

Home Cooking Transcript: Episode 5

Samin: Hello?

Hrishi: Hello?

Samin: I miss you. You cannot put that in the episode.

Hrishi: Oh, that's definitely going in.

Samin: Oh, no.

[Intro Theme Music]

Samin: I'm Samin Nosrat.

Hrishi: And I'm Hrishikesh Hirway.

Samin: And we're Home Cooking.

Hrishi: This is episode five of our four part miniseries, I guess, where we help you figure out what to cook with what you've got at home. And we hope you're staying home as much as possible.

Samin: Coming up later, we'll be joined by Sam Sanders, host of the show It's Been A Minute from NPR. A fantastic podcast on which I've been a guest.

Hrishi: But first, it has been a minute so Samin, how have you been?

Samin: Oh man, I feel like it's been 300 years since we talked.

Hrishi: Has it not?

Samin: It definitely feels like every day is three to four years, for sure.

Hrishi: Yeah.

Samin: I also read something about the importance of our, for our emotional wellbeing of having something to look forward to, and that that's been something that's

been largely taken away from us. And so when you don't have anything to look forward to, you process time differently, too.

Hrishi: Definitely.

Samin: It's the main reason why I wanted to come back was I just realized I missed this kind of lighthearted thing that honestly feels so innocent now looking back.

Hrishi: Yeah the world has definitely changed from a few months ago when we started.

Samin: My hope is that there will still be a lot of making fun of you and that will make me feel better.

Hrishi: As you wish. Let me start with this question. What have you been cooking that's been giving you some pleasure recently?

Samin: I've been having a lot of joy out of using up every bit of every vegetable. There's been a lot of fermentation. I made a huge jar of curtido, which is The El Salvadoran pickled cabbage that I've been eating with every meal, on top of everything. It has carrots and jalapenos and all sorts of oregano in there. And then I made a huge jar, like a huge jar, of beet kvass, which is kind of like ... this salty beet soda. And that's an Eastern European thing that I really like.

Hrishi: And it's supposed to be really healthy, isn't it?

Samin: I think it's really good for your gut, yeah, which is nice. And it has this strangely syrupy thick texture, which I really like.

Hrishi: Tell me how you made beet kvass?

Samin: Oh, it's so, so easy. You put some beets that you ... I mean, I didn't even peel mine. I just sort of rinsed the dirt off and chop-sliced them. I didn't even chop them. I sliced them. Put them in a jar with water and kind of a lot of salt. It should taste pleasantly, like salty. You could just stop with that, with beet, salt, and water. But I had some ginger I put in there. I had some lemon from a lemon tree in the yard that I put the zest of in there. And then you just leave it on the

counter until it starts fizzing, basically. Until it ferments. And mine got some mold on top, which is I think pretty normal, so I scraped it away.

Hrishi: It's not a deal breaker.

Samin: No. You got to Google your mold. I do a lot of mold Googles. But just to make sure it's not going to kill me. But no, I think it's pretty normal to get a little bit of mold on top of some fermented things. So I just scrape that off and then I decanted it and now I have this super delicious, salty beet soda in my fridge.

Hrishi: What's the gestation period from when you pour it all together?

Samin: If it's warm out, it's like four or five days. Yeah. I think mine took a little bit longer because the weather was sort of fluctuating. Took maybe a week.

Hrishi: And do you have to do anything as a precaution to make sure the container doesn't explode from the built up carbon dioxide?

Samin: I think you're supposed to, but ... I mean, I just kind of keep it near the kitchen sink, so when I think of it, probably everyday or every other day, I sort of unscrew it a little bit. But to be totally honest, mine wasn't that airtight which might explain the mold. There was never the puffing of that mason jar lid that made it seem like there was going to be an explosion.

Hrishi: Yes.

Samin: But that is definitely something good to keep an eye out for. And when I made the curtido or if you're making kraut or kimchi, you definitely want to make sure that all of the vegetables are submerged under the water that the cabbage lets out, and so that that's airtight by being completely underwater. So if your jar doesn't allow for that, what you can do is construct ... I did a kind of small version of what we used to do in the restaurants, it's like a MacGyver situation. MacGyver cabbage. I put plastic wrap on top of the cabbage and then to weigh it down and push it down, I just filled a little Ziploc bag with water and put that on top to keep everything under the water. So I did that and that worked really beautifully and now I have weeks worth of curtido in the fridge. I have a lot of

beet kvass in the fridge. And the other main thing I've been doing is every Sunday or Monday, I'll sort of go through the whole fridge and I'll take everything that's on its last legs. And I will turn that into some sort of either kuku like a frittata, or a greens pie. And the first few weeks, I really stuck to just greens and tops of scallions or onions or garlic. And since then, I've really expanded into the garden, there's just a lot of zucchini in the garden, and so I've been slicing that thin and sauteing that and putting that in the frittata. Or I had some poblano peppers so today I charred the skin off of those and I sliced them, and those are going in. So it's just become a whole thing. But the main thing that makes these so delicious and so yummy is I'm really using that Persian technique of cooking the greens, of sauteing the greens for a really long time. Oh I also have really rediscovered the joy of a food processor, which as a home cook I really never did. So I steam everything now and I squeeze all the water, and then I throw it in the food processor and I just chop it into the finest bits. And then along with an onion that's also been chopped into its finest bits, I just caramelize everything for like 45 minutes into this kind of delicious jammy texture that's completely different than what I think anybody sort of associates with a greens frittata, which you think of as some wilted spinach or chard. So it has this totally other flavor. It's really nice. I totally feel like Popeye when I eat a piece. Because I'm like feeling the greens just making me strong.

Hrishi: Do you have a Popeye impression that you could do?

Samin: No.

Hrishi: I think you probably do.

Samin: I'm trying to remember, what did Popeye say? I remember like, was there like a, "Hack-a, hack-a, hack-a"?

Hrishi: It's close. It's more like, imagine his laugh was just letters U-G. And a bunch of times.

Samin: U-G U-G U-G. Wait, what?

Hrishi: No, no. Okay. The letter U and the letter G. Put that together.

Samin: "Ug, ug, ug, ug". Like that?

Hrishi: Exactly. Yes.

Popeye: [Recording] Ug, ug, ug, ug!

Samin: "Ug ug ug ug." Like that?

Hrishi: There you go. Okay. Anything else we get in this episode is just bonus, because I got you to do a Popeye laugh.

Samin: Are you patting yourself on the back now?

Hrishi: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Samin: Great.

Samin: What have you been cooking?

Hrishi: One of the things I've been making is, this one pasta dish almost weekly to fulfill two different things. One, there's this really great organization in LA called FEW for All, and they are a bunch of recently unemployed restaurant workers who wanted to keep serving their community. It's called FEW for All and FEW stands for flour, eggs, and water. And they make homemade fresh pasta, plus like pasta sauce and other stuff. And you buy it through Instagram, and they deliver it to you. And for every thing that they sell, they donate one pound of pasta to the LA food bank.

Samin: Oh, amazing.

