



Episode 430: How to Eat Better to Feel Better (and Stay Balanced) With Giada De Laurentiis

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This episode is brought to you by Wellnesse. That's Wellnesse with an E on the end. We make personal care products that go above and beyond just non-toxic to actually be beneficial for you from the outside in. I realized years ago that even some of my most naturally minded friends and family members who made an effort to eat organic food and be really cognizant of what they brought into their homes were still using certain personal care products, mainly hair care and oral care. And the reason was, they weren't willing to sacrifice how they looked and felt just to use natural products. And none of the natural products they were finding really lived up to the conventional products as far as how effective they were. So, I resolved to change this and realized I had things that I've been making in my kitchen for years that worked just as well and that I could share with other families, and thus Wellnesse was born. You've probably heard that what goes on our body gets into our body and that many of the chemicals we encounter end up in our bloodstream. To me, this means non-toxic and safe should be the absolute bare minimum baseline for any products that are in our lives. But I wanted to take it a step further. I wanted it to use this to our advantage to actually put beneficial ingredients in our hair care, toothpaste, personal care products so that we could benefit our body from the outside in. Why not use that wonderful skin barrier to our advantage? Our hair care is packed with ingredients like nettle, which helps hair get thicker over time. Our dry shampoo has scalp promoting products that really help follicles stay strong. And our toothpaste, for instance, has a naturally occurring mineral called hydroxyapatite, which is the exact formulation or exact mineral that's on our teeth that's present in strong enamel. So they're all designed to work with the body, not against it to help you have stronger, healthier hair and teeth. We now have a hand sanitizer that doesn't dry out your hands like many hand sanitizers do. I would be honored if you would check it out and I would love to hear your feedback. You can find all of our products at wellnesse.com.

Katie: Hello, and welcome to the "Wellness Mama" podcast. I'm Katie from wellnessmama.com and wellnesse.com. That's Wellnesse with an E on the end, my new personal care line. I am so excited today to get to share this interview with someone who I have known of for many, many years and who partially taught me how to cook. And that is Giada De Laurentiis, who is the Emmy award-winning star of many shows, including "Everyday Italian," "Giada Entertains," "Giada at Home," "Giada in Italy." She has many books as well. She trained at Le Cordon Bleu in Paris and has worked at Wolfgang Puck's restaurant before starting her own company. She was born in Rome but grew up in Los Angeles. She lives there now with her daughter, Jade.

And we go today into her health journey and how she recently has gotten into the health and wellness world, what that's taught her about her body, how she's helping her own daughter to have a healthy relationship with food. And not surprisingly, we touch a lot on the importance of community and how she knows firsthand from being born in Italy and growing up there that community is such a big part of what makes their culture and the Mediterranean diet so healthy and how to implement that with our own families at home. I really enjoyed getting to talk with someone who, like I said, taught me how to cook when I was first married through her shows. And she shares a lot of nuggets today about balance and wellness and how to implement these things in our own lives. I know that you'll enjoy it as much as I did. So let's jump right in.

Giada, welcome. Thanks for being here.

Giada: Hi, good morning.

Katie: Good morning. I'm so excited to chat with you because, confession, when I first got married years ago, I actually didn't know how to cook at all. And I married into a big Italian family. And so I had to learn how to cook quickly. And you were one of my big inspirations, your cookbooks, and also your show when I was first married. So, you literally taught me how to cook Italian food and it's an honor to chat with you today.

Giada: Yay. That makes me so...Honestly, I always tell people that those are the most proud moments that makes me feel like all the hard work is worth it when you make somebody else look like a hero in their own families.

Katie: And there's, yeah, so much nurturing in community and food. And I love how you bring in so much of the Italian culture that the rest of us might never get to experience. And that's why I'm so excited to chat with you today because you're now taking all of that and I feel like up-leveling it even more into now the wellness world. So, I'd love to start kind of broad and just ask you, what was the inspiration for that? Because you've certainly been in the food world for many, many years. What caused that little bit of a change?

Giada: Well, in all, honesty, Katie, it was a difficult path only because, you know, growing up in a large Italian family with...And my family was on a mission, when we moved here when I was about 7 years old, that we held on to our culture, our food culture, our Italian heritage, and our language. And so, in doing that, the type of food and what we ate was really important to them. And you have to remember that this is in the late '70s when American food was completely different than it is today and understanding ethnic foods, because, in that time, Italian food was still sort of considered an ethnic food culture, was really different and it wasn't as readily accepted or loved the way that it is now.

