

Home Cooking Episode 10 Transcript

Hrishi: Ready?

Samin: Hit it, sister.

Samin: I'm Samin Nosrat.

Hrishi: And I'm Hrishikesh Hirway.

Samin: And we're Home Cooking.

Hrishi: This is episode 10 of our four part series where we help you figure out what to cook with what you've got at home. In this episode, we're joined by the delightful and hilarious actor Jason Mantzoukas.

Samin: You know Jason from The Good Place and Parks and Recreation, and his podcast How Did This Get Made? Or you might have seen him in literally anything else, because he's actually in everything.

Hrishi: But first, before we get to Jason Mantzoukas and before we answer some questions. First of all, Samin, what's the best thing that you've had to eat recently?

Samin: Well. This week was a little bit different, because I went on a little trip, so I haven't been cooking as much.

Hrishi: Have you traveled much this quarantine period?

Samin: No, this is the first time I went anywhere. This is the first time I slept not in my own bed.

Hrishi: Oh wow, okay, so this is exciting.

Samin: Yeah, it was very exciting. I went on a COVID road trip to officiate my friend's tiny wedding.

Hrishi: Oh, that's so sweet.

Samin: Yeah, it was really wonderful. And her now-husband is a salmon fisherman. And so as part of the wedding, the meal was mostly seafood towers, beautiful seafood towers in honor of his profession.

Hrishi: I'm not familiar with those two words being put together.

Samin: Oh, really?

Hrishi: I'm really just imagining a plate where there's a bunch of shrimps that have been speared together with toothpicks to make a jenga, shrimp jenga, basically is what I'm imagining.

Samin: No, it's not shrimp jenga. It's more like three plates stacked on top of each other with lots of ice. It's like cooked shellfish, and raw things...

Hrishi: Okay, yes, I see the picture now, okay, got it.

Samin: Yeah.

Hrishi: But, Shrimp Jenga, a million dollar idea, you can have that one.

Samin: I'm going to let our listeners run with that.

Hrishi: I think that's going to be a thing.

Samin: Shrimp Jenga is a thing

Hrishi: Hold on, I'm buying the domain shrimpjenga.com, but go ahead.

Samin: Anywho, we had a really delicious spread. And one of the fishermen who has worked at this fishery for 40 years is named Dexter, and Dexter has a tiny little amount of salmon that he cans every year. It's like the most precious gift. He gave, I don't know, maybe 20 cans of this salmon to the bride and groom, and they gave some to the cooks who cooked the wedding, and they turned that salmon into a dip for the delicious bread that I brought down for the tables. It was so good, I was just slathering this salmon dip on the bread. And it was so good, it tasted like some magical chefery had been done. I was like, "What is in this, it's so good?" Everybody, I was taking pictures of it, it just was like, "What is in this? Oh my God, it's got to be so good."

Hrishi: Taking pictures of it, like you took a selfie with it?

Samin: Yeah, yeah.

Hrishi: You were like, "Can I get a picture with you?"

Samin: Yeah, it was so good." Then afterward I went in the kitchen and I was like, "Oh my gosh, can you please tell me what you put in that salmon dip?" They were like, "No, we literally opened the can of salmon, dumped the whole thing including all the oil, and then mixed it with cream cheese."

Hrishi: It's brilliant.

Samin: I was like, oh my God. I love that recipe, and I'm totally going to make it. The end, so that's my new favorite recipe.

Hrishi: That's great.

Samin: What's the best thing you made this week?

Hrishi: Uh, I'm making it right now, and I just finished. It is the domain name for our website, which is shrimpjenga.com. It works.

Samin: Awesome. \$9.99 well spent.

Hrishi: Exactly. Okay, on to questions. Okay, so we have a question that comes from Vanessa.

Vanessa: I bought a bamboo steamer the other day to cook dumplings, and I'm wondering whether you have any other suggestions for what I could steam cook.

Hrishi: Bamboo steamer.

Samin: Love it.

Hrishi: Do you have one? Have you ever used one?

Samin: I've definitely used one. I don't own one, but boy do I have an idea for you.

Hrishi: What's your idea?

Samin: Sweet potatoes.

Hrishi: Do you have to do anything special to them?

Samin: You can cut them any way you like, or not cut them at all. But steamed sweet potatoes, woo baby, they're good.

Hrishi: How did you first learn about steaming a potato?

Samin: Not a potato, a sweet potato.

Hrishi: Oh oh, I yam so sorry for getting that wrong.

Samin: Oh no.

Hrishi: What is the origin story for you and sweet potato in a bamboo steamer?

Samin: I wrote a column last year about steamed sweet potatoes that I found a recipe for them in a cookbook called *Where Cooking Begins*, by Carla Lalli Music. She has a really beautiful recipe for steamed sweet potatoes that are spread with tahini butter and sprinkled with sesame seeds, and drizzled with lime juice. I was pretty skeptical at first. The picture's really enchanting, so I was like, "That looks good, I guess I'll try that." But I've always been a sweet potato roaster. I've historically not really been into steaming vegetables, just because I'm always like, "I want them to be brown, and I want to work salt into them." When you steam vegetables, you can't really get salt into them because they're not in water, absorbing salt from the water, or they're not absorbing salt through the skin as they're roasting.

Hrishi: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Samin: And they're not browning, so I just was like, why would I do this? But something does happen, some magical textural thing does happen when they steam, it's like all of the fibers absorb the liquid from the steam and the condensation, and they fluff up in this really delightful way. This tahini butter that she makes is so delicious, so we can link to the recipe. I wrote a column for it. That's incredibly delicious. But I've been transformed into a believer. What do you like to steam? Do you steam anything?