Hrishi: And they also give away pasta to anybody in the hospitality industry who's struggling. So that's one part of it. Oh, and if you want to check them out, you just look for FEW for All on Instagram and if you're in LA, I highly recommend it. But we have a lemon tree in our yard as well and right now, the tree is so prolific. I have the window open at nighttime and as I'm trying to fall asleep, I just keep hearing lemons dropping from the tree. So I've been trying to use lemons

as much as possible in cooking. So I've been making a pasta with a lemon garlic tuna sauce on top of it.

Samin: Oh, delicious. I love tuna pasta.

Hrishi: I've just been making that once a week and it's been great.

Samin: That sounds so good. Yum.

Hrishi: You know, my lemon tree has a name. Do you ever name your plants?

Samin: No.

Hrishi: Oh. Well, my lemon tree has a name.

Samin: Do tell.

Hrishi: It's Dame Maggie Smith.

Samin: Because she's sour? Why?

Hrishi: I don't know. She's kind of-

Samin: Regal?

Hrishi: Yeah. She's been there for a while. She's got a kind of regal quality as she's kind of holding court in our backyard. She's the central fixture of the backyard.

Samin: I will say this doesn't take that many lemons, but a recipe I'm really into right now is Melissa Clark has this lemon coconut snacking cake.

Hrishi: Okay. That sounds great.

Samin: It is so good and so simple to make.

Hrishi: And I'm a coconut fiend, so send me that recipe.

Samin: No, just Google it yourself.

Hrishi: Oh God. Meanwhile, Dame Maggie Smith if you're listening... We love you.

Samin: We do love you.

Hrishi: Okay. Well, the question that we got the most when we opened up the--

Samin: The long-unchecked email.

Hrishi: We got a lot of people asking this question.

Joanna: It's very very hot right now and my kitchen in particular is extremely hot.

Sarah: It is getting too hot to heat up my kitchen and cook.

Jourdan: I'm calling from Chicago in an apartment without air conditioning.

Amy: What can I make without turning my stove on? Thank you so much.

Samin: I agree. The very last thing I want to do right now is turn my oven on. Okay. I have one little weird shortcut, which is not going to apply to everybody, but I will say I am so into my toaster oven, because using the toaster oven for things like toasting nuts or roasting a little bit of vegetables, or even like fish or chicken, or a couple cookies depending on who you are, is a great way to not have to turn on the oven and heat the whole house, which I think is a really good one.

Samin: I also have been cooking a lot at night before I go to bed to get, like prepping I should say, you know? That's when I clean the kitchen and I saute a few things and get stuff ready, because it is so hot during the day. And I don't even live in a super hot place. So yeah, I fully get that. But let's talk about cool foods to eat and/or cook.

Hrishi: Let me ask you a question here.

Samin: Yeah, go for it.

Hrishi: If you don't apply heat to something, in your mind, does that still count as cooking?

Samin: Yes.

Hrishi: So you really could've just done salt, fat, acid. Save yourself a quarter of the book.

Samin: Well, to me, you're always, you're really into efficiency and that's one of the reasons I love you. Yeah, but I think I as a cook even think of the absence of heat as part of heat.

Hrishi: Very John Cage of you.

Samin: Oh, yes. Very, very. Not everything I've been making that is cool requires no heat, but I think we have to think about how to use the heat sources more sparingly. When it's an option, I think moving outside is really helpful. So I have just a little grill that I love and that allows me to, you know, grill my corn outside, grill a little bit of chicken outside, grill a little bit of fish, grill whatever. But inside I've been eating a lot of cold soba noodles, which I think are really delicious. You can take them in any direction that you like. And while it's traditionally a buckwheat noodle from Japan and served with Japanese flavors, there are also ways to dress up buckwheat noodles. They just have that delicious sort of... I don't know what's the right word, grainy taste, buckwheaty taste, that you can mix with other stuff. I made one with zucchini and corn and basil and serrano peppers that was inspired by this Diana Kennedy recipe. She's done a lot of work researching Mexican cuisine and putting together all these different flavors and that's a recipe that we used to make a lot at Chez Panisse of hers. One day I wanted to make it because I had corn and zucchini, but no... I was like, "I'm not going to make buckwheat noodles from scratch." Then I realized I had soba. So I did that. I've been resorting a lot to piles of crunchy vegetables, salad pluses, I guess. It's not just eating salad for dinner. It's like salad with something else. So I had these soba noodles that I had rinsed off and they were just cooked, but cool. And then everything else was not cooked. Everything else was raw. So I had sliced bell pepper. I had a bunch of lettuces and cilantro. I had serrano chilies. I had a few little slivers of smoked salmon, it was a hot smoked kind so I just flaked it onto the salad. Oh, I had cucumbers I put in there. I think I put peanuts on top. It was this crunchy, fresh salad that I didn't even make a dressing for, I just drizzled with lime and rice vinegar and a little bit of olive oil.

Then underneath, it was the surprise of the soba noodles. So I got the comfort of some starch, which I really need as a human and then a big beautiful salad.

Hrishi: Yeah, it's like a non-mayonaisse pasta salad.

Samin: Yeah, exactly! So that's been really nice.

Hrishi: One of the "It's Too Hot to Cook" questions we got was specifically asking about any dessert options where you don't have to-

Samin: Turn the oven on, yeah. Jasmine Guillory, who writes these beautiful, amazing romance books that I love that I'm obsessed with, I follow her on Instagram. She has been obsessing with popsicles. You just see something and then you get obsessed with it, so now I've been in this mental popsicle rut where I haven't made the leap to actually making them, but I've been doing a lot of research. There's the super simplest one, which is you just take frozen bananas and you put them in the food processor. That turns into this delicious one-ingredient banana ice cream because it's just that bananas have that creamy texture innate to them. You could mix that with frozen yogurt. Or what Jasmine's been doing is taking yogurt and then roasting whatever fruit she has and berries and mixing those. She's been putting booze in her popsicles. But I think you could make any form of popsicle or granita, which is if you don't even want to mess with a popsicle mold or sticks, you could make it as simply as lemonade or a little bit of sweetened coffee or any fruit that you puree and maybe water down a little bit. You could add Prosecco or something if you wanted a little bit of booze in there. Then you freeze that in a baking pan and every few hours you go in with a fork and you scrape it up to disturb the ice crystals so it doesn't turn into like one huge ice cube. It just turns into these little shavings. It's like shaved ice. Then traditionally in Sicily they eat coffee granita with a huge dollop of whipped cream on a brioche for breakfast. That's the traditional summer Sicilian breakfast.

Hrishi: Oh I want to get a popsicle tray again.