And so, in doing that and in that journey when, in my late 30s, really right after I had my daughter, which, kind of, spills into my early 40s, I started to become chronically sick. I really struggled when I got to the point several years in that I realized I had to change, sort of, my relationship with food, but also the way I ate. Because obviously, I grew up on a lot of gluten, pasta, bread, etc., dairy, you know, all of the foods that were

now causing a lot of inflammation and, in turn, sickness in my body. So, that was, sort of, a...I had to get over some mental hurdles and things that I had been attached to.

So, actually, it was a really difficult journey and I think mostly because I had such a deep-rooted culture of food, even though the Mediterranean diet is known to be one of the healthiest diets on the planet, truly. But, you know, I think I strayed from that to a certain degree, especially during my career-building years. And so, it took me a long time to get comfortable with writing this book or even considering writing this book. I had to figure out a way to eat that didn't mean I was just going to be on shakes all the time, or a liquid diet, or so restrictive that it was no longer enjoyable. And so, how would I share that and how would I do the journey? And how did my body react to the types of foods that I started to write recipes for and cook?

Katie: You're right. Like, the Mediterranean diet is held up as the gold standard throughout all of the medical communities. And I think certainly, there's probably some misconceptions about how to follow it. But I'm curious on a specific level, how is your diet different now than perhaps it used to be or what would be the 80/20? How have some of those changes stuck?

Giada: Well, my diet in the past, even growing up, my number one love was sugar. Yes, a lot of times it took the form of chocolate, but in the essence and root of it, it was sugar. And I didn't know as a young person what kind of issues would arise from the amounts of sugar I consumed. And when I say sugar, I mean straight sugar. I mean, there were moments when I felt so tired from being on the road and all the things I was doing, including having an infant, that I would just take sugar cubes, just raw sugar cubes, and dip them in an espresso, and just eat the raw sugar cubes. Forget drinking the espresso or melting it into that or dissolving it. I just would eat it straight. I loved the crunch. I loved the high. I loved the immediate sense of clarity and energy I had.

And then I would deal with the crashes with more sugar. And when I would shoot my shows because the hours, especially in the beginning, were so long, I had chocolate chips and all sorts of chocolate stashed in the freezer of the set. And I would just grab it, as I went, as much as I needed to keep me going through to get to the end. And really, it was never about, like, how am I gonna feel in an hour? It was like, how am I just gonna get through the next five minutes? I don't care. Let me just get through it. And I think that that was not seeing the long game, which tends to happen when we're young and we just need to get through the day.

Katie: Yeah. And I wonder, like, for me, certainly, I think a lot of my impetus for health changes and researching was very imminent because I had Hashimoto's and I felt really bad. But also, with Hashimoto's, came weight gain. And so certainly the outside of that was very motivating for me to try to figure out what was wrong and figure out how to correct it. And I think I had a very unhealthy relationship with food for a lot of years, including actually under-eating. But I'm curious, because at least from the outside perception, it seems like you've always, kind of, had that side dialed in. Like, it doesn't seem like you've maybe ever struggled with the weight side. So, for you, it was much more from the internal of, like, how you actually felt. How did you even get in-tune with that to your body?

Giada: And, you know, Katie, that's one of the misconceptions I think that people don't seem to understand. They seem to think that because you're thin, you're somehow completely healthy. And I guess that's what this book is saying. You know, people asked me for years, "How do you stay so thin and eat all that pasta?" And I used to say, like, "I don't eat a lot of it. I eat a little bit of everything and a lot of nothing, really." And for me, it was never about weight. And I know that's what usually motivates people to take a look at their health is their weight because that's the goal, right? But for me, it wasn't about weight. I just felt so weak, and tired, and foggy, and bloated. And I just felt like, this can't be the best I can be. It just can't. And, you know, all the excuses I got from the medical profession where, you know, "You're getting older. You have a young baby. Your stress level's too high. Your hormones are changing." And I get all that.

