Jess Dang: And I know many of us would be at the finish line of the school year and all the parents out there and looking forward to like all the summer plans, vacations and camps and just getting some time away from the routine of the year. But I know this year, summer is going to look a lot different without camps and trips as part of the summer landscape, or just not in the way we have had them in the past.

Jess Dang: Luckily, my guest today, Katie Kimball has some ideas for what you can do with your kids this summer in the kitchen in your very own DIY cooking camp. Katie is an advocate for healthy kids cooking, a blogger, a former teacher, and the founder of the Kids Cook Real Food eCourse. Her blog, Kitchen Stewardship helps families stay healthy without going crazy and she's on a mission to connect families around healthy food and teach every child in America to cook. Now that is a pretty great mission if you ask me.

Jess Dang: She's also the mama to four kids and her oldest just came out with a cookbook of his own. So you know, she has real life experience teaching kids how to cook. Plus it helps that Katie was just born to be a teacher, her strength as a natural teacher is just really evident in everything she's created. And because of our businesses because there's a lot of crossover. I have known Katie for many years now. She's always been such a great supporter of Cooks Smarts and I've always been so grateful for that.

Jess Dang: And I've been so impressed with how smart she is, but also how generous and thoughtful and I am so excited to introduce her to you today to talk more about

her program and just the importance of teaching kids how to cook. So here she is.

Jess Dang: Katie, welcome to the podcast. I just love it when we get to chat and I know our listeners are in for so many good lessons today.

Katie Kimball: Thanks for having me Jess. I know I always love chatting with you too.

Jess Dang: Okay. So before we dive into the topic of kids cooking, I'd just love for you to introduce yourself to our listeners. Tell us where you live, who you feed, what you do.

Katie Kimball: Sure thing. I am in Michigan and I have four kids. Birthday season is starting, so I have like a 60/40 chance of getting this right. They are 15, 11, 8 and 5. So we've got a kindergartener and a high school freshmen in this quarantine. So the distance learning has been really interesting. And what do I do? I knew since I was like a preschooler that I wanted to be a teacher that was always the way my brain works. It's where my heart was. And so that's my degree, is in elementary education.

Katie Kimball: But I only got to do that for real for two years. And then we started our family and I also knew since I was little that I wanted to be a mom. And I'm like a super perfectionist, so I give a 100% to both and I don't have 200% to give. So something would have broken if I had tried to do both full-time. So I knew I needed to leave teaching full-time and come home. But we were so young that the budget was a little red, when I figured out how much money we needed to get through the week.

Katie Kimball: And so I was like, "Oh my gosh, I have to do something. At least something little. Do I like sell pampered chef or like tutor children or what am I going to do?" And I had this book idea that had been kind of percolating in my head as I was transitioning to real food and learning to cook on my own as a young wife. And so I thought at the time a book might be a way to make money, which was totally not a good idea.

Katie Kimball: So luckily, I've never actually done that, but that was sort of the inception of my blog Kitchen Stewardship where for the past 11 years I've been teaching families how to stay healthy without going crazy.

Jess Dang: That's wonderful. I just love that you've made teaching kids how to cook this great mission. It's such an important skill but so often overlooked. Because we sign our kids up for a soccer class and ballet classes, but we just don't teach them how to cook. So how do you recommend that people prioritize cooking and how do we do it as parents?

Katie Kimball: You know, it's not something that most of us, in the kind of the parents' generation right now, have a very good example of, because I think most of us were not taught to cook by our moms.

Jess Dang: How did you learn?

Katie Kimball: My mom is like a hybrid. So in the '80s I would say that she was probably above average as far as what she made from scratch. She made homemade bread, but just for fun at holiday time, not what you would eat every day. So she actually was a pretty good cook and both my grandmas were amazing cooks. What I never learned was how to cut up and use vegetables. It was more kind of meat and potatoes and bread sort of cooking.

Katie Kimball: And I remember, my husband was so impressed that I made homemade spaghetti sauce when I was in college, like dating him and getting to know him. And when looking back it's hilarious to me because my mom's like "homemade spaghetti sauce", had two cans of Campbell's cream of tomato soup as the base, which is processed food. So that's why I call it a hybrid. It was a funny mix of homemade and processed foods. So I learned a little from my mom and then I learned a lot through failure and teaching myself.

Jess Dang: That is definitely the best way.