Samin: Yeah, totally. The other thing I was thinking about in terms of cold foods is, I don't know why this didn't occur to me right off the bat is gazpacho or any sort of

cold soup, which just really requires a blender. Or If you don't have a blender, you could use the food processor or traditional gazpacho is just made on a grater. Honestly, you don't even need a machine. There's, of course, the tomato one that we all are probably familiar with, which I think is so delicious in the summertime. I like making it with cherry tomatoes because I think they're more concentrated in flavor and there's always some cucumber and onion and some sort of bell pepper in there. And if you want to spice it up, you can add jalapeno or serrano and that's basically it with some good olive oil. To me, I like it when the base of it is quite smooth. Then you add in other diced vegetables, so you get to control the texture of it. But there's also other forms of gazpacho. There's something called white gazpacho that's made with almonds and bread and also a crucial ingredient in traditional good gazpacho is breadcrumbs to help thicken it. But you could leave that out. Or one way that I like to put it in is if you have any stale bread, you can cube up any stale bread and fry it in olive oil or just toss it in olive oil and toast it. Then you drop them into the soup. They absorb a whole bunch of soup and they're this delicious texture of crunchy and soggy. So that's something I really love to eat. To take that even further, there are a lot of other soups from all parts of the world that are nice cold soups in that kind of way. I think in Turkey and certainly throughout the Lavant, there are a lot of cold cucumber soups that have sometimes some yogurt in them. In Iran, this isn't soup, but we have a drink called Doogh. It's called Doogh.

Hrishi: How do you spell that?

Samin: It probably would be spelled D-O-O-G-H, Doogh. It's made out of yogurt and fizzy water and salt in its most simple form, that you drink over ice. It's a refreshing drink for hot times. Then there are various versions of that that might have herbs in it. And then that relates in my mouth mind, to our -

Hrishi: Mouth mind...

Samin: -What?

Hrishi: Your mouth mind.

Samin: Okay, so mouth brain I think is when your mouth is craving something and your brain can't get off of it. Mouth mind I think of as when I'm connecting the dots in my mind to the dots in my mouth and when I'm thinking about foods from the world--

Hrishi: The dots in your mouth I think are called taste buds.

Samin: I was going to use my mouth mind to connect doogh and-

Hrishi: Doogh.

Samin: It's doogh.

Hrishi: Doogh.

Samin: I was going to connect doogh, which is a salty drink that Iranians drink during the summer. Or like a lot of the time, I never particularly became a doogh lover, but people drink it when eating a big, heavy kebab meal. But the taste of it is not so different from masto khiar which is our cucumber yogurt, which is not so different from raita or any of the other cucumber yogurts of the world, which is really just a little bit thicker than cucumber and yogurt soup.

Hrishi: What's the difference between doogh and salty yogurt lassi?

Samin: Well, does salty yogurt lassi have fizzy water in it?

Hrishi: No, it does not.

Samin: Yeah, I think that's the difference.

Hrishi: You know who loves doogh? Is Neil Patrick Harris.

Samin: Really?

Hrishi: Yeah.

Samin: Wow.

Hrishi: He had a whole show around it. It was called a Doogh Howser.

Samin: Oh, no, I can't believe I fell for that. I'm so out of practice.

Hrishi: I know! I can't believe you didn't see that coming!

Samin: Oh, my God! Oh, my God! Oh, my God! Oh, my God! How do you feel about yourself right now?

Hrishi: I feel pretty good.

Samin: I'm hot with anger now. I'm physically hot. Okay, I really was like, "Wow, Neil Patrick Harris likes dough how do you know this?" Okay, yes, white gazpacho. Anywhos! Sorry, we did go on a crazy tangent.

Hrishi: Okay, continue connecting the mouth dots from your mouth brain with your mouth mind.

Samin: Anyways-

Hrishi: How do you make white gazpacho?

Samin: White gazpacho is almonds. I think usually they're blanched, so they don't have the skin on them. And then a little bit of bread, water, olive oil, garlic, and then different recipes might have different stuff in there like cucumbers. You just puree that and you chill it and you can top it with whatever delicious things you want. I would probably add a little bit more cucumber. I think a traditional garnish is grapes, green grapes. And that's a simple cold soup without tomato. But I do think a cold soup is a nice cooling way to at least start a meal, if not make it your whole meal.

Hrishi: Well, that was my philosophical question for you is can soup be the whole meal?

Samin: If you eat a whole bunch of cookies after. Can soup be the whole meal? I don't think so. Not for me, unless you want me to have a whole other meal 15 minutes later.

Hrishi: So have we answered the question of how do you make dinner without using your oven if you consider soup only an appetizer?

Samin: We don't really have to turn our ovens on. I do think you're going to have to use your stove selectively. And/or I think you cook at night, and/ or you cook outside, and/or you choose one cool time to cook something that then you can eat cool or at room temperature over the course of several days. Another really simple thing to do is you can slow cook a side of salmon and you can do this with halibut, but it's really nice with salmon because salmon is quite fatty. I have a fig tree here in the yard. If you have a fig tree, you can put a few fig leaves shiny side up on a baking sheet. If you don't have figs, you could use any sort of bed of herbs, dill, or fennel or parsley or whatever. If you don't have that, you could just use a piece of parchment paper, put your salmon down, skin side down, and then throw it in the oven and at quite low at 250 degrees. So your house doesn't even get that hot, honestly. And then you cook that until it's translucent and flaking apart, which for maybe a two pound piece might be as much as 40 minutes. But then you have this large piece of salmon that you can then turn into many other salads and meals and all sorts of other stuff for the next several days. Another thing I thought of during this time was another seafood thing, which is you can make yourself some pickled shrimp or pickled clams or pickled anything, any shellfish. That becomes this protein bit that you can add onto a beautiful platter of food. Or sort of salad-ifying stuff, I think is really helpful, like a nicoise salad where you've boiled eggs at some point in time. You've boiled green beans and potatoes. Those are not things where you have to stand over the stove slaving. Then you get to have these piles of vegetables and you honestly can just open a can of tuna and that's a perfectly satisfying dinner.

Hrishi: Salads are an infinite world unto themselves.

Samin: They are.

Hrishi: Should I tell you what my cold, non-cookie dessert is?

Samin: Yeah.

Hrishi: When my bananas start to brown I freeze them and then I take one banana and blend it with 10 ounces of oat milk.

Samin: I thought you were going to say 10 ounces of chocolate.

Hrishi: 10 ounces of chocolate, yeah. Oh, I wish. I do the banana and I usually scoop in some protein powder, so I feel like I'm actually doing something good for myself. But then I also put in a generous tablespoon, like a heaping tablespoon of raw cacao powder. It gets really chocolaty. It's almost like a Wendy's Frosty kind of feeling. It has that kind of texture and flavor, but it has some protein powder and I feel like I'm getting some nutritional value while also cooling off and having my chocolate fix.

Samin: This sounds so healthy, it can't possibly be good.

Hrishi: I mean you know, you can just up the amount of chocolate if you want.

Samin: But even when your chocolate is raw cacao powder. Come on.

Hrishi: Yeah. Okay, okay, okay, here's another question that we got. Another need for cold foods.

Mike: Hey, y'all, it's Mike from Charleston, South Carolina. And my wife is newly pregnant. That's right, we are having a coronial baby and it'll be our first and I am 100% freaking out. My wife is super nauseous all the time and it's been hard to make her things so she can eat. She says she can eat super simple foods that are preferably cold and are not overly flavorful. So please help.

Hrishi: Some addendums in his email, he said, "She doesn't like red meat to begin with, so definitely won't tolerate it now. So far grilled chicken and roast veggies are a hit."