Hrishi: The only experience I've ever had with a bamboo steamer is in the video game *Overcooked*, which is my favorite video game.

Samin: Oh, you've tried to make me play this game so many times.

Hrishi: It is the most fun game.

Samin: I would totally play with you if I had a remote situation.

Hrishi: It's great, and there's a bamboo steamer that figures prominently in many of the levels.

Samin: Oh, it sounds delightful. Oh, you know, another thing I think you could steam, inspired by Hrishi's game actually, Vanessa, is I think you could steam little banana leaf packages of things. So whether they're tamales that you buy or make in banana leaves, or fish that you wrap in banana leaves and steam. I think you said that your parents use a metal steamer for fish, but the nice thing about a bamboo steamer is, I feel like it's a little bit more gentle. I don't love putting raw food, things like raw fish directly on the bamboo steamer, but if it's wrapped in the banana leaf package, it does really well in the bamboo steamer. I do feel like the heat is so gentle that that's kind of a nice little touch. One recipe for a banana leaf wrapped fish that I love, is yet another column that I wrote. Sorry, just tooting my own column horn a lot over here.

Hrishi: Tooting your own column horn.

Samin: So this is a recipe called *patra ni machhi*, or *patra ni machhi*. It's a Parsi recipe that comes from one of my favorite cookbooks, which is called *My Bombay Kitchen*. It's like a pounded, or you could use a little food processor, paste out of coconut and serrano peppers and cilantro and mint and cumin and sugar and lime. Then she spreads that all over the fish, wraps it in banana leaves, and then you can grill it or steam it until the fish is all the way flaky. So you could use any flaky white fish, any sort of ling cod or snapper or sea bass, and just cook that until it's cooked all the way through. And if you've never used banana leaves before, they're really fun to work with. They're really easy, and they have a shiny side and a less shiny side. The way you kind of loosen them up is, you take the shinier side and you pass it over a flame, like over the gas flame of your burner, to sort of soften it, and then you can kind of fold it around the fish.

Hrishi: Well, I hope that helps, Vanessa, and have fun with your bamboo steamer.

Samin: Shrimp Jenga.

Hrishi: You can't say shrimp Jenga to that. That's not a sign off.

Samin: Why not? Dot com.

Hrishi: There you go. That was what it was missing.

Samin: Next.

Charlotta: Hello, this is Charlotta from Germany. I bought some sumac? For a fattoush recipe, where you just sprinkled it over. Which was delicious, but now I'm left with a whole lot of sumac. I would love to have some suggestions if you would give me some, what to do with this amazing spice that I just bought, and that is now sitting in my spice rack laughing at me. Greetings from Germany.

Hrishi: So. Charlotta's sumac is now in her spice rack laughing at her.

Samin: Laughing at her.

Hrishi: Anything you can do to help her get out its mockery. Its sumac-ery.

Samin: Sumac-ery. Aye yay yay, I just walked right into that. So for those people who don't know, sumac is a wild berry that's quite sour. It's used a lot in Middle Eastern cooking. In Iran we just use it sort of dried and ground up, we don't really cook with it so much as use it as a garnish at the table. Almost exclusively, in my experience, for kebabs. And it's this sort of sour thing that we add, every single time. It's like on every single table in a shaker. So in my worldview, it's a garnish to be added to grilled meats. For those people who don't know, I don't know if you got exactly what fattoush is, but fattoush is a Middle Eastern bread salad. It's kind of like pita version of panzanella. It's a dried pita salad with tomatoes and cucumbers, and yeah, that's a great place to use sumac too. I think Charlotta, one great resource for you, a person who I think uses sumac really beautifully and quite often is Yotam Ottolenghi.

Hrishi: Right.

Samin: So if you want to refer to his cookbooks, he is a prolific user of sumac, and I think really popularized it with people around the world in the last 10 years.

Hrishi: He's definitely the reason why I have sumac.

Samin: The classic sort of Ottolenghi recipe is a sumac grilled chicken. It will stain, if you marinate your meat with sumac it will stain it, so you can sort of sprinkle it on right before you start cooking if you're not interested in getting that pinkish tinge all over your meat. Although, who cares? Maybe the pink is nice. Also sprinkling it on your fish

would be really nice. But to me, you could also go full Persian and just keep the shaker at your table. Yeah, my recommendation is go full court press, it sounds like you have a lot, so just start sprinkling it on top of everything.

Hrishi: Thanks Charlotta.

Annie: Hi Samin and Hrishi, my name is Annie. Since the pandemic started, I have been cooking almost every meal for myself at home. I'm a pretty good cook, but I find myself craving crunchy foods, and the only one that I have come up with to make is just croutons, which I make a lot, and I can eat a lot of. But it's kind of boring. So, I'm looking for something that has that full mouth crunch, where you bite in and the whole thing is crunchy, and if it's salty that would be great. Thank you, bye.

Samin: I'm really into Annie's question.

Hrishi: Yeah?

Samin: To me, I feel like the answer is somewhere in the realm of frying or heavily oiling and baking at a high temperature things.

Hrishi: You know who loves frying actually without oil is my dad.

Samin: Oh my God, do you think we can call your dad?

Hrishi: My dad has been talking to me about his air fryer every chance he gets. He's going to be thrilled.

Sumesh: Hi.

Hrishi: Hi Dad.

Samin: Hi, Sumesh uncle.

Sumesh: Hi, hi, how are you?

Samin: Oh, I'm so happy to see you.

Sumesh: So you did a good job on bay leaf.

Samin: Oh, thank you.

Sumesh: You use that in biryani.

Samin: Oh, yeah.