Katie Kimball: Yeah. But I mean, I know a lot of our generation wasn't taught to cook and that was sort of the story that I heard at Kitchen Stewardship people would say, "Katie, I just really want to get healthy, but it's so much work because I was never taught to cook at all, nevertheless healthy." And so what I was starting to see, was that people in our generation weren't teaching their kids. And in fact, I wasn't even teaching my kids.

Katie Kimball: My oldest son, Paul, who's 15 now, five years ago when he was in fourth grade, had to do a, how to speech, for his class and I nudged him into doing food. So he taught his class how to make homemade guacamole. And there was this moment where he thwacked the pit out of the avocado with the chef's knife and all the adults in the room were like [auditory gasp]... and I'm cool. Like I love watching my kid impress the other adults. But I had a little crisis in my own head realizing, "Oh my gosh, this is the only recipe he knows how to make." Like, "Katie, what are you doing? One cannot live on guacamole alone here."

Katie Kimball: And so that was like my crisis moment where I thought, "All right, I am an educator, I've got four kids and I'm teaching all sorts of people to cook. I need to be not dropping the ball in my own home with the people who matter to me the most." So that was the summer that I taught my kids really intentionally, built a curriculum, taught them to cook. I had each of them invite a friend because I know my weakness that if I write cooking class Monday, 10:00 AM in my own calendar, I'll be like, "Yeah, I'm kind of tired. I'm not prepared."

Katie Kimball: So I had to have those other families counting on me in order to get it done. And so I empathize with parents who are like, "I don't know. I can't find the time. I don't feel like it's important. I was never taught to cook, so I'm really not comfortable in the kitchen." I'm totally there too. But that's why I realized that other people would be able to use what I had put together and I can smooth the way and take out the thinking for other busy moms.

Jess Dang: Yeah. So we've just started using your course, Kids Cook Real Food and what I really love about it is that you've just thought so much about how to make it like something that everybody can take at every level. Like a two-year-old can take the course as well as a 15-year-old. So I would just love to learn more about, when you were sitting down and thinking through like, "Here are the different levels that I'm going to have, different skill sets that were to be a part of each level." How did you think through all of that to make it so that it was so versatile, that a parent with any age kid could be able to do the course or with like multiple age kids could do the course?

Katie Kimball: Yeah, I think I have a couple of superpowers in teaching and one is breaking things down really simply and explaining them and another is making connections. And I mean that's what learning to cook is all about. Right? So I thought about if I walk in the kitchen and I'm going to make a recipe, what are the basic building block skills I need? I mean, I see a lot of like kids' cookbooks or like rec center cooking classes, they're all recipes.

Katie Kimball: So a kid might walk away from a four week, every Monday night class at a rec center, and they now know four recipes. You can't live on four recipes. So like you do at Cook Smarts, it's about breaking those down. So think about just making muffins, which is something a lot of kids love to do and they jump in. But if we break that down into building blocks, you need to know how to measure with teaspoons. You need to know how to measure flour, a totally different skill. Potentially how to measure fat, totally different skill.

Katie Kimball: You need to know how to stir to a uniform mixture, how to read and follow the recipe well, how to use the oven safely. And there might even be one or two more in there and you start going, "Oh, we just made muffins," which sounds really simple and that's at least six different skills. So that's what I did. I thought, what are like big categories of things we need to be able to make? We need to be able to prepare vegetables, some simple meat dishes, some baking, some breakfasts, you know?

Katie Kimball: And then how do we break these down into these little building blocks? And so I still remember my office floor covered in like a 100 index cards.

Jess Dang: Oh my gosh.

Katie Kimball: Because I had the skills and then which developmental age level do those skills fit. What are like the foundations that you need to know before you can do

something else? And what recipes would I teach? Because obviously you can't teach a skill without any food involved. And so I was organizing them all. And as a mom of four, I know that pain of, there's nothing I can do with all my kids together. There's not a lot of movies that we can watch where the four-year-old, the five-year-old and a 15-year-old are having equally a good time.

Katie Kimball: So I really wanted to serve other families and make sure that cooking and eating together could be something that would cross the age groups, and sort of connect back together into one meal or snack that everyone can share. So each lesson day kids are working at their own developmental levels, building their skills, but the food created comes together and the whole family can eat together.

Jess Dang: I love that. And it just takes so much work off of the parent's plates. Because yeah, it's true. It's impossible. My kids are much closer in age. They're almost three and almost five. And even those two I find have... We find that we can do a lot together but there are some things where the five-year-old clearly is ahead on and the three-year-old can't do it, but it's so great that you've made it so that the course, we can all do it together and we have been and the kids just have been loving it.