Samin: Okay. This may or may not fit the bill because a lot of people have aversions to eggs, but I do think anything with a hard-cooked egg that's nice and cold could turn into something nice. If she feels like egg salad could be an option, I think egg salad with some hard-cooked eggs is nice and you can eat that on crackers or deviled eggs or just hard-cooked eggs that you turn into something. One version of deviled eggs, which I've also turned this into an egg salad that I really love, is this Parsi recipe from this chef and writer named Niloufer Ichaporia-King,

who I just think is so brilliant and so- She's an anthropologist. She's amazing. Her book is called My Bombay kitchen. It's so beautiful. It's one of my favorite cookbooks. In there, she has a recipe for Parsi deviled eggs. And Parsis are an ethnic minority in India. There's a large community of them in Bombay. And so there is this sort of tradition of delicious Parsi cooking, which in my mind, and other people might take issue with this, but the way I like to think of it is sort of Parsi cooking sits sort of between Indian cooking and Persian cooking in a lot of ways. Parsi deviled eggs, which I think are so incredibly delicious, and this could easily be turned into a salad and you could leave out any of the flavorings if they felt too much is, she just puts a tiny bit of honey and lime juice and cilantro and a little bit of serrano pepper and mashes that all together with some mayonnaise. And I know a lot of people have a textural thing with mayonnaise. So I have actually found that you can make a totally delicious egg salad without any mayonnaise. If you want, what you can do is take the egg yolk that's cooked and sort of mash that up with some olive oil or whatever oil you're using and let that become the creamy base. But I don't know. I think that that's pretty simple and if the chilies are too much, you could leave that out absolutely. If cilantro doesn't work, you could leave that out absolutely. But I do think that's something where you could boil a dozen eggs, leave them in the fridge and then use them over the course of several days for all sorts of different things.

Hrishi: What would you think about turning towards Japan for some suggestions here? Because I feel like with just simple rice and vegetables, maybe he could do something with a very simple kind of hand roll.

Samin: Oh, I think that's a great idea. I've never made that at home, but I don't think it's that hard. You could just get some nori sheets or if you can't even make it to a Japanese grocery, you can just get those pieces of seaweed that kids eat. And then sushi rice usually is a specific kind of short grain rice. And the way it's often seasoned is with a little bit of sugar or seasoned rice vinegar and salt, and it sort of is a little bit flavored, just mildly. So then you could smush a little bit of that just steamed white rice, it's nice if it's a short grain rice, onto your thing, and then you could put whatever you like, whatever vegetable. If she's okay with fish, you could put some cooked fish in there. You could even just put a little bit

of your grilled chicken or your roasted or raw veggies in there. And you're basically making yourself a little cool taco.

Hrishi: Exactly. It's just like a delivery system for whatever amount of flavor or whatever ingredient could work well for her.

Samin: Oh! This is something I need to look up, but this is one of the most delicious, cool meals I've ever had, was my friend, Alice, whose parents are from Japan. She lived for a period of time in Hawaii and I visited her one year in May and it was so humid and hot and I remember that the most amazing meal that we ever had was this, a dish called Somen noodles. And I had never tasted that or seen it before. Because I don't think it's something that's often on Japanese restaurant menus. It's definitely more of like Japanese home cooking. And so there are these very thin wheat noodles that come and you can buy the Somen sauce and it's a delicious sort of brown, maybe soy-ie, sweet-y sauce that you can thin out with water. And you serve your Somen noodles in this very thin dipping sauce that you can eat with any combination of vegetables or pickles. And that is something that I ... I mean, the last time I had this was over 10 years ago and it still sits in my mind as one of the delicious, cool summer foods that I've had.

Hrishi: Awesome. Okay. I have another question here that is also about a relationship because I don't know if you know this, but secretly, I also want this, besides a food advice podcast, I would like us to be doing a relationship advice podcast. You know, I just want people to write to us about-

Samin: All their problems.

Hrishi: Yeah, exactly.

Samin: Okay, great!

Cody: Hey guys, my name is Cody. My question revolves around my relationship with my girlfriend. We love each other to death, but sometimes we don't quite see eye to eye on our tastes in food. One of my go-to recipes, especially right now, during the pandemic has been this super easy vegetarian skillet chili that has

black beans, onions, garlic, some spices and tomatoes. My girlfriend would love to jump in on this recipe with me because it's super cheap, makes a ton of food and uses a lot of pantry items, but the problem is, she hates tomatoes. I've agreed to try to make a compromise, but I'm struggling to find a recipe for chili that does not include tomatoes. Any help with this would be greatly appreciated. Is it possible to make a chili without tomatoes? Please help me save relationship.

Samin: Oh my god. These are all really hard. I feel like I'm out of practice.. Okay, I do not know enough about the definitions of chili to know whether or not you have to have tomato in there. I'm having a hard time imagining not having tomato-

Hrishi: Wait. I know the answer.

Samin: Wait, you know the answer?

Hrishi: It's the same answer as before, white chili.

Samin: White chili. Is there such a thing?

Hrishi: There is. Yeah.

Samin: What?

Hrishi: White chili. It's like a, I think it's made with cannellini beans instead of black beans, but it doesn't have tomato in it.

Samin: I'm seeing it has chicken in it. So what would you do if you're a vegetarian?

Hrishi: Just leave out the chicken.

Samin: So it's just a pot of white beans?

Hrishi: I mean, it's white beans, but you still have some chili style heat. Like you still put chili peppers in it. I mean, I guess it is basically that, but you know, you do white beans and onions and chili. Also, I mean, you could always ... I know I've talked about this before, you could always use some kind of plant based meat alternative if you want that ...

Samin: Like con carne thing.

Hrishi: Yeah, exactly.

Samin: And also to me, I will say apart from the beans, which in and of itself, beans are very controversial in chili because there's an entire thing like chili con carne, which doesn't have beans like many Texans believe it's just the meat is the chili, the meat and spices.

Hrishi: Okay.

Samin: Maybe what makes a chili a chili is the spices. Let's talk about this. The philosophy behind chili. If Chili con carne has no beans, if white chili has no tomato, if vegetarian chili has no meat, the thing that links all three is the chili spices.

Hrishi: Uh-huh. (affirmative)

Samin: Right? It's that they have the chili spices. So as long as your thing has chili spices in it, we can call it chili, whether or not it has tomato and whether it's made with white beans or dark beans. So that gets me over the philosophical hump. So I'm there with you. And then for me, much like with baked potato and many other dishes in my whole life, the most exciting part of chili is what I put on top of it. So honestly, who cares what's in there as long as you put avocado and cheese and hot sauce and cilantro and onions.

Hrishi: Yeah.

Samin: And eat it with corn bread or tortilla chips. I guess I'm with you, I'm with you. Okay.

Hrishi: I don't know if that will work for Cody, but I'm going to say, as we said, from gazpacho to white gazpacho, I'm going to suggest that he goes from chili to white chili. And see if that works.

Samin: Okay. I like this. Wait. And also, does she just not like tomato in things or she's just anti-tomato period?

Hrishi: For the purposes of our discussion, let's assume anti-tomato across the board.

Samin: Well, I mean, Cody, I think you need to rethink your relationship. No, I'm just kidding. I mean maybe because, I mean, what kind of monster doesn't like a tomato?