Hrishi: Okay, all right, enough about bay leaf. Okay, so Dad. The reason why we're calling is because we got a question from a woman named Annie, who has been craving crunchy foods. And then I told Samin that you have this air fryer that you've been excited about.

Sumesh: Yes. Yes.

Hrishi: What are you making in your air fryer?

Sumesh: Well, today I heated up samosa.

Hrishi: Oh, in the air fryer?

Sumesh: Yeah.

Hrishi: Have you made anything from scratch in the air fryer?

Sumesh: No, nothing from the scratch.

Hrishi: Well, question over, good night.

Sumesh: Okay, French fries. You know, the ones we get, the fries? To get it crunchy, you have to go like 15 minutes.

Hrishi: In the air fryer?

Sumesh: Yes.

Hrishi: You're just using it to heat up things?

Sumesh: Well, the air is frying it up.

Hrishi: Uh-huh.

Sumesh: Instead of toaster, I'm using the air fryer.

Samin: Can you use the air fryer to make things that are thin and crispy?

Sumesh: Yes.

Samin: Like what?

Sumesh: The one I just gave you, the easy one is French fries.

Samin: French fries, okay.

Hrishi: But if French fries are thin and crispy, those sound like bad French fries.

Samin: Well, listen Hrishi, different people have different kinds of french fries that they like.

Sumesh: Okay. One thing is, there's no oil you're using.

Hrishi: Uh-huh.

Samin: Oh right.

Sumesh: There's a basket. You put it in the basket, so air from the side gets in there, and then it makes it crunchy.

Hrishi: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Samin: Air makes it crunchy.

Sumesh: Yeah, and it's much better than using toaster oven.

Samin: I love that.

Hrishi: Hey Dad, have you ever made papad?

Samin: Ooh.

Sumesh: Yeah, Papad I use microwave.

Hrishi: But how do you make papad?

Sumesh: So you get the ready made papad.

Hrishi: Step one of making papad, buy papad.

Samin: No no no. But that's how, even Niloufer buys the papad and you just toast them over the fire. Everybody buys the papad.

Sumesh: Yeah. But if you go to the Indian restaurant, they usually fried in the oil, right?

Hrishi: Yeah.

Sumesh: But you put it in 30 seconds in microwave, and it comes out very crispy, very nicely.

Samin: I think you're on to something, though. I think that's definitely that crispy texture that she wants.

Sumesh: Right, right. There's no ... And you're not using any oil.

Hrishi: Yeah.

Samin: So Annie, I think a papad could definitely work. Papad are made out of lentil flour I think, right?

Sumesh: Right.

Samin: So, as Sumesh uncle is saying, you can put them in the microwave and puff them up, but you can also just pass them over a gas flame, like the gas burner of your stove, or over the grill, until they puff up or you can deep fry them and they get really really crispy all the way through, and that's a really really wonderful texture. That's I think going to give you that same sort of satisfaction.

Hrishi: Yeah, and if you haven't had the Indian snack of papad before, it is just delightful.

Samin: It's really fun, and the puffing up is really fun to witness.

Hrishi: Yeah.

Sumesh: Right, and if you overdo it then it burns up.

Samin: Yes.

Hrishi: Okay, but we're focusing on the fun part, Dad.

Sumesh: Okay. The other thing in my air fryer I've done is muffin.

Samin: Muffin?

Hrishi: Muffins are not crunchy.

Sumesh: No, but outside-

Hrishi: We're trying to solve Annie's problem here.

Samin: Wait, why would you put a muffin in an air fryer?

Sumesh: To warm it up, rather than in the toaster oven.

Samin: Oh.

Hrishi: Annie, we know you asked about crunchy foods, but if you'd like the opposite of a crunchy food, try putting a muffin in an air fryer.

Samin: This is what happens when you call a food scientist at 11:30 at night.

Sumesh: Well, this is fun, let's do more Zoom meetings.

Samin: Okay, great.

Hrishi: Okay, bye Dad. Say hi to Mom.

Sumesh: Take care.

Hrishi: Good night.

Samin: Good night Sumesh uncle.

Samin: That was incredible.

Hrishi: Well, I hope you get to try some papad. Step one, buy papad.

Samin: Step two, put it in the microwave.

Hrishi: But either way, I hope it'll satisfy your craving for crunchy food. It's really good, if you haven't had it before.

Samin: Then also what I would recommend is while you're at the Indian store buying the papads, maybe buy yourself some mango chutney, mint chutney, some other chutneys too.

Hrishi: Yes, yes, yes.

Samin: To eat with your papad.

Hrishi: That's right. The chutneys are essential.

Samin: Yeah.

Hrishi: Thanks so much for the question, Annie.

Samin: Oh, I hope this helps.

Hrishi: Now we're going to talk to the wonderful Jason Mantzoukas. Actor, writer, podcaster, someone who we absolutely love and we're so thrilled to have on the show.

Samin: He told us that his cooking experience is super limited, but we also thought that might make for an interesting conversation, so here it is.

Hrishi: Jason, thanks so much for joining us.

Jason: I am thrilled to be here.

Samin: We're so excited to talk to you.

Jason: Thank you for having me. This is and I can confidently say will be the only show that I am a guest where a guest was also Yo-Yo Ma. There's unquestionably no piece of media in the future there's going to happen where both Yo-Yo Ma and I are part of it.

Samin: Same.

Hrishi: Jason, what's your quarantine cooking life like?