Jess Dang: You really were made to teach. Like watching you on camera, I'm like, "Oh my gosh Katie's like... Mrs. Kimball. Mrs. Kimball's such a great teacher," and the way you break things down. So it's funny to kids and you have all these fun sayings. I am very competent in the kitchen and I feel like I'm a teacher, but I feel I'm much better with teaching adults than I am teaching kids. But yeah, just seeing you with watching the videos of you with the kids in your kitchen, your own kids plus their friends. I'm like, "Wow, this woman really was born to teach."

Jess Dang: I just love watching my kids watch you. Because they're smiling and just having the best time. So we started just as you told us to, the knife skills video and they were saying all the things that you were saying. Like, "Hey, hey, out of the way." But making sure their fingers are out of the way, but it's great that you have these ways to make it so that it just clicks with kids. It's clever. It's funny. So just wanted to give you a kudos on that.

Katie Kimball: That makes my day. I love seeing pictures of kids watching the videos and doing the classes. I'm like, "Aww, I am on their parenting team, right? We're working together, we're making this happen and kids are cooking that's amazing."

Jess Dang: Yes. So clearly everybody is looking for ways to occupy their kids right now, as we are right now. And so it's been really great for us to do during quarantine, even though I'm in the kitchen all day long, it feels like, and cooking lots of meals and clearly could teach my kids. But I do find that it's nice to have like the structure that you've given us. One of the first lessons we did was spreading. Was peeling and spreading and I had never really thought about, "Oh yeah,

buttering bread or spreading hummus on a piece of bread, that's a skill that they need to learn." I just totally took that for granted.

Jess Dang: So now we've been doing a lot of practicing with just spreading butter on bread, spreading hummus on crackers and it's been so much fun.

Katie Kimball: That's awesome. Yeah, that's a great example of one of those skills that we as adults don't think of as a skill.

Jess Dang: Yes, yeah.

Katie Kimball: Because it's second nature to us or pouring or something. But when you're under five, your small motor skills are pretty poor. They're just still developing. I always tell people, "If you want to know a preschooler small motor skills, have them brush your teeth," and you'll be like, "Oh, that's why they spill cinnamon when they try to measure it perfectly, I get it. Their fingers don't work like mine do."

Jess Dang: Yes. So we've been mostly been exposed at the beginner level. So can you talk a little bit more about the intermediate and advanced levels and what age you're kind of trying to accommodate with those and what kind of skills one should have when they are of those age, whether they do the class or not?

Katie Kimball: Yeah, for sure. So let's talk to parents about what your kids can do. Because it is one of my missions to encourage parents to raise the bar. Right? What I see too often is that we bake with our little kids and we let them dump in stuff that we have measured and then help us stir and then we take over when it gets too messy.

Jess Dang: Yes.

Katie Kimball: And unfortunately when kids are seven and eight, some of us are still doing the same thing. We haven't released any more responsibility to our kids. But if you think about a seven-year-old versus a kindergartner, how much better they can read, write, talk, socialize. Even just their text, the letters that they write are so much smaller, because they are so much more capable. So parents, let's raise that bar.

Katie Kimball: So we did. We covered kind of our preschoolers, which is what I call the beginner level. So if you've got preschoolers focus on those small motor skills, just even using tongs, using knives to spread butter knife, simple, to spread and cut. But start teaching them to respect that butter knife like it's sharp and you will feel completely confident moving your kid to a paring knife. Even sometimes at age five or six, which scares... That idea scares some people. But when you see your child be safe in the kitchen, it's not scary anymore.

Katie Kimball: And then just pouring dry rice or dry beans or water with a creamer pitcher, one cup measuring cup. These are all cool little preschool skills that are really important. And then what I like to do with our early readers... So as soon as a kid can read early elementary, we want to really give them confidence. Okay? We want to make sure that they feel like they know what they're doing in the kitchen. And so three major skills of categories at that point.

Katie Kimball: And that's reading and following a recipe well, I mean, that's huge. It's a totally different skill than reading a chapter book. There's all these abbreviations, there's fractions, there's following steps in order, and making sure you look back. I mean we've had disasters in our home where kids are just throwing all the ingredients in, because they didn't read the directions to mix X and Y together, and then mix with the dry ingredients whatever. And that can end up with very sticky pancakes, we learned just recently.

Jess Dang: This is a skill that adults lack. We always tell our members you read through the recipe first. I mean I have the same problem sometimes when I'm in a rush, but so I'm not blaming anyone. But yes, it's a very good skill to learn early on the life.