Hrishi: This is why I'll do the relationship advice.

Samin: Yeah, you do the relationship part.

Hrishi: You do the food advice. Our next question comes from Dan Pashman, who makes a podcast that you have been on as a guest.

Samin: I love.

Hrishi: He's the creator of the show, The Sporkful. And he sent us this question about olives.

Dan: Here's my problem. I don't like olives with pits in them. I don't know why anyone would. I mean like when you bite through an olive, you want to be able to focus on the pleasure or the experience of piercing the skin and the juice and the flavor. And to so quickly after you bite through the flesh, to hit this rock. And then have to spend half of the experience of eating the olive, like navigating this choking hazard and getting it out of your mouth in a way that isn't totally revolting to anyone who might be looking at you. By the time you're done with that process, the good part of the olive is gone. It's fallen down the back of your throat. You missed it. I don't know why anyone would want an olive with a pit in it. My question is, is there a material benefit to the pit? I think that there's a perception that olives with pits in are of a higher quality, but I am suspicious that it may be correlation and not causation.

Hrishi: What do you think, Samin? Does the pit in the olive make a difference? Because I relate to this very much.

Samin: First of all, Dan, and maybe Hrishi, what do you guys think of cherries?

Hrishi: I like a cherry. I don't like having to spit out the seed. But usually when I'm eating a cherry with the seed in it, it's the only thing that I'm eating. Like it's the event unto itself. So I don't have to worry about the thing that Dan's talking about, where you're in front of people. You know, it's like served as an appetizer at a fancy restaurant and maybe you're on a date or you're with other people and you have to eat it, and then you've got this thing in your mouth and what do you do with it?

Samin: Wait, wait, wait, wait, wait, wait, wait, wait, wait. Other than a breaded and deep fried olive with a pit in it. I, as a restaurant cook, have never ever put an olive with its pit, an entire olive on a plate apart from maybe like an antipasto platter.

Hrishi: Yeah, that's exactly what I'm thinking of. Like an antipasto.

Samin: Okay, I have a lot of thoughts about this. And I just want to say I'm a person who regularly buys black pitted olives in a can and sometimes just eats an entire can of them for dinner and loves them in my pizza and also nachos. And so like I appreciate a pitted olive, but as a cook in restaurants, I've really only ever purchased olives with their pits in them and I've never even questioned it. I've always sort of thought and believed and was taught that the more processed an ingredient is, the more steps involved in getting it to you, it's better to be able to make those decisions yourself. So even when we're making tapenades or dish or salsas or anything with olives in them ourselves, we pit them. We do that pitting. I think once you pit an olive, then all of that inside flesh is vulnerable to oxidation and/or anything else. And so then they have to put more stuff in the liquid, in the brine that they, you know, to protect it. And so it's not quite as untouched. That's why in a fancy restaurant, you don't get served pitted olives on your antipasto platter. But should that be a reason why like you don't get them at your own olive bar at the grocery store and bring them home? Do what you want.

Hrishi: Okay, do what you want Dan.

Samin: By the way I just Googled this, and the very first hit said that the pits preserve flavor. So, I've got one thing to say to you Dan, didn't that James Beard Award teach you how to use Google?

Hrishi: Wow, James Beard burn. Okay, Here's our next question

Caller: I was hoping to find out if you had any suggestions for making pasta with kids that doesn't require a semolina flour, or a pasta making machine, like a roller. I would love to be able to make something really simple with our hands. That would be really satisfying for the kids. Thank you.

Hrishi: She did not give us her name, but we can assume that she's calling from an airport runway.

Samin: Dear airport mom. Okay. Good news. You don't need semolina to make pasta. I find it to be helpful to have on hand because it helps keep the sheets of pasta from sticking to one another, but you can just use regular flour. So, I like using a kind of flour called 00 for making homemade pasta, but you could just use regular old all-purpose. That works great. My ratio's really simple. It's one cup of flour, one egg, and one egg yolk. So, it's really easy to remember. And I would say if you're making it with a couple kids, you might want to just do two cups of flour, or even three cups of flour. And when I'm making handmade pasta that I'm going to roll by hand, and by hand, I mean, not with a hand cranked machine, but with a rolling pin, or in a terrible case scenario, with a bottle of olive oil or wine, I think you want to err on the side of wetness in the dough. The recipe's sort of a guideline. Those ratios are a guideline. But usually I end up adding an extra egg yolk or two, or you can just add the remaining egg white, or you could just add some water. But you do want a nice, pliable dough when you're making it, so you can make it in a bowl, or you could make a pile of flour on your countertop with a well in it, and then crack the eggs in the center and just work them in with a fork. The key is to go nice and slowly, and then you have to let the pasta rest. You have to let the dough rest for at least 30 minutes to really give the flour time to completely absorb the liquid evenly. And at that point, you start rolling. And this is where elbow grease comes in. And I've done this with actual, living, human children. So, I know children who are interested can do it.

But it is a lot of work. And it's going to require a lot of work on your part to use a rolling pin, to roll it thinly enough for it to be not super chewy, and take 15 minutes to boil. So, make sure you take a small enough piece of dough so that it doesn't grow super unwieldy. You have to have large enough counter space to really work. And make sure that your body, your torso, has leverage over the counter space. So, for a kid, that might mean putting them on a stool, or creating some sort of... Use the coffee table. Something where they are able to put their shoulders into it. And then they just roll. You roll, you roll, you roll. You have to turn the dough quite often to make sure it's not sticking to the counter. Use plenty of flour on the counter, and roll it until you can see the light when you hold it up. Or, you don't even have to go quite that thin, especially if you want to then turn it into fettuccine or noodles. They can be a little bit thicker. But I think it's a really great way to spend time with kids.

Hrishi: And which part of the process do the kids have the most fun with?

Samin: I think once they see it turn into something that they recognize, because there's a lot of steps in the beginning where you're like, I don't get it. It's flour and eggs. Or even when you're rolling it, you're like, how does this turn into the bowl of noodles that I love so much? So, I think that part where you cut it, or where you shape it, that's a super fun thing.

Hrishi: Okay, thanks for the question Airport Mom! I hope that keeps the kids entertained.

Samin: Okay, now we are going to talk to the wonderful Sam Saunders.

Hrishi: He is the host of NPR's *It's Been a Minute*.

Samin: Sam, when I saw you last we cooked. Do you cook on your own? Are you a cook?

Sam: I grew up in a family of people who are really good at cooking. My father is from East Texas. My mother is from Birmingham, Alabama. All my aunties can cook.

We were blessed enough to have help in the house growing up. They taught me how to cook. I know how to do it, but over the course of my adult life, I just didn't do it. I was a guy living alone with a busy job, but I always could do the basics pretty well. And I could always whip something together to impress a few friends and like feed them and not kill them.

Hrishi: The first step in impressing them: not killing them.

Samin: Yeah, a very good part of friendship.

Sam: Exactly, exactly. But I leaned into cooking a lot once lockdown began and there was a good two or three weeks and I was like, "I am doing everything." And then about a month in, I realized I really don't start to cook until I'm very hungry.

Samin: Same. I always do that.