But I think that I realized the root of it was deep inside. And yes, I did the same. You know, I under-ate sometimes thinking that maybe it was too much food that was making me tired that my body couldn't process it because I've learned I'm a slow processor, in general. So that's why I don't eat large meals. So sometimes under-eating, sometimes over-eating, sometimes it was just eating sugar and/or too many carbohydrates that made me tired. And I was always struggling to be, like, "Okay, what is the right balance here?" And I think that, you know, cleaning my diet slowly, and I don't mean in one day taking sugar, gluten, and dairy completely out. I mean, over time, slowly trying to tweak. And you have to be really patient. I think this whole journey taught me patience if nothing else, patience with myself, patience with my body, patience with the people around me, and with my work. Just taking it...This is a long journey. It is not a one-pill fix-it situation, which we are all so hoping that that's what it is. That's what we're, sort of, trained to do. I'll take a pill and everything will be fixed. It's really a journey about getting to know yourself.

And I think that what I realized in this time, and now I'm 50, is that I really got to know who Giada really was. And I don't think I ever knew before. I think I was so disconnected with the relationship with myself. And that's, kind of, what this book is about is healing the gut and understanding the journey. And really, I believe the gut controls just about everything in our bodies. Now, I'm not a doctor, so, you know, I always preface it by saying that, but I learned that for my body, the gut is ruling everything, everything, my hormones, my digestion, my immunity, my ability to think straight, the way my brain works, the way it fires, all of it. And that has been my main focus for 10 years. So, yes, slowly getting off of sugar. And I don't mean that I never have sugar because I don't believe in never having anything. I just really, really cut back on the amount I was having. Dairy, gluten, alcohol. So those are the main categories that I really started to cut back on.

Katie: That's so fascinating. I love that you brought up that point of when you were noticing some of those things and doctors, kind of, mentioning like, "Well yeah, you have a new baby and you're getting older," and all of these things. And I had that same experience and just it was like, "No, but that's not normal. It shouldn't be normal. And if that's normal, we should change it." And with the sugar thing, I think you're right, that balance and moderation at the end of the day is the best approach. But I also remind people, like, we don't have a biological need for refined sugar specifically. Like, we do need certain amount of carbohydrates but sugar itself is not a nourishing food. So I, like, had to, kind of, adjust my thinking in that of, like, choosing foods not based on calories, not based on macros, but on nourishment and on, like, supporting and feeding the body versus depriving the body or prohibiting certain foods.

I think that especially in diet culture, in general, but for women, there's so much wrapped up in there in our relationship with food. And I think that's one of those things we have to continually unpack. And like you, how you said you didn't really even know who you truly were, I think there's so much in that identity and in that journey that we get to continually learn. And you also mentioned the gut. And I'm so glad you brought that up. What specifically I'm curious with your experience helped with that journey and with gut healing? Because I'm 100% in agreement with you that so much goes back to the gut.

Giada: Yeah. So, what helped me...Well, first of all, cleaning up my diet was a big part of that. And, you know, when I say that, it seems a little esoteric, but what I mean is making healthier choices. So, you know, when I was a kid and even in my 20s, breakfast for us was like a chocolate croissant, a piece of toast. It was pretty basic, you know. In Italy, we don't eat eggs and we don't eat protein like that. It's just not what we'd usually do and that's not how I grew up. And sometimes skipping breakfast. My mom never really ate breakfast until her later years. So, figuring that part out first. And then, you know, secondly, making a better choice for lunch, and for dinner, and eating a little bit earlier, and choosing to decide how much of a carbohydrate I would have. Like, let's even say it's brown rice, how much of it can Giada actually have in one day? Because everything in excess is going to, sort of, have its own repercussions, right?

So, for me, it was figuring out how many things I could eat how many times a day. I also had spikes, glucose spikes, and insulin spikes because I wouldn't eat until, like, noon, right? So by the time noon hit, I was like, I would grab anything. So learning to have little snacks in my purse, whether it's mixed nuts or little granola that I made, something that would keep my blood sugar leveled would help, in the end, my gut. Lots of water, I was always dehydrated. So, you know, minimum 12 cups, for me, of water. I'm someone that needs a lot of water. I think for some people 10 cups is enough. But really thinking about drinking water. I mean, if there's one thing that I would say people should try desperately to do in their day is to keep an eye on how much water they're drinking, even if it's water with fruits, or herbs, or lemon, or cucumbers, anything that makes you wanna drink it but drink more water.