Katie Kimball: Exactly. And even like teaspoons and tablespoons., my poor 11-year-old daughter, this was a number of years ago. But measured tablespoons of salt into homemade tortillas instead of teaspoons. And we figured it out. I don't know how, but we figured it out before she rolled them out. She was making a two X batch. So then she had to make a six X batch.

Jess Dang: Oh gosh to dilute the salt.

Katie Kimball: In order to not three X the salt. So because there's three teaspoons in one tablespoon, so she was rolling out tortillas like forever and she still remembers that. And so you do learn from failure. She'll never forget that. Anyway, I digress. So kids who can read, teach them to read a recipe as a skill. We want to get them to the stove top and work on stove top safety and then that opens up a whole new world of what they can do. And finally working with a sharp knife.

Katie Kimball: I really encourage parents to raise that bar and choose... It's all about choosing the right knife and the right food. Okay? The one time that we've had an accident in the Kimball house, was when my oldest grabbed a cheap dollar store paring knife and a huge fat apple. He was like, "Mom, I cut myself." I'm like, "Well let's go get you cleaned up. And then what happened?" So he shows me, I'm like, "Well son, you're not matching the knife to the food."

Katie Kimball: This is what we teach in the course. I tell parents it's more important for safety to implement this properly and have the right knife on the right food and the right hold, than it is to have proper techniques. So anyway, I'm telling all my poor kids' fail stories. But it's important. I think it's important to let parents

know that when we raise the bar they might fail and that's okay, because the stakes are pretty low as long as we're training them correctly.

Katie Kimball: The mistakes just miss a little and the stakes are much lower now. I want my kids to make mistakes under my roof rather than when they're trying to become young adults and pursue a career and figure out college. I don't want them to have to figure out how to feed themselves too, at that point.

Jess Dang: Exactly. And then how about the older kids? If you were a parent that's like, "I've never tried to teach my kid how to cook and now they're like about to go off to college." What are some things that they should really learn before they go off to college?

Katie Kimball: Sure, the fast track. Well I know one in three college students don't know how to boil an egg. So I guess we could start there.

Jess Dang: Yes.

Katie Kimball: I think so for our advanced kids, we take what we've learned in the intermediate level and then we kind of raise the bar again. And so we move from pairing knives to chef's knives. I feel personally that knife skills are the most important thing any chef can learn, because it's the way to unlock the produce section. And that's where your health lies, right? In the fruits and the vegetables. So that's super important. In fact, four of our eight advanced classes are chef's knife skills. So yeah, if I had a teenager going out to college, it would be like how to use a chef's knife and then how-to simple recipes.

Katie Kimball: So we teach things like sautéing, we make sure that they know how to use the oven, and how to tell when things are done baking wise and then how to juggle. Where for our big kids we start to teach how to juggle multiple recipes. Because that's really tricky when you're cooking dinner, trying to get things done at the same time. And we talk a lot about creativity too. We talk about how do you tweak someone's recipe? How do you know what you can adjust and what seasonings go together and maybe what might not go together?

Katie Kimball: You know, we're not going to put oregano in applesauce. And so we try to help kids build their own, create their own meal out of what they see in the fridge. So I think those would all be great skills as well, for any teenager too just some of those basics. How to steam and sauté vegetables, we do both of those as well.

Jess Dang: So have your kids all gone through your course?

Katie Kimball: Well, they have. What's funny is that, I had that big summer where they all went through the level they were at the time.

Jess Dang: Yeah.

Katie Kimball: But now that was five years ago. So now, they're all pretty much a level up and I'm realizing that I've forgotten to go back on some things. So I mentioned the gooey pancakes and that's because my eight-year-old John was a preschooler when I hardcore taught everybody. And he's been leveling up in some areas but not in others. So he uses a chef's knife and he does a pretty good job. But I never taught him to read a recipe.

Katie Kimball: So I was like, "Oh, this needs to be your new skill, for the next couple of weeks, I'm going to make sure that you're reading the recipe and I'm not just telling you what to do from across the room." So it's funny, I mean, that's life, right? We just kind of miss little things. So, yeah. So my five-year-old is now working through the various skills in the beginner level.

Jess Dang: That's awesome that you've built this for yourself to some extent. You know, that's great. You have your little test subjects. So I mean it sounds like with the course, you're basically giving your kids a little bit like DIY summer camp and with everything going on with summer, likely being canceled to a certain extent, every parent is looking for things to occupy their kids with right now. So your program seems like a really great replacement for summer camp.