Sam: Right? Yes! So I realized the things that I was going to have to make were going to have to not require too much time. And so I used to be mad at myself for not doing the recipe that took four hours. And now I'm like, "No, that's just not my ministry. I'm a quick line chef and that's cool."

Samin: You're just like a fried eggs kind of guy.

Sam: Come on. Exactly! And I have leaned into that and accepted that. And I have really embraced quick and easy dishes that are still impressive in the midst of lockdown.

Hrishi: And what's your number one?

Sam: Oh, frittata.

Samin: Talk to us.. You're talking to a frittata family.

Sam: Okay, good. Good. The thing about frittata is really just, it's so easy. It's like quiche with no crust. It's just an egg pie with whatever's in your fridge, but the way that it's made in a cast iron skillet, it just looks beautiful. It always looks beautiful. And it's the kind of thing where it's almost like stone soup, just throw in there whatever you got in your fridge, it will work in the frittata, right? And so the

way that I do it, I always use my trusty cast iron skillet, and I always use 12 eggs. And there's usually a bunch of grated Parmesan cheese, and then whatever vegetables I have in the fridge that I feel like using and then some kind of ham or bacon.

Samin: Are you a flipper?

Sam: No. I will probably start by sautéing onions and garlic and lots of vegetables, like broccoli and such. And I will just sauté that in butter until it gets really tender. And then I will add the meat. Oftentimes, I will use the bacon grease from the bacon to cook the vegetables in. And then you really just add eggs, which I have already grated the Parmesan cheese into. And you keep it on top of the stove in the cast iron until it kind of sets. And then I put mine in the oven at 350 for 15 minutes, maybe broil it for the last two or three, and you pull it out and it's this beautiful, crustless egg pie that really only required you to sauté some vegetables for a few minutes and literally pour some eggs on top. And it always looks pretty and everyone's always like, "Oh my God, look at that." And I'm always like, "Yeah, I'm a chef."

Samin: You are a chef.

Sam: Yeah. Yeah.

Hrishi: And do you wing it when you're making it, or are you following a recipe?

Sam: I usually know what I need. I can guesstimate how many vegetables I can have in there and I like just sturdier veggies that I can just cook down for a long time and not worry about, like kale or just a ton of onions or a lot of shallots. Just things that can be sitting in hot butter for a while. You can never have too much cheese in there. So it's also one of those things where you don't have to really think too much about it after a certain number of times doing it. It's just easy. It's easy.

Samin: Okay, can I tell you some crazy things to put in a frittata?

Sam: Tell me, please.

Samin: Croutons.

Sam: Get out of my house.

Samin: I know, isn't that kind of nuts? If you put toasted bread inside, because okay, one time I had a frittata that had huge pieces of delicious, toasted bread and then huge, huge, huge dollops of goat cheese.

Sam: Okay, yes!

Samin: So then every once in a while you would get this like perfect bite that was egg, cheese, and bread, but it was all built in.

Sam: I like that.

Samin: It was delicious.

Hrishi: That's kind of like the crust on a quiche, but now you're putting it inside.

Samin: Yeah, or like scrambled eggs on toast, but it's inside out.

Hrishi: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Sam: Okay. Okay. Okay.

Samin: I'm not pressuring you or suggesting to you that you make it. I just thought that that was, I remember when I saw that, I saw it at a restaurant once and I was like, "This is wild."

Sam: Although, if Samin tells you to maybe try a thing in the kitchen, you have to try it. That's the rule.

Samin: Well, yeah. And I will say I've made it and been disappointed too. I've made it and it's been awesome and I've made it and it's been blah. So I think the kind of bread matters. I think that it's toasted with a lot of oil and it's really crispy and golden first really matters.

Sam: Okay.

Samin: And I think also having a big dollop of either ricotta or goat cheese in there matters too.

Sam: Yeah, I was trying to think of my most struggle frittata. And there was one time where I was like, "Everything needs to be out of the freezer and fridge before I go back to the grocery store." And I think I made one frittata where it was just like, I don't know why I had it, like a package of diced ham and some frozen snow peas. And that was the frittata. And it was filling and it worked and it still looked pretty.

Hrishi: Was it good?

Samin: That sounds actually pretty good. Ham and peas is a pretty classic combo.

Sam: Ham and peas. Ham and peas.

Hrishi: I want to ask you about supply and demand. Do you normally have more than one dozen eggs in your fridge at a time so that you can make a frittata whenever you want, but also do uh sorry, eggstracurricular dishes as well?

Samin: Oh no.

Sam: So I will say I've never Googled how long eggs last. So I never know if I'm eating eggs past their prime, which means I never buy more than a dozen. But I'm pretty lucky here in Downtown Los Angeles. There's a Whole Foods nearby that is humongous and they took distancing very seriously, very early on. So I feel pretty safe going to that grocery store and I have since this began. So I have not hoarded eggs yet, but we're only halfway through 2020. Things could change.

Samin: Sam, I have just one more question, which is what will make you feel cared for? Something I've been thinking a lot about is the Black people I know, and my Black friends who are in media. And in a lot of ways, I feel extra double, triple compassion and empathy and worry for you guys because not only are you going through everything that you're going through and all of the feelings, but you have to show up every day and you have to talk about it and put all of your feelings into words and still be at work and talk about this in a way that

communicates these really important ideas and feelings to people. And I'm wondering how I, as your friend and how we as your listeners and your audience can support you.

Sam: Oh I mean, honestly, I think listening is the best thing. I've been really honored and impressed to see people earnestly saying this moment, "Let's seek out Black voices and just listen to them." I think that a lot of people are maybe perhaps finding out that a lot of the people of color in their lives, that they assumed were always happy actually weren't as happy as they thought. And people were worried and sad and angry about a lot of things. And now there's this moment where it can all be let out. So I think just listening and I think also not forcing the conversation, creating a space where people of color feel safe enough to begin that conversation with you on their own timeline. Right? That is a true goal. So I don't know. I will tell the white folks I'm close to, if we get to the point where we're sharing advice for how to do this stuff, I'm just like, "You don't need to bring a syllabus to a conversation with somebody of color. You just be there, ask how they're doing and see what they say." Right? See what they say and just keep listening.

Samin: And send a frittata.

Sam: And send a frittata. Yeah, well another impressive thing that I've been doing in quarantine. I got a pasta maker. I'll make my own pasta every now and then. It takes way too long, but it's good. But when I'm doing that, I'll make my own vodka sauce.

Samin: Oh, tell me how you make that!

Sam: Vodka sauce is so easy. I found some easy recipe online. It's like dice the onions, add the tomato paste, get that brown, add the vodka, add the heavy cream, and voila. It's there. You can make it in 20 minutes. And if you Google, there's four or five easy recipes that are very similar. And within half an hour you have a hearty sauce. That like, I mean, you just feel accomplished, but it took you 20 minutes. So I will do that a lot and feel very proud of myself.

Hrishi: I can see the pasta on your Instagram does look really impressive.

Sam: It's funny, when I first wanted to make my own handmade pasta, I didn't have a pasta machine to cut it after I had made the dough. So the first two times I made it, I would just roll it out myself. And let me tell you, I did not have the energy.

Samin: So much work.