And I would say so diet, exercise, finding peace in different places. I know it sounds weird for the gut. But I for one hold a lot of stress in my gut and in my stomach so I had to find ways to, kind of, calm myself. So, meditation, and yoga, acupuncture, baths, saunas, all that kind of stuff was time off that I could, sort of, regenerate myself. It's like turning off a computer, giving it a minute, and rebooting it. I would reboot myself in those ways. Even if I was in a hotel room, just five minutes of quiet, if I was lying down or sitting in a chair, whatever I felt like doing, finding those moments to calm myself actually helped my gut as well. So it's not just about food. And supplements, I do take supplements to also help weed through some of the imbalances in the microbiome.

Katie: Yeah, absolutely. And I think you're right, stress is a huge component of that. And I've talked a little bit about that on my podcast before of that I had dialed in, literally everything else, the diet, the supplements, everything, and it wasn't until I dealt with stress and past trauma that all of those pieces got so much more effective and really fell into place. And for years, I had underestimated just how big of a component that is and

thought if I just got everything else right, it would still work out. So I'd love to know how do you manage that because you're also a mom and I would imagine you have a relatively busy schedule still with all of the things that you do in the world. How do you manage the stress component?

Giada: Well, I had to learn to, sort of, ask for more help. In the beginning of having my daughter, Jade... Sometimes as women, not all women, but some women, and especially me have this, sort of, belief that we can be Superwoman. Right? We can do it all. We can work. We can take care of the kids. We don't need help. We don't need anything. And I really had to start learning how to ask for help, whether it was from my family or, you know, my co-workers, something to help me get through it, someone else to take some of the pressure off of me. And even if it meant someone else helping me with Jade because that was my biggest fear, "Oh, my gosh, I'm gonna have a baby and someone else is gonna raise my baby because I'm too busy working. I don't wanna do that." You know, I grew up and I did have nannies because there were four of us. And my mom had us very young. You know, she had me when I was 19 so she was a child also. And my mom grew up with nannies, so we grew up with a lot of people around us. And not that my mom wasn't there, she was, but she was pretty young. So she needed some guidance with all these children.

And so, I think I wanted to be Superwoman and, kind of, do it all. And I started, over time, realizing I can't do it all well. I can do some of it well, but other parts are gonna fall apart. And I think that when I got divorced, I started to realize, okay, I need to get help in different parts of my life. And really where I wanna get the most help is in my work life, someone else to take over different components of my work so that I am not having to do all of it myself because I have no time than for my daughter. You know, and I'm ashamed of this but I spent the first year-and-a-half, 18 months, 2 years of Jade's life on the road. Did she come with me? Yeah, but it wasn't a lot of quality time because I was always, you know, going in 10 different directions. So, it was either her dad or my nanny that traveled with us that, kind of, helped me with her.

And I realized, you know, for me, that wasn't good enough and I had to find another way. And I took a year off of work when I got divorced and I was like, okay, I need to refigure what is the rest of my life gonna look like? Because now I'm hitting my mid-40s. At that point, I just thought, "I'm not happy with what I see in the mirror. I don't feel well. I'm not spending enough time with my daughter. I get too stressed out with work. So, nothing was feeding me anymore. And I thought, "I gotta figure this out because I'm miserable. I'm completely miserable in all aspects." So I think taking that time and that blow from constant sinus infections, constantly on...not antidepressants, antibiotics that wreaked havoc in my gut because I did this for years, and it just trashed my microbiome and my gut.

And, you know, finding myself as a single mom, I realized I won't have my daughter full time anymore. I only have her half the time now. So, I really have to rethink the way I had been living my life and especially my work life. So taking a year off really helped me focus. And I know that not everybody can do that but if you can just, sort of, take a step back, that's the most important. Unfortunately, I may have waited too long to do that. I wish I had done it before my divorce, before all of that. But hey, that's the way it goes, so, you take it the way that, you know, it comes.

Katie: Yeah, that idea, that myth of Superwoman, I think is so prevalent in our culture. And I feel like it's great that, of course, like, in today's world, women are able to do so many things but also, I feel like we've continually added and added and added to our plates. And nothing that used to be there went away. And so, we have to be so proactive in, like you said, finding help or building systems or, like...and it's gonna be different for each of us but finding those ways to make sure that we have support. And it's definitely a recurring theme on this podcast of just having community, building community, finding community, however you need that for support and also the chance to be that in your own family for other people, I think that's a thing that often gets lost in our modern culture and that we have such a human need for. And it sounds like that was a thing that you came back to you with your daughter and also with your extended family.