Jason: Unlike a lot of your other guests, my quarantine cooking life is like pretty much nothing. I am quarantining alone. I have not had human contact in about seven months. I'm pretty much losing my mind. But one of my greatest kind of challenges, especially as this was starting was, I'm not a cook. I'm not only not a cook, I don't even have the basics of cooking knowledge. Yeah, I've got the time. I've got certainly a beautiful kitchen in my house in L.A. I could have, but instead, it was really panicking me, because I felt like more often than not, I was putting together what I like to call lovingly "slop bowls", which is just, I don't know, I'm going to make like a can of lentil soup. I'm going to put

something else in it and that's it. I felt like it was not nutritious, I felt like I was being unhealthy. It was stressing me out. So, my solve has been - in this kind of embarrassing - and this is going to be an embarrassing kind of Hollywood, kind of thing, but I hired a friend of a friend who's a cook to make me clean healthy meals. So, he makes me a week's worth of meals at a time, drop them at my house one day. I just eat pretty much those meals. It's a very healthy clean fish, chicken, all this stuff. And then I will, my contribution is I will make a sweet potato, or I will make some rice in an instant pot or I can, I do get a vegetable box. And there are things, so like, I can very basically roast some brussel sprouts. Very basically, and I can do about the same for like a sweet potato or something like that but it's all very plain, none of it has flavor. I have a very complicated relationship to food in general.

Hrishi: How so?

Jason: I have an anaphylaxis level allergy to eggs.

Hrishi: Oh, wow.

Samin: Oh.

Jason: So, anything that has eggs as an ingredient, uses eggs, touches eggs is literally fatal for me. So, I grew up very afraid of food. That has continued throughout my adult life. My relationship to food is one of it is a threat. New things are dangerous. New restaurants are dangerous. To go to a restaurant is to have to put implicit trust in the people that I'm talking to that they're going to believe me and convey this severe allergy back to the kitchen.

Hrishi: Right.

Jason: And then I end up in the hospital every once in a while, and it's a mess. It is a very palpable awareness of my own mortality every time I sit down at a new restaurant to have a meal, if that makes sense.

Samin: Wow, that is so big.

Jason: I grew up feeling around food very fragile, very breakable, and in many ways, continue to feel that way. Samin's look is amazing.

Samin: You're breaking my heart.

Jason: As I'm talking, I wish the viewers could look at the contortions of heartbreak and pity that are going across Samin's face.

Hrishi: Well, given all the restrictions that the egg allergy has given you and your cooking experience as it is right now, is there a dish or even just an ingredient that you'd like to cook with at home, yourself, that Samin might be able to coach you through?

Jason: Well, okay. So, like I said, I get a box of vegetables, right? What will then happen is I will unpack that box of vegetables. There will be a number of things inside the box, I don't know what they are. I will take pictures of them and I will send them to my friends, Ravi and Connie who are very incredible home cooks, the best. They will be like, "Okay, this is this. This is this." Usually it's leafy greens and stuff like that I just am like, "I don't know what this is." They'll tell me what to do with it. So, this week, my box came and there's something inside of it that I didn't know what it was. I was like, "Oh, you know what? I'm not going to text this to Connie and Ravi."

Samin: Did you save it for us?

Jason: "I'm going to save it for Samin and Hrishi, and I'm going to ask you what it is." Okay, give me a minute. I got to go get it, it's in the fridge.

Samin: Okay.

Hrishi: Okay. Let's take a quick break.

Jason: Okay, so this arrived in my box, I unwrapped it and I was like, "What the f*** is this?" Okay. So, here we go. What is this?

Jason: I don't know what this is. It's got like a bulb at the bottom of it, and then long green stalks that have leafy things coming off of them, like light leafy, not leafy things but-

Hrishi: Like fine green hair.

Jason: Yeah, it's hairy. This sounds appetizing. It's stalks with hairy green appendages. Okay, here's my guess before you tell me.

Samin: Okay.

Jason: Is these leeks?

Samin: No.

Hrishi: It is not leeks.

Jason: Goddamnit. I really was like I bet it's leeks. I'm going to guess leeks.

Samin: That was a great guess. It's a great guess.

Jason: Thank you, Samin.

Samin: Sometimes you put this with leeks. It's fennel.

Jason: This is fennel.

Samin: Yeah, that's a fennel bulb. And then those are fennel fronds.

Jason: Wow.

Samin: You can use both parts.

Jason: Huge reveal

Samin: Huge reveal.

Jason: Also, very disappointing for Jason Mantzoukas. I don't like fennel. If you can figure out how to make me like fennel by making me cook this, I will do it.

Samin: Well, are you an anti-licorice, anise family person?

Jason: It's not my favorite group of flavors.

Samin: Yeah, I'm an anti-licorice, anise person too, but I've definitely grown to love fennel. Sometimes you might not like the taste of raw fennel. I mean, sometimes it's so mild, you don't even taste that anise-ness. So, you can just shave it and toss it with a lemon vinaigrette, or you can also cook it. If you cook it and caramelize it really, really, really dark, that anise-ness goes far, far away.

Jason: That's just take the fennel, add caramel, and then bring it bring to a boil?

Samin: Exactly, and you put some ice cream and call it a day. Totally.

Jason: Again, I need to really stress to you when you say caramelized something-

Samin: Yeah, yeah, sorry.

Jason: ... my mind says, "S***, I got to order caramel-

Samin: No, no, sorry.

Jason: ... from Amazon.

Hrishi: One thing that I love to use fennel in is a slaw. So, if you're getting fish as your main dish, one thing you could do is chop up the fennel and combine it maybe with cabbage or something like that, if you want to break it up a little bit. The thing that's really nice, it's like so bright and crispy and crunchy.

Jason: Yeah, I think with the way that I'm used to having it, it is like soft and mushy.

Hrishi: Mmm, that sounds terrible.

Jason: Exactly. So, it does not have those textures that you're talking about. That does sound okay.

Hrishi: Yeah.

Samin: Okay, but what I think you could do, remember back when you were saying you know how to make brussel sprouts just one way by roasting them?