Jess Dang: So I imagine you have some ideas for parents on how to make it feel more like a DIY summer camp. Clearly with cooking, I've noticed with the course it's not something you can just be like, "Hey, here's a screen. Go watch it and do it yourself." Especially with little kids you have to be watching them with the knife skills and such and demonstrating and all of that. So how can parents be a participant and a leader within and make it feel like a summer camp and something that they're teaching?

Katie Kimball: For sure. I mean I think putting it in the calendar is step one. I've always said that our classes would make a great summer camp, like no construction and no driving. And now, yeah, this summer is even more important because there just aren't that many summer camps. We have one mom named Stephanie Kinsel who took her two girls and two neighbor girls through every single lesson and it was so amazing to watch her share week after week in our VIP Facebook group, all the pictures and what they were learning.

Katie Kimball: So to make it feel like a summer camp, you can involve the kids in maybe some of the planning, making sure that it happens at the same time every day and just moving through those lessons. But yeah, Stephanie's girls ate vegetables they'd never eaten before that they were really skeptical of at the beginning of the class. There was even one picture where like a brother and a neighbor kid were coming in because it was so exciting to have food being made. So they were having positive peer pressure on those kids.

Katie Kimball: And that would be cool too, would maybe be to make some charts of what you tried and did you like it or did you dislike it or are you on the fence? And just kind of keep track, especially if you happen to have maybe a more selective eater. It can be interesting for them to track and assess what they enjoy. So it's

hard to know with different states opening up at different rates, it's hard to know whether I should say like, "Oh, grab the neighbors too, that'll be fun."

Katie Kimball: But at the very least you want to always like celebrate the finished product. Right? That's the best part of camp is those awards nights. So, we just want to celebrate what the kids did and make sure that, if dad's coming home or if you do have contact with other people, that maybe they can serve those people, because that's a huge self-esteem boost for kids to see other people eating what they've made.

Jess Dang: Yes. Yeah. And I imagine for parents that can also be really easy in terms of boosting that self-esteem, making some certificates, just on some sort of graphics thing online and just printing them out. They're like, "They finished DIY summer camp, cooking camp," and that would be really fun for the kids I'm sure too.

Katie Kimball: Yeah. And we provide certificates too. So another one of my favorite pictures is the kids beaming, holding those. And man, we had another mom in Abu Dhabi, which is like incredible, right? How are we reaching all around the world? So in Abu Dhabi she taught this little homeschool co-op, the whole course, and then at the end the kids made a huge meal for the parents. And there were like two salads and homemade sauces, Mexican food... Mexican food in Abu Dhabi is kind of funny. And I mean just every child, every picture, was like every child was so focused and working so hard and then just beaming to serve their parents at the end. It was beautiful.

Jess Dang: Oh yeah. Kids, I guess there's such a sense of accomplishment in terms of doing something in the kitchen. I definitely remember as a kid trying really hard to make meals. They were not great meals, but every time I did do something in the kitchen feeling so proud of myself, because it felt like something that adult was supposed to do and not a kid. But clearly, you're showing that it's not the case.

Katie Kimball: Right. But yes, kids like to feel... They like to do authentic skills. And I think that's where authenticity of self-esteem and praise comes in too. It has to be something that matters to show them that they matter.

Jess Dang: Yeah. So you mentioned about selective eaters. So picky eating is something that is really hard for a lot of parents. Have you seen a lot of examples where parents have gotten kids more involved in the kitchen and that's really kind of help alleviate some of those picky eating habits?

Katie Kimball: Yes, absolutely. And in fact, I mean we survey our folks, and at least 25% of kids are eating foods that they hadn't before. And keep in mind that a bunch of the other kids and the other 75% are already good eaters. Right? So that's actually a pretty big number. So I know like Lavonne is one mom and her son was 12 and

she's like, "I can count on my fingers what he will eat." So he's an extremely, extremely selective eater.

Katie Kimball: But because he was cutting up a red pepper, he gave it a little taste and she's like, "I got to get a picture. This is a miracle." He didn't love it and that's okay. But he engaged with his food and that's what science tells us. If we can get the kids involved and engaged with the food so that their senses are appreciating and understanding those foods basically whether it's sight, smell, touch, even the sound of cooking, that brings kids into the experience and it helps their minds and their taste buds be more ready to accept new foods over time as things go on.

Jess Dang: Yeah. So my kids, I've been very lucky with them. They're pretty open to most foods and they help me in the kitchen, so we have that exact same example with the peppers. Where it's like "We're chopping peppers," and all of a sudden there are no peppers left because Bowie, my son has eaten them all.