Giada: Yeah, you know, I think that we forget, especially when we're in our 20s and 30s, as women, we're so busy building our careers and we forget to focus on our friendships. I think that as women, you know, we really connect in groups with each other and we need the support of each other. And I think a lot of times, at least when I was growing up, I was busy working and, you know, spending time with my boyfriend at the time who ended up being my husband, my ex-husband now. But I spent all my time doing that and forgetting about...My family was always there because we're very tight-knit because we're Italian. So, we just do that. But my girlfriends, I had them, but I didn't focus on them. I didn't spend much time. I didn't set time aside to spend with them the way I do now. And I think that we forget how women need the community support.

We really, really flourish so much more with each other's support. And, you know, not that you can't tell your husband everything or your parents everything but those girlfriends are, sort of, your...they're your pillars, your rocks a lot of the time when things go wrong. And there's certain things that only women can understand about how we function. You know, if you're not a woman, you probably don't get it. And we really do help each other with knowledge and share stories. And those things help in child-rearing and in building up careers, and just the depths of which those relationships help calm us, bring peace to our lives and clarity. And we forget until we're much older. And so, I think that that's part of it. And, you know, we need to work on that as women and as older women, do that for the younger generation, and, sort of, corral around them, and help them, and really just inspire them to be together and to work on it together. Those things really help a lot.

And I think sometimes we forget about that kind of stuff. And that feeds our souls. That's why people say, "Yes, you can really focus on the type of meal you're eating and you can do all of these things right, but what's maybe missing is that sense of community." When you eat your meal, where did you eat it? Standing up at the kitchen counter or did you eat it sitting down with family and friends, laughing and, you know, enjoying...? The food actually gets digested differently in your body and the receptors in your brain tell your gut different things depending on how you're enjoying the food. Are there people around you? Is that sense of community around you? And that's really what makes us whole and heals our inside. It's food, of course, first, but it's also the way we enjoy it and who we enjoy it with.

Katie: I've thought about that for a long time. I've only been to Italy a couple of times, and it was absolutely incredible. But what I realized when I was there, you know, people talk about the Mediterranean diet and try to pinpoint, like, what is the thing in the Mediterranean diet that makes it so healthy? And they look at Blue Zones. And they try to find all the similarities in Blue Zone, and they wanna find the perfect food or the

perfect...maybe they drink alcohol, maybe they don't. And I've always thought maybe it's the how, it's not the what. It's that they do it in community. They eat slower. It's not that the food itself, what's that they're spending three-and-a-half hours with people they love, getting in a parasympathetic nervous system state feeling connected. And so their food...their stress is gone. Their food is digested differently. They're gonna sleep really well. And they probably walk to dinner. Like, maybe it's the how not the what, and we're so laser-focused on, "Oh, I just need to eat these perfect foods." But it's also that human connection and community that we're nurturing that I think is a much bigger piece than Americans sometimes realize.

Giada: Yeah, it's because, you know, I think a lot of times too if you think about the history of America and you think about the people that came here, and this includes, you know, my ancestors, Italians, a lot of them came to be rescued, right? Like, they came for a new life, a new beginning. And so, in doing that, a lot of them assimilated into whatever the culture was. And although the Italian-Americans held on to their culture, they also let go a lot of things. And one of them was community. Yes, they came together and built little communities in different cities but as the generations passed, a lot of those people, sort of, separate themselves. They changed their names. They tried to assimilate in a different culture. And the work-life became dominant, right? Making money for your family became the dominant thing. And I think that we lost a lot of that sense of family, and community, and three hours over a meal. And I'm not saying everybody has time for that.

But we really have to think about the family unit, the sense of community. We need to come back to that because that's really how it's a huge component of the way we heal ourselves besides food being number one, but how we share the food. And that's something the Italian culture does so well. And I think that's probably why so many people around the world are gravitating and have gravitated towards and attracted to the Italian culture. Because although many Latin countries have it, Italians do this wonderful job of inviting you in. And it's almost like a hug from a grandma. And they will just...they expect you to eat, they expect you to sit, they expect you to relax. And there's a piece of that that is really healing to us. And I think Americans really do forget about it but I also think they love it, right, because they're so attracted to the Italian culture and the Mediterranean diet as well.