Jason: Yes.

Samin: So, when I said caramelizing the fennel, that was just another fancy word for saying roasting the fennel until it's almost burned.

Jason: Okay. So, just in a pan.

Samin: Yeah. You could do it in a sauté pan like a pan that you would use on the stove as long as there's not a plastic handle or it's not nonstick. So, as long as it's either cast iron or completely stainless steel.

Jason: Okay

Samin: Or you could use a baking sheet.

Jason: I have.

Samin: Yeah, so I would cut off... See where the white ends and the green begins.

Jason: Yeah.

Samin: So, where the bulb ends and the stalk begins, I would cut it there. So, the stalks, you would save if you are ever going to make a veggie stock or chicken stock or it would go into your compost. The bulb is what you're going to roast. You're going to cut it in half crosswise through the root, through the bottom. And then into wedges.

Jason: Okay

Samin: Probably I would do it into maybe sixths or eighths. And then you'll have these beautiful wedges. And then you're just going to coat the wedges in olive oil and salt and roast them like you roast your brussels sprouts or your sweet potato, at least 400 degrees until they're almost burnt but not burnt, which is probably 25, 30 something minutes.

Jason: Okay, I can do that.

Samin: That's what caramelize means is brown but not burnt. That's all it means.

Jason: All right. Maybe I'm really going to like fennel for the first time.

Samin: And then you might like if you have at your house balsamic vinegar?

Jason: I do.

Samin: Balsamic vinegar might be nice to drizzle on top of that when it comes out of the oven, or even before it goes in the oven, it would actually help it caramelize better because it's sweet.

Jason: Now here's a question I've thought of a couple of times, because there have been times when I've had in the box, let's say sweet potato, brussels sprouts.

Samin: I know where you're going.

Jason: Can you do them together?

Hrishi: Samin is shaking her head.

Jason: No. Okay.

Samin: You one could do them together.

Jason: Because I was like "Why don't I just chop all these up, throw them in and roast them all together?"

Samin: Okay, okay, okay. Let's do a compromise, buddy. Let's do a compromise.

Jason: Oh, no, she called me buddy.

Hrishi: That's okay. She calls me sister.

Samin: Okay. I discourage people from mixing different vegetables on the same tray for a few different reasons. One is they have like different qualities. So, they have different amounts of water or starch. So, they're going to cook at different rates. So, some are going to brown, some are going to burn, some are going to caramelize, some are going to still be raw. You're going to pull it out of the oven. You're just going to eat this thing that some things are going to be undercooked and some things are going to be overcooked.

Jason: Samin, welcome to my life.

Samin: So, what I think is going to help you have a better and more delicious result is if you use different trays. If you don't have many different baking sheets, what you could do is just even keep them separate on the same tray. So, keep the sweet potato on one side, keep the fennel on the other side, keep the broccoli-

Hrishi: Samin is pro-segregation this is a little known fact.

Jason: Listen, I'm in favor of busing the sweet potatoes into the squash section, if need be.

Samin: You can bust the sweet potatoes into the squash after they're cooked, after they're cooked.

Hrishi: Separate, but equal, but separate.

Samin: Listen, listen, post-cooking integration.

Hrishi: Did you ever know about the famous case that Samin was involved in? Browning versus caramelization versus the Board of Education

Samin: Oh, my God.

Jason: This is-

Samin: You guys.

Jason: a long road, Hrishi, a long road.

Hrishi: I bused you in.

Samin: Oh no.

Jason: It really is. He moves quick.

Samin: It's really fakata

Jason: He's like an assassin.

Samin: It's not fair.

Jason: You brought something up, Samin, that at least now I realize a second question I have, if you don't mind.

Samin: Please.

Jason: In the beginning of quarantine, I bought a cast iron skillet.

Samin: Oh, great.

Jason: I have not "seasoned" it.

Samin: But what color was it when you bought it?

Jason: Oh, black-ish.

Samin: Black, okay.

Jason: Yeah.

Samin: Well, these days most of the ones that that you buy come pre-seasoned. So, they come black. If it comes black, it's already seasoned.

Jason: This one, it told me that I was supposed to season it.

Samin: How much did it cost?

Jason: Over \$100.

Samin: Oh, it's a fancy. Okay.

Jason: It's fancy. Yeah.

Samin: You're a fancy L.A., Hollywood guy.

Jason: I'm a fancy boy. I'm a fancy L.A-

Samin: Got it, got it, got it.

Jason: I'm Hollywood bad boy out here, guys.

Samin: You're a guy who doesn't know what a leek is and you're buying \$100 of cast iron?

Jason: Yes. Yes. Now you get me, Samin. Now you get me.

Samin: So, you've never used your very expensive pan, because you don't know how to season it.

Jason: I'm worried I'm going to ruin it at the beginning. I'm going to ruin it and then I'll have messed myself up for future cooking.

Samin: Let me tell you something about cast iron pans, you basically cannot ruin them.

Jason: Oh, great.

Samin: Even if you kind of messed one up, the worst that can happen is you will get it rusty probably. You can always fix that. You can de-rust it and re-season it. I am the queen of messing mine up. Mine have gotten too rusty so many times. I have then just re-seasoned them. I am a notoriously bad caretaker of the cast iron. But we'll send you a little video about how to season. There are so many different ways to season, but I actually am a fan of the fast way to season, which is a little bit scary for people and involves opening all the windows in your house.

Jason: Okay...

Samin: It takes about 20 minutes, maybe a little bit longer. But you just essentially, crank the heat under the pan and incrementally add oil. You're just working oil essentially into the pores of the pan. I mean, I'm using definitely non-scientific language here, but you just want the pan to absorb oil until it becomes essentially nonstick. That is how I think of it. There's a great video on a website of this really wonderful pan maker that I love.