Katie Kimball: Aww.

Jess Dang: Yeah, he's definitely a really eager earnest kid. Really loves helping in the kitchen. He's the one that's almost three. My daughter really interestingly enough, she has been helping since she was two, till we got the Curious chef knives and from two to three she was really into it. But over the last year and a half, has just been not as into it. Whenever I'm like, "Hey, do you want to help in the kitchen?" She's usually like, "No, I want to do something else, or I'm fine, just sitting here on the couch doing nothing."

Jess Dang: So clearly, I very much think that learning to cook is a really important skill, but I also don't want to put pressure on her. So do you have any suggestions on what I should do? Should I just let it be for now? Because at some point I do feel like, I do not want to send the girl to college not knowing how to cook. So I don't know when it is. I'm like, "You need to really learn how to cook now."

Katie Kimball: Well you have some years before you need to freak out about her being 18, so that's good. I mean I'm always all about the balance. So I think balance is the answer here too, where like, yes, you don't want to pressure her, but you also don't want to allow it to never happen. So a cool phrase that kind of member moms that I came up with together was to say, "Okay, I need a chef who has this skill." Maybe it's peeling, right? "I need a chef who has peeling skills, who's going to be my peeler today?"

Katie Kimball: And it's just a different way to say I need help. Right? There's about a mom saying I need help versus like who has... Because everyone wants to feel like they have skills, right? So who has peeling skills and they're like, "Me, that's my level. That's my skill. I watched that video." And then they can recall from the class that we make that fun and silly. You've done that one, so the bonking into

the wall, and reliving those giggles and then there can be a little more motivation there.

Katie Kimball: And also, as I mentioned, serving other people, huge motivator for many kids. So you in your house, you might say, "Oh I wonder who I will get to thank when daddy gets to eat this dinner? Hmm. Will it just be daddy, give mommy a kiss and thank me for making dinner and working so hard? Or will it be daddy give mommy and your daughter a kiss?" And just kind of build that up. That they'll get thanks at the end. Keeping it fun. So I guess those are just a few little motivation tips to pull them in as much as we can without pressure of, thou must do this.

Jess Dang: Yeah, I agree. I'm going to give all of those a try. And actually, I feel just in the last two weeks that we've been using your course, like Neko has been a little bit more interested, I don't know. I think there's something about getting to watch a screen of course, but also seeing other kids do it. I think that makes it a little bit more exciting for her. Seeing other kids spreading their butter on their bread or cutting their bananas.

Jess Dang: And so I'm hoping. But yeah, today we had that exact moment of peeling where I was like, "Do you want to help me peel?" And she said no, but I can see how rephrasing it the way you suggested of like, "Who has peeling skills?" might have changed her mind about helping me peel the carrots today.

Katie Kimball: And having their own cutting board can go a long way too. If it's a color, or like we have one with limes on it that for a couple of years my daughter would only use that, and she wanted to help more because she was the only one who used that cutting board, simple but effective.

Jess Dang: So where can parents go to learn more about the program Katie?

Katie Kimball: Yeah, we're just at kidscookrealfood.com. And right now in these times we're doing kind of a bunch of different things to make sure that parents have options both large and small to get their kids in the kitchen during sort of our at-home time. I mean, we can't travel and do summer camps as much. And then if you want to see what my real kids are doing in the real kitchen, it's Instagram at [kidscookrealfood](https://www.instagram.com/kidscookrealfood).

Jess Dang: Awesome. Okay. Before we let you go, I wanted to talk about some just real life pragmatic stuff, because you are a mom of four and you run a business and I don't know how you're doing it right now, but I imagine like all your teaching skills are coming in very handy. So can you share with our listeners some life philosophy or pragmatic tip that they can take away today to live a more efficient, productive life?

Katie Kimball: That is a great question. And so I have to preface that by saying I am super unorganized as a person. Tell me to keep a schedule or make a to do list in order

of how I'm going to do it, it never ever, ever happens. So when school was first canceled, I knew we needed a little something to hang on to it, a little sort of routine. And so this is pretty practical but a little philosophical too. So we start every day, when I see my kids, I say, "Good morning," and then I ask them three things they're grateful for.

Katie Kimball: Because I know like brain science and when we deal with stress and stuff that our brains have five times the fear receptors, than joy and reward receptors. So we are literally wired for the negative and we have to work hard to rewire our brains for the positive. And that's what just focusing on what you're grateful for right at the beginning of the day, will do. It actually wires your neurons to look more for the positive in the day.