Sam: It takes so much work. And so now I have this little pasta machine and it is doing that work and running it through there over and over again, working with your hands, watching it happen. It makes you forget about everything else. It makes you forget about 2020. It makes you forget about Twitter. It makes you forget about what you were sad about. It is an all consuming work and I love doing that.

Hrishi: Do you ever use any specialty molds or cutters to make fun shapes out of your pasta? Because that's another way to make a good impression.

Samin: Oh, no you didn't!

Sam: I love it. I love it.

Sam: Okay. Last thing, just because I have my list.

Samin: Oh my God, he really has a list. I love it.

Hrishi: You are so prepared.

Sam: I studied. I studied. My funniest quarantine food story. There was a week Downtown where it was just too loud to sleep. And the first day of the curfew, when it was too loud and I had to get out, I was going to some friends in Silver Lake and I was like, "I'm just going to come over. I can't bring anything. I'm sorry." They're like, "It's fine. We have an extra room. We'll make you dinner. We'll eat outside," and I was like, "I can't bring any food. You can't order me food. I'm sorry." So I got there and they were like, "All of the food delivery is shut down. All we have is Annie's White Cheddar Mac and Cheese."

Samin: Delicious.

Sam: And I was like, "I've never had that. I don't even really like mac and cheese that much. I guess I'll try it." When I tell you that first bite, I said to myself, "This is one of the best dishes ever, of all time." How did no one tell me about Annie's White Cheddar Mac and Cheese before? It's one of the greatest things.

Hrishi: Well actually, Samin recommended it in episode two of this podcast.

Sam: Well! Oh my God. Stop it. So one, I've been so behind on podcasts. So I'm going to go back and I'll listen to every episode of this one to get some more food tips because y'all would have told me about Annie's Mac and Cheese sooner than I found out. Had I just been listening. So I am sorry!

Hrishi: No, that's okay! Sam, thank you so much for joining us.

Samin: You're the best. You're so funny. And I can't wait to make some frittata in your honor.

Sam: Oh my God, thanks for having me. This was delightful. Y'all are the best.

Hrishi: Listen to Sam Sanders' show *It's Been a Minute* on NPR wherever you listen to your podcasts.

Samin: And you can follow Sam on social media @SamSanders

Hrishi: Okay Samin, I'm ready with the next topic at hand. Here's Kait.

Kait: Hi, Samin and Hrishi, this is Kait in Denver, Colorado. During the pandemic I tried to get into roller skating, but I crashed and fractured my right wrist.

Samin: Oh, no.

Kait: That's my dominant hand, on my second day out.

Samin: Oh, no.

Kait: So, now I'm looking for foods that I could prepare with one hand and eat with one hand. Thank you so much for your help.

Samin: Oh my Gatos. Kait, I'm so sorry. I really didn't think that was going to go that way.

Hrishi: It's actually not the only hand injury related question that we got recently if you can believe it.

Samin: What?

Hrishi: Yeah.

Eric: Hi, Samin and Hrishi, this is Eric. I'm calling from Seattle and I just had a traumatic incident with my finger on my right hand. I cut off the tip of it. So, one of the things that's been getting me through quarantine is cooking a lot and now I'm very limited in what I can cook. So I'm wondering what suggestions you might have.

Hrishi: He cut off the end of his finger, so if you have any tips for him.

Samin: Oh no, no. That's inappropriate. It's inappropriate. He does not deserve that.

Hrishi: I know, I'm sorry, Eric. I'm sure you've had your share of kitchen injuries.

Samin: Oh yeah, many.

Hrishi: Yeah, It's just part of the job, right?

Samin: Oh yeah. We could have a whole podcast about my injuries, not an episode, a podcast.

Hrishi: Well, what do you do when you can't use your dominant hand? What can you make? This is a new level of needing an easy recipes.

Samin: Okay. Let's think about this.

Hrishi: The thing is, if you can't use your right hand, that's a great time to get into leftovers.

Samin: I'm going to fucking kill you. You're like sitting at home, Googling.

Hrishi: You think I had to Google to come up with that? Siri, what is a joke for when you have hurt your right hand?

Samin: Oh my gosh. Okay. Let's think about this.

Hrishi: I'm really hoping that you can single-handedly answer the question.

Samin: Oh no. Stop it, stop it.

Hrishi: I'm just going to keep going until you come up with some answers. Just something that might be handy.

Samin: Stop. What's wrong with you? Why are you such a monster?

Hrishi: I have to amuse myself while you come up with your answer.

Samin: I don't have an answer.

Hrishi: Get ready for more. I know eventually you're going to put your finger on it.

Samin: I hate you so, so, so much.

Hrishi: Probably not as much as Kate and Eric do, if that's any consolation.

Samin: Okay. Something I can think of, which is not an answer to your questions, I guess this is the first thing that comes to mind. A friend of one of my friends is this writer named Adrian Kane. And she writes about food. And she suffered, I think from a stroke, at a pretty young age when she was in college, I believe.

Hrishi: Oh man.

Samin: So for her, she learned to cook with one hand, essentially. Anytime I've spent time with her in the kitchen or heard stories of how she cooks and how painstaking it is, things like the way that she cuts a cherry tomato. So when I cut a cherry tomato in half, which is already a really laborious thing, because you have to take each cherry tomato and hold it. And don't be telling me about that YouTube video with the cherry tomatoes, because don't be telling me about that.

Hrishi: Okay, promise.

Samin: Okay, good. But when I take a cherry tomato, I have to hold it with one hand in and that you kind of pinch it with one hand and then with the other hand you cut it in half. But when Adrian does it, she has to put the cherry tomato on the cutting board with her dominant hand, with her only hand, basically, that's usable, and then take that hand, lift her other hand that she can't lift, put that on top of the cherry tomato to hold it in place and then cut the cherry tomato, then move that hand out of the way and then move the cut cherry tomato and then repeat the entire process. It takes eight times as long just for this one, tiny, tiny step in a recipe. And so there's so much more patience with herself, I think, than the rest of us have with ourselves. Watching her, being with her, is a really good reminder and a really good lesson. We'll link to Adrian's writing in the resources. But I think, anytime I injure myself and especially when I don't have to work, it's one thing when I injured myself as a professional cook. But one time I hurt myself really badly to the point I had to go to the emergency room and have surgery. So this thing ended up taking me out of work for months, which I was not a person who was used to that. I am person who am defined by my work. At that point I was definitely defined by how hard I worked and how much I worked. And so this was a really big, big challenge for me to not be able to work. I had to learn how to be a human without going as fast as I could, going as hard as I could at all times. And it wasn't my dominant hand. So I still had the use of my main hand. So I still could make something, but I also had to learn how to accept help, which was a big part of it. And I think might be a part of what you guys are going to have to do, is ask for help, if it is really your dominant hand. And that has really prevented you from a lot, is ask your neighbors and your friends for help and to drop off food for you. I think part of it is getting used to things taking a lot longer, like I learned from watching Adrian. And I also think making much more simple dishes and buying foods that you might not normally buy, buying pre-prepared things that you might normally raise your nose at.

Hrishi: So cook more like me basically.