Jason: Great.

Samin: That we will link to that shows how to do that. That's my preferred way, because it's the quickest way. A slower way that involves a lot less work and won't create like a smoke bomb in your house-

Jason: Oh I see. Oh, okay.

Samin: ... is to do it at a much lower temperature in the oven, but you do it for like 12 hours. So, you just set the oven at 150 or 200 degrees.

Jason: I see.

Samin: You just leave the pan in there. You could do it overnight or something like that.

Jason: I see, I see, I see.

Hrishi: How much oil is required if you're doing it the oven way?

Samin: It's not very much oil. It's like a few tablespoons of oil. Different people have different opinions about which oils are better. You definitely want to use an oil that's good at high heat. Some people feel like coconut oil is good. Some people feel like flax oil is great.

Jason: To be clear, not motor oil.

Samin: Not motor oil, not face oil.

Jason: Not oil of Olay.

Samin: Not oil of Olay.

Hrishi: That's if you only want to make Mexican food.

Samin: What's...

Hrishi: Oil of '¡Olé!'

Jason: Uh, Hrishi.

Samin: Oh, no.

Jason: It's like, "Wow."

Samin: Doesn't end.

Jason: I should have been able to predict that. I should have sacrificed my own joke, just to not lead to Hrishi's jokes.

Samin: Sometimes you just really kick yourself, I have to say.

Jason: It's really tough stuff. It's exhausting. I don't know how Lindsey lives likes this.

Samin: Trust me. That's what I ask everyday.

Hrishi: She has tuned to me out entirely.

Jason: She's like, "Don't you have a podcast to be doing somewhere?"

Hrishi: Yup.

Jason: I have a question again. Are there recipes or are there foods like categories that you think would be good as a straight, true beginner? That are either things that are good to start with, because they utilize the basics, or they are less likely to be messed up? Does that make sense?

Samin: Yeah, I mean, I definitely think you're already on a road. If you feel comfortable using your oven and roasting vegetables, I do think getting really good at that is a great skill to have, because that's an important thing to be able to do all year round and feel comfortable with all the vegetables of the year. When you said you didn't know how to do anything and then you're like, "But I feel okay making brussels sprouts," I was like, "Oh, actually, you do know how to do something."

Jason: I mean, that's just I cut them in half. I put olive oil and salt on them and I put them in the oven.

Samin: Well, there you go. That's something.

Hrishi: Just the process of taking a vegetable, cutting in half, putting olive oil and salt on it and roasting it, that can be applied to so many different ingredients that you could really have an incredibly diverse diet just with that one application.

Samin: Totally.

Jason: Sure, yes. Okay, good.

Samin: And then the other thing I think, if you know how to do that, if you feel comfortable using your toaster, if you really can make a good piece of toast.

Jason: I mean, I can't make bread

Samin: No, no, no.

Jason: But I can certainly toast bread.

Samin: You don't have to make some bread.

Jason: Yeah, yeah, yeah, totally.

Samin: You just toast the bread. There you go.

Jason: Great.

Samin: And then number three, if you get comfortable putting a pot of water on the stove and boiling various things, be them making a pot of beans, making a pot of all sorts of different boiled vegetables. All the green things that come in your box really should get boiled in heavily salted water at a rolling boil until they're just cooked.

Jason: You're talking about spinach greens or kale, that kind of stuff.

Samin: Yeah, or chard or kale or green beans or broccoli or cauliflower. You would boil that until it's like al dente, pull it out. Pull it out with a sieve or something and then put it on a plate and drizzle good olive oil and put flaky salt on it. Even that is just really delicious just like that. I think another thing that maybe you already have, and you haven't told us about is like stock up on the condiments in the fridge.

Jason: Yeah, I've got some things but it's like truly haphazard.

Samin: Yeah, I would say bulk up the condiments.

Jason: Perfect. I love it. I can do that.

Samin: That's like basically how I eat here. Once you feel comfortable making yourself a pot of rice, a pot of beans and some boiled vegetables, some roasted vegetables, yeah, that's basically what I eat, probably four nights a week is like some combination of those things. Also, different various boiled noodles. It's not that complicated.

Jason: The way you're saying it sounds super simple. I'm trying to picture it in my head. I'm like, "I think I can do that." Because none of these things require you to take one thing, do this to it, then do that to it. You know what I mean? That's where I start to get nervous.

Samin: No. I think the difference is I think what has been sounds like a really long and arduous journey in your life around food. In a lot of ways, it sounds like your relationship, what you consider to be good food is somehow restaurant food. Restaurant food is often complicated and does often involve many steps and many garnishes. But home cooking, at least what I eat, is very simple. I don't do a lot to it. I do just have a boiled thing or roasted thing or a chopped up raw thing. So, I think a big part of what my mission to explain to people, you don't have to be a restaurant chef at home. Chickpeas on toast and broccoli could be dinner. Something super simple can be dinner, a bowl of pasta with just a little bit of parmesan and spinach can totally be a super satisfying meal. You're not trying to impress anyone. It's not about Instagram. It's about nourishment and joy.

Jason: Totally. I will say one of my true victories during quarantine was they, at one point in my box, put three avocados in it. I, for the very first time as a 47-year-old man, made avocado toast.

Samin: Awesome.

Jason: It was delicious. I was like I get it. I get the hype. I'm not on social media. I know that this was a big thing with young people, but guess what? I f***ing did it. I made avocado toast.

Samin: That's awesome.

Jason: So, yeah. This is very inspiring, I will say. This is inspiring because what I hope to hear coming out of this and what I am now understanding is there are very simple ways to make very tasty dishes.