Katie Kimball: And so I thought that was really important and simple enough that I could actually stick with it. So I would say that's a great habit to get started for any family.

Jess Dang: Speaking of that, how is your family doing? How has it been with everybody home together, and I'm sure your husband home as well, all six of you under the same roof all day long together?

Katie Kimball: Yeah, luckily, we really like each other. And my husband and I are both at home entrepreneurs, so we're used to working at home. We're much less productive with all the children around, so we're suffering, our work is suffering, I guess. But the kids are doing pretty well. I'm always grateful that they get along with each other, and our two little boys are five and eight and they put up with each other really, really well. They're catching frogs. My garage is full of frogs right now.

Jess Dang: What? Oh my gosh.

Katie Kimball: I shouldn't say full of. But they keep losing them. So at one point they had five, I think now they have two left. I don't think they're losing them inside.

Jess Dang: Is there like a creek nearby that they just go?

Katie Kimball: Yeah.

Jess Dang: Oh that's-

Katie Kimball: It is. So they're having fun stomping around and yeah, we did a couple just fun family things. We pretended we were going on a cruise one week and so every night we would do something goofy. We had fancy drink night and mini golf in the basement with cups taped to the floor and wear your Hawaiian shirt day. So it was just super goofy. But I think now that it's nicer out, we don't need to work so hard, the kids are just really enjoying being outside.

Jess Dang: Oh, that's great. And you guys, what does summer look like for you all?

Katie Kimball: I have no idea. That's a good question. We were supposed to travel for six weeks while our kitchen was remodeled, but that all fell apart because of this. So I don't know.

Jess Dang: Well, if anyone can figure it out, I know you can Katie. You will have your hundred index cards out and thinking some way to do some great summer camp, that all your kids will be a part of, and I know it'll be amazing.

Katie Kimball: Thanks.

Jess Dang: Okay, so before I will let you go, I would love for you to go through our rapid-fire round if that's okay.

Katie Kimball: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Jess Dang: All right. Your most important kitchen tool.

Katie Kimball: Definitely six-inch Wusthof chef's knife.

Jess Dang: Your go to breakfast.

Katie Kimball: We do oatmeal in the instant pot for the kids, so it's ready when they wake up. And eggs for my husband and I later on.

Jess Dang: Okay, you have 15 minutes to make a meal, what is it?

Katie Kimball: I've never done that I don't think ever. So if I have 15 minutes, I better have some leftovers to heat up.

Jess Dang: What's one meal you never get sick of?

Katie Kimball: Every Thursday we do Mexican nights. So like tacos, nachos mostly. Yeah.

Jess Dang: One ingredient you always have in your pantry.

Katie Kimball: That's a funny one, because I probably have 50 ingredients I always have it in my pantry. But I buy dry beans in 25-pound bags, so there's a very good chance I never run out of dry beans.

Jess Dang: Oh my gosh. You're well prepared for this quarantine.

Katie Kimball: Yup.

Jess Dang: Guilty pleasure food or not?

Katie Kimball: Ice cream hands down.

Jess Dang: Your favorite life optimization or organization app?

Katie Kimball: Well, we've established that I'm not very organized. But I definitely rely on just Google calendar and phone notifications.

Jess Dang: The whole you being not organized really amazed me because I would just have never... I've never known that from all of the correspondence we've had. I'm just like, "Oh, Katie is so on top of everything."

Katie Kimball: I just pretend I'm organized on the internet.

Jess Dang: Yes, that's all you need to do. Hardest thing you've done.

Katie Kimball: So when my oldest was 12, he and I and my husband were SCUBA certified, which was such a huge process and just really physically demanding as well as mentally and emotionally. Because once you're down there, you can't tell anyone what to do. You can't save your people and I've never felt so helpless in my life. We did it and I'm super proud to have done it, but, oh my goodness so difficult.

Jess Dang: Proudest thing you've done.

Katie Kimball: Just watching my kids, I'm proud of what they've done. Yeah. They're growing up to be pretty amazing people.

Jess Dang: Last book you loved.

Katie Kimball: I read a book called Indistractable, which I probably need to read again, but it was really interesting.

Jess Dang: Last TV show you loved.

Katie Kimball: My husband and I are just about finished watching the Parks and Rec season. I know we're like way, way, way behind on that, but I don't know if you saw their quarantine special where all the actors came back together and did one from their homes. So hilarious. Like loved it.