Samin: Cook more like Hrishi. At the store you could buy the frozen vegetables that are already cut or the fresh vegetables that are already cut. I also think some other things you could make are really simple pastas where you just layer things into

the pot. A really simple way to think about it actually, is going back to our favorite, the Annie's Mac & Cheese, right? Just think about everything as an Annie's Mac & Cheese. It's a wonderful model where, Annie's Mac & Cheese, what do you do? You throw your mac in there and then separately you get your little cheese sauce ready. What I do is I don't even do it separately. I just drain the pasta and then use the same pot to make the cheese sauce in and then put the pasta back in there. I don't even dirty a separate bowl. But if I'm going to add, say asparagus or peas or anything else, all I do is I just count backwards from the end time of the pasta and add those frozen peas in or the greens or whatever else I'm going to add into the boiling water and let them cook for those last 90 seconds or last two minutes or whatever.

Hrishi: Frozen peas is a great option because no cutting involved.

Samin: Totally. I'm saying Annie's Mac & Cheese, but you don't have to do it Annie's Mac & Cheese. You could do this as a pot of rice. Or for boiling any sort of a noodle, same thing where you could make a pot of soba, and say soba takes four minutes to boil, after three minutes, you could add some corn, some frozen corn. You could add some frozen peas. You could add some pre-cut stuff that you bought from Trader Joe's. And so when you drain the pot, you have all of the ingredients already there. And then you stir it with whatever sauce that you want and that sauce could just be a dollop of butter. It could be a spoonful of sour cream. It could be a premade jar of sauce that you bought. I think simplifying is one step, lowering your expectations, being kinder to yourself, asking for help and just making dishes where you can do everything in one pot.

Hrishi: I think that that sounds like a great solution for Eric, but I wonder for Kait, one thing that I'm imagining, with a fractured wrist, it might be hard to lift up a pot of water -

Samin: Oh, you're right.

Hrishi: - even to just dump it out. So I think we might maybe need to have a separate suggestion for Kait.

Samin: Okay. So something I can think of where again all of the parts of the dish are in one dish, something super simple that I make that's kind of a comfort food for my own self, is different versions of Kitchari or Kedgeree, depending on if you're British or Indian.

Hrishi: And my family calls it Khichadi.

Samin: Oh, say it.

Hrishi: Khichadi

Samin: Kit-kitsari-

Hrishi: Khichadi. The root word is actually the same, but the R is rolled so hard that in English it's transliterated as a D. Khichadi.

Samin: Khichadi. Oh my God, I can't do it. Khichadi, Khichadi.

Hrishi: Yeah, you did it.

Samin: Khichadi. Okay, this is I think actually a great thing to do. And it's really delicious. I make it all the time in my rice cooker.

Hrishi: Oh, rice cooker's such a good idea.

Samin: Oh, yeah sister.

Hrishi: Because it's like just a stationary.

Samin: Yes.

Hrishi: And you can spoon stuff in and spoon stuff out of it.

Samin: Exactly. There's nothing to control. I love my rice cooker. The thing is always hot. I have multiple meals that are just warm and delicious. Yes. Very into the rice cooker. So that was a very long way of getting to, for you, Kait, kitchari in the rice cooker. Kitchari, to define it for you, is rice and lentil dish. It's kind of like, you can almost think of it as a salty porridge. But you can also make it to whatever thickness you like. I like it a little bit thicker than porridge consistency.

So I put one part rice to one part lentils. I use the red lentils that are split and usually basmati rice. So one part rice, one part lentils. I rinse them.

Hrishi: While we're on the topic of pronunciation, I'm just going to jump in and say, we call it basmati rice.

Samin: Uh huh (Affirmative). How do you pronounce Samin?

Hrishi: [Garbled Sha-min]. That's the traditional way.

Samin: Basmati. Oh, okay. Here we go.

Hrishi: Oh my gosh. We are so off.

Samin: The thing about it is at some point it becomes me being that person where I'm the croissant person again.

Hrishi: You already said, ricotta today. So, you could basmati.

Samin: These are like really, this is so funny. At least this is a safe space where we can make fun of ourselves and each other, but these all do point to much more heavier issues.

Hrishi: I know. I know. But here we can just admit that we're both problematic.

Samin: Yeah, but it's just also super fun. It's super, super silly, but it is complicated because it's just like what am I supposed to do? Walk around saying basmati?

Hrishi: You actually pronounced it perfectly when you were making a joke out of it. You nailed it.

Samin: These are all important things to talk about.

Hrishi: But probably not for Kait so much in this moment, while she's sitting there with her fractured wrist waiting for a recipe.

Sami: Yeah, she's like, "Hello, my arm healed. I don't even need your stupid recipe anymore."

Hrishi: This is our real solution, we're just going to wait it out for you, Kait. Hope this helped.

Samin: Yeah. I mean it's pretty simple. It's one part rice, one part lentils, two parts water. I'll wash the rice and lentils, set those aside. I'll start with a little bit of a sizzle of aromatics in the bottom of my pot or rice cooker. So if I'm doing a rice cooker, I'll get the rice cooker heated and then just put a little bit of ghee in there, and then I put a little bit of yummys, and yummys might be defined as, ginger or garlic or whatever I have like various spices like coriander, cumin, turmeric, probably just those things probably, or a little bit of mustard seed. And then I'll put the lentils and rice in there and toast all of that together and then I cover it with the water and just let it cook until it's all the way soft and tasty and delicious. And then usually, what I do is I'll just eat it with a dollop of yogurt and some cilantro and some chopped chilies or whatever. I just eat it super simply but it's just really comforting, it's soft and it involves basically no chopping. And so, if you can't even deal with the ginger and garlic, skip that, or you can buy those little pre-grated frozen ginger cubes and pre-grated frozen garlic cubes that you can buy. So, you can just pop one of those cubes of ginger, pop one of those cubes of garlic into the pan and sizzle those. But literally I think, nothing that we listed involves any chopping.

Hrishi: Yeah, that sounds great. So rice cookers are going to be your friend and you should really start thinking about it all the way back when you are shopping.

Samin: Mm-hmm (affirmative). Also cereal.

Hrishi: Exactly, for all emergencies.

Samin: Thanks Kait.

Hrishi: Thanks Eric.

Samin: Thanks Eric. I hope you guys both feel better soon. Especially since it took 400 hours for us to answer your question.

Hrishi: All right and that's it for this episode.

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

Hrishi: Home Cooking is a proud member of Radiotopia from PRX, a collective of independent podcasts. You can learn more about all the Radiotopia shows at radiotopia.fm.

Samin: Let us know if you have any cooking related questions.

Hrishi: Yeah. Record a voice memo. And just remember to hold your phone up to the side of your head like you're making a call.

Samin: And send it to us at alittlehomecooking@gmail.com.

Hrishi: Our website is Homecooking.show and you can find transcripts, recipes and other resources on there.

Samin: You can follow me @CiaoSamin on Twitter and Instagram.

Hrishi: And I'm @HrishiHirway.

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

Hrishi: We'll be back soon with another episode

Samin: Until then, I'm Samin.

Hrishi: And I'm Hrishi.

Samin: And we'll be home cooking.