Samin: Also, I live by myself like you. I've definitely reduced my idea of what dinner is.

Jason: Oh, my God. I'll be often like, "Well, I did have that banana at 4:00. Does that count? Maybe I'll add a piece of beef jerky and then call it a night."

Samin: Yes.

Hrishi: Can I tell you about the dish that Lindsey and I make probably more often than any other. It's really good, but it's also incredibly quick and simple. It comes from this cookbook called *Feast*. It just has a few ingredients. It's broccolini, kale, and chickpeas. We just use canned chickpeas, you slice up some garlic and you combined all of that together in a bowl with a little bit of olive oil, salt, and pepper, and red chilli pepper flakes. And this goes against Samin's segregation rules, but you then transfer everything from that bowl.

Jason: It's such a regressive philosophy.

Hrishi: I know.

Jason: I mean, I guess you're sticking with it.

Hrishi: As someone who's in an interracial marriage, I got to speak my truth.

Jason: As someone who grew up in Boston, I mean, what you're saying is-

Hrishi: Yes, yeah, yeah. Jason from The Hub and me from Peabody. Look, we've lived through the aftermath.

Jason: Oh, my God. North Shore representing the North Shore.

Samin: How did I become the-

Hrishi: The face of racism? Gosh.

Jason: I'm sorry. Samin, I mean it when I say I was coming on this podcast to be your ally against Hrishi.

Samin: Now, how the tables have turned.

Jason: Somehow the alignment is off.

Samin: Yeah. Tell me about it.

Hrishi: Yeah. He's fallen under my spell. Okay, but...

Jason: Yeah, go ahead.

Hrishi: So, the rest of this thing, it's so simple, you put it on a tray. You set the oven to high broil, the highest heat that you can possibly go. You put the tray in for five minutes. Comes out, it's delicious.

Samin: Yeah, see it's not all the way cooked through, everything is kind of...

Hrishi: Actually, the thing that Samin was complaining about is part of what makes it so good, the different ingredients.

Jason: I can't tell listeners more that this should be a video podcast, because while Hrishi is describing, all of the steps, the faces and the movement from Samin is without a question, derisive about everything that Hrishi is doing.

Hrishi: It's fine, I'm used to her judgment.

Samin: Wait, Jason, you're really ruining the spell of my character, as like a totally supportive and loving-

Jason: I just don't know if listeners know-

Samin: The whole point of-

Jason: I don't know if the listeners can hear quite the eye roll.

Samin: That's why I don't say anything and it's only a facial expression thing. You're really ruining-

Jason: Eye roll.

Samin: ... my whole secret identity as a totally huge judgmental person.

Jason: Yeah, you're saying everything is medium cooked, but you think it's delicious?

Samin: Some things are burnt-

Samin: Some things are totally raw.

Hrishi: Yeah, exactly. The kale is crispy. The broccolini is just a little bit tender. It's fantastic.

Jason: All right, I'll try that.

Hrishi: The whole thing takes about five minutes to prepare and then five minutes in the oven. You take it out and you just squeeze some lemon on it. It's just so good.

Jason: So, you're not afraid to put all those ingredients together and roast them together all as one.

Hrishi: Right.

Jason: Wow, true food integration.

Hrishi: Yes. Yeah.

Jason: It's interesting.

Hrishi: That recipe by the way comes from the *Feast* cookbook. It's called *Feast: Generous Vegetarian Meals for Any Eater and Every Appetite*, it's by Sarah Copeland I'll try and see if that recipe's online and we can link to that.

Jason: I will find it. I will order the book.

Hrishi: Jason, on another related topic here, have you ever lived with somebody or have you always lived alone?

Jason: Yes. No, I lived with someone. But I lived with a woman for 10 years. I was in a relationship for 10 years in Brooklyn. She was an incredible cook. But she used to make something that I still think about all the time, which was a pasta dish, because you can get store-bought pasta that is egg free.

Hrishi: Right

Jason: Which was a pasta dish that was on top of the pasta was garlic, red chili flakes, chickpeas and maybe kale or something green. That was it. It was like super simple, but absolutely delicious.

Hrishi: No tomato sauce or anything like that.

Jason: No tomato sauce. No saucy sauce kind of. It was a very clean pasta dish. Does that sound like something that you... Could I do that?

Samin: Totally.

Hrishi: I mean that basically sounds like what I was talking about but with pasta added to it.

Jason: Totally, yeah, but Samin said your thing was gross. I want to do a good version.

Samin: That's a pretty classic pasta combination. That sounds pretty delicious. So, what I would do is get your can of chickpeas or your cooked chickpeas that you make at home and drain them. Maybe even save a little bit of that chickpea water, because it's pretty magical.

Jason: I love magical things.

Samin: Yeah magical things, very important. Chickpea water is a magical thing. Did you know about it? It's called aquafaba.

Jason: No.

Samin: They gave it a Latin name and it's used actually as an egg substitute.

Jason: Great.

Samin: Because it's something about the chickpea water, there's some similar proteins in it to egg whites you can use it to make mayonnaise instead of eggs.

Jason: Wow.

Samin: You can use it to make merengues instead of egg whites. As an egg averse person, you should familiarize yourself with chickpea water.

Jason: Cut to me hoarding chickpea water.

Samin: Oh, 100%. When I ran kitchens, I told all my cooks, I was like, "Bean water is as precious as gold." I was like, "Never waste a drop."

Jason: And then when you walked away, they were like, "Do you know she still believes in segregating vegetables?"

Hrishi: This crazy segregationist is trying to pay for things with bean water. It's not currency.

Jason: She said we have to all give her our bean water, but that's our gold.