Jess Dang: Oh, that is good reminder for me, because I need to watch that, because that was one of my favorite shows. So I have to check that out.

Katie Kimball: Yep, great.

Jess Dang: Oh Katie, thank you so much for being on the podcast. I had a great time catching up and I'm not surprised, even with everything going on, it seems like you all are doing so well during this crazy quarantine.

Katie Kimball: We're hanging in there. I almost forgot though, that I do have a gift for your audience. Oh, great.

Jess Dang: Yes. What is it?

Katie Kimball: Yeah. So our members' favorite lesson is the, our basic knife skills and safety, where we teach the four ways to hold the food and the three ways to hold the knife. So I love giving that one away, so the parents will raise the bar and see what's possible with their kids. So people can find that at kidscookrealfood.com/cooksmarts.

Jess Dang: Yes, and please everyone. I encourage you to watch that lesson because it's like 10 minutes, and it entertained my kids very wildly and they learn a couple of things. And they're saying all those things like the "Hey, hey, out of the way." And what is it? The tunnel one?

Katie Kimball: Up and over soldier?

Jess Dang: Up and over soldier. But it's like, yes, these are the things that make you such a great teacher for kids, because you've all these like fun ways for them to remember things. So yes, I highly encourage everybody to watch that. And like I said, even a two-year-old could get something out of it, because you can use a butter knife and I was so impressed with that lesson.

Katie Kimball: Awesome.

Jess Dang: Great. Oh, thanks Katie. Well, we will catch up soon and please stay safe and sane.

Katie Kimball: You too Jess, thanks.

Jess Dang: Okay. So I hope you got some great ideas for what you can do with your kids this summer in the kitchen, all parents will definitely be spending a lot more time than we might have anticipated with our kids this summer. And I don't know about you, but I just want someone to tell me what to do at this point. Like I said, I have no more brain cells and I just want a teacher like Katie to lead the way for me. Of course by now I think most of us have gotten used to the whole e-learning thing.

Jess Dang: My kids are used to their Zoom preschool. They don't love it, but they're used to having that. I know for so many things, being in a classroom is really important, but getting to be in your own kitchen and using your own tools to learn how to cook is actually an advantage to me. So, as Katie mentioned in the interview please, head to kidscookrealfood.com/cooksmarts to watch her knife skills course that can be used at any age.

Jess Dang: I had been doing this, of course, as I mentioned with Neko and Bowie, and like I said, I clearly know how to cook very well. And I am even a cooking instructor and I have my own online course. But there's just something so great about one, doing a course that's designed just for kids and then two, not having to think it through for myself. I love being my own boss, but there are days when I really miss someone just telling me what to do. And I'm happy for Mrs. Kimball to be our teacher in the kitchen this summer.

Jess Dang: As I mentioned in the interview, Katie is such a natural teaching kids. And I learned so much just from watching her with her kids. Plus she's got all these fun ways to remember things that you're doing in the kitchen that will definitely appeal to young kids and really help them be safe and really learn the skills. So I am a huge fan. You don't have to sign up for the full course. I think if you do, she's going to be running lots of summer specials that are going to make it very affordable. But, even if you don't want to sign up for the full course, please check out that knives skills video that we mentioned. She's made it again, available on kidscookrealfood.com/cooksmarts.

Jess Dang: Okay. So before we go, I wanted to share a recent review from MBV2104. "Such a great podcast, the content is consistently excellent, and it is presented in such a fun and accessible way. I always learn so much and come away with great tips for meal planning, cooking generally, and becoming more efficient in the kitchen. Jess and her team are amazing." Well, MBV2104 thank you for such a lovely review. You also get a Cook Smarts tote bag, just reach out to us at hello@cooksmarts.com to collect it.

Jess Dang: So if you want to support our podcast, help us grow and maybe be the winner of a fabulous tote bag that you can carry around to these summer farmer's markets, I hope they're still open ours still are, just make sure to socially distance still. Please head over to Apple Podcasts and throw us some stars and let others know why they should be listening to the podcast. You know, you're stuck at home anyway, so helping us out would be a very productive way to spend five minutes of your time.

Jess Dang: So I hope everyone is doing all right. I know this isn't the summer we expected, but I hope today I offered at least our parent listeners a way to make it a bit better, a bit more productive, and just a little bit less work for you by just being in the kitchen with a great teacher. So we'll be back with a new episode in two weeks, but until then, thank you for letting us join you in your kitchen or wherever you're listening to this podcast. And until next time happy cooking from your kitchen cheerleader.