Samin: She's trying to pay us in bean water instead of money.

Jason: I went and tried to buy groceries with bean water. She's been lying the whole time. It has no value.

Samin: To me, friends of chickpeas in the green family are I think broccoli raab, broccolini, broccoli, kale. All of those things are good pairings. Oh, wild nettles are really good with chickpeas. You could use, also, if you had spinach or chard, you could use that, but I think the hardier things stand up to chickpeas a little bit better. If you are using something like kale or broccoli raab or broccolini, you do need to pre-cook it a little bit.

Jason: Sure.

Samin: You could just use the boiling pasta water to do that. So, when you add your pasta in, you could also add your green things in.

Jason: It's okay to add it with it.

Samin: Yeah, depending on what kind of shape of pasta it is, if that takes 12 minutes, your greens probably will take fewer minutes, less time. So, you will stagger them into the water at some point later. So, that you could pull them both out at the same time and go into your pan, which would by then have a little bit of garlic that you would have sizzled and some olive oil, maybe with some chili flakes. And then you would have added your chickpeas that you would have drained and sizzle those and gotten them all oily and garlicky and chiliy. And then added the pasta and the greens and stirred that. So, now at this point, you're using some combination of pasta water, if you have a little chickpea water, and olive oil to create a starchy oily emulsion. So, I would crank it up to the highest. Crank your pan up.

Jason: Crank it up on the pan that now has these things in it.

Samin: Crank your pan up because you want it boiling, because that boiling action and that hot temperature, that's going to be mixing this like starchy, water and oil mixture. It's going to create an emulsified thick sauce, but you really do need it to be boiling hard in order to happen.

Jason: Okay, because what you're describing does sound like the dish I'm talking about. So that sounds perfect.

Samin: Awesome. And then if you need to help it along, you could even smush a few of the chickpeas to break down a little bit even more of the starch.

Jason: Okay, to make it thicker.

Samin: Yeah, to make it a little bit creamier. Exactly.

Jason: Oh, that's great. Okay, that's perfect. I'm so glad this happened, because this is the dish that I feel like would be comfort food for me.. Organically, we have found it, because it was that dish. That was the dish that my girlfriend at the time would make often and was delicious. Again, because I don't get to have a lot of pasta, I get to have pasta and it was great.

Samin: I love that.

Jason: Yeah, this is awesome.

Samin: I love that.

Hrishi: Jason, thank you so much for talking with us.

Jason: I could do this for hours.

Samin: This was so fun.

Hrishi: Thank you so much.

Jason: A blast. Truly a blast.

Hrishi: Samin, before we wrap up I wanted to play you one very special message that we got in our inbox from someone who was very concerned, this came in between our second batch of episodes and then this new batch of third episodes so it was during that long stretch when we were on a break. This is from Karen, and I love her.

Karen: Where are you? We miss you. How do we find out what's going on with you? The last time you had a podcast was over a month ago. Oh, you have to come back. Oh. Where are you?

Samin: She sounds bereft.

Karen: I'm sure I'm not the only one leaving voicemail messages. Can someone call back? It's ***_***_****, if at all possible. I don't know what's going on, please? God, I go to sleep with you at night. I listen to you during the day. I told all my friends about you. They just absolutely love it. What is the problem here? Can someone leave a voicemail message? And let us know what we're supposed to do here to get you back on the air. Thank you.

Hrishi: So I'm sorry that we didn't call you back but thank you for this message. It's maybe my favorite message that we've gotten.

Samin: Message we've ever received.

Hrishi: Yeah.

Samin: Karen!

Hrishi: There is no advice needed, but I felt like we had to respond.

Samin: Karen, wow. The level of concern, wow.

Hrishi: We're okay, we're back.

Samin: We're okay, we're back.

Hrishi: And we really appreciate it.

Samin: Yeah. We do appreciate it, and we're back, and we'll be here basically until the end of the year.

Hrishi: Yeah. We're going to make episodes every two weeks until the end of the year. Maybe we'll take a little bit extra time after Thanksgiving.

Samin: Yeah.

Hrishi: But we'll ...

Samin: We're going to coast through the holidays with you.

Hrishi: My favorite part is, "What is the problem here?" Oh Karen, you're great.

Samin: What was the part where she said she's like, "I listen to you at night and during the day."

Hrishi: Yeah. She said, "God, I go to sleep with you and night, and I listen to you during the day." That really made my day, thank you so much for that message.

Samin: Wowzers.

Hrishi: That's it for this episode.

Samin: Yeah, thanks for listening.

Hrishi: We make this podcast with the help of Margaret Miller, Zach McNees, Gary Lee, and Casey Deal.

Samin: And Mamie Rheingold does the illustrations for our episodes.

Hrishi: We're a proud member of the network Radiotopia, a collective of independent podcasts, And you can learn about all the Radiotopia shows at radiotopia.fm.

Samin: Let us know if you have any cooking related questions. Just record a voice memo and send it to us at alittlehomecooking@gmail.com.

Hrishi: Our website is homecooking.show, and also

Samin: [Shrimpjenga.com](http://shrimpjenga.com).

Hrishi: Dot com. Go to shrimpjenga.com to find recipes and transcripts for all our episodes.

Samin: You can follow ... Oh my gatos, this is what happens when we make a show at night.

Hrishi: Yeah.

Samin: You can follow Hrishi on Twitter and Instagram @hrishihirway.

Hrishi: And Samin is @ciaosamin.

Samin: Stay healthy, eat well, and take care of each other.

Hrishi: We'll be back in two weeks.

Samin: Until then, I'm Samin.

Hrishi: And I'm Hrishi.

Samin: And we'll be shrimp Jenga.