Katie: That's such a good point. And I think...It sounds like we have daughters close to the same age. I have an almost 13-year-old and I think you said Jade is 13. And so I'm curious how as a mom, you've, kind of, integrated this. Like, this has been very top of mind for me as my daughters get older is wanting to make sure that I model and help them have a healthy relationship with food and with their bodies. And, like, I love that you mentioned, you know, of course, you still eat pasta, but it's not a huge amount. And I'm just curious how you have done that with Jade throughout her life of helping her to build and to have all those healthy parts of the Italian culture and a healthy relationship with food.

Giada: Well, I will say this, it was much easier when she was younger. When she was younger, I had more control over what she ate and how she ate it. I did from a very young age make sure that Jade, when she ate her meals, was seated even if it was at her high chair, and we would talk, and we would play, and I would make it really fun for her. I never forced her to eat things that she didn't want to eat. I tried to recreate those things and make them in different ways until she started to enjoy them. So I tried not to make food an

obsession for her. But I definitely wouldn't allow her to run around the house eating. I really wanted her from a very young age to understand that we eat sitting down, and we talk, and we're together, and it's fun, and it's laughing. That's what a meal is about. You know, so she never started with those, sort of, other notions.

And then as she grew older, it's been a little bit more difficult because once sugar was introduced into her life as a preschooler, you know, it's like she had seen God. It was difficult to keep her from understanding that too much sugar really hurts. As she's been growing up, I have allowed her to indulge in certain things that then caused either, you know, some kind of constipation or stomach aches or, you know, things of that nature. I have allowed her to, sort of, hit her wall, so that she could understand what that felt like, so that she could understand how her body dealt with it, instead of just, mom always telling me, within reason, of course. So that has helped a little. Now, as she's gotten older, you know, I focus less on don't eat too much pasta, whatever. I let her eat whatever she wants but I focus more on her relationship with the things she's eating because, like you said, this age is difficult. This is the time where the love of food changes, the relationship changes. They hear their friends say certain things.

She has friends who tell her, you know, "I'm not gonna eat for a few days because that way, I'm gonna fit into a pair of jeans that's smaller, or I'm gonna look like this TikTok star, or I'm gonna do this, or I'm gonna do that." And luckily, we have a great relationship so she shares those things but it's heartbreaking to hear. So I try to talk to Jade a lot about, you know, "Why do you think they say that? And how do you feel about it?" And, you know, I watch how she looks at herself in the mirror. I watch what things she wants to buy and how she, sort of, relates to herself. And I think that this pandemic has given me a gift in the sense that I've been able to be home more to really watch that evolve. I'm not sure that I would have been able to...I thought I knew so much about my daughter but the pandemic has taught me that I really only knew the tip of the iceberg.

And I've really been able to delve into talking about things and sharing stories. And I've shared stories from my past to really help her as much as I possibly can because obviously we can't protect them from everything, allow her to have a positive experience with food and her body, and to love herself for who she is. But it's difficult, especially with as much social media and as much, you know, stuff that's thrown at these young girls at such a young age. But I think it's a journey she's gonna have to go on. I'm just, kind of, trying to hold her hand and guide her as much as I can and let her know that I've been through it too. And the more we talk about it, maybe the easier it will be.

Katie: Yeah, those conversations are so important. And I think, like you said, to the degree that we can to model it, but also to be honest about the fact that if it's been hard for us as well, like, certainly I've had body issues that I took years and years to work through, and being honest and vulnerable. So, hopefully, they can learn from us. And it's been fun to watch my girls as well. I wasn't as into sports as they are, but for them in pole vaulting to see how they view their body as really cool machines that can do cool things. And so they're less focused, at least right now, on just the looks side, which I think is a tremendous gift. But you're right, society tells them and puts so much pressure on them of how they're supposed to look, and act, and move. And I think we do have to be so proactive as parents to just, kind of, counteract that and to give them a healthy foundation.

I think part of that also, like you mentioned earlier, goes back to that connection with food and knowing where it comes from, and seeing it prepared, and then having that shared experience together, even if it's just that's the only touch point of the day, but coming together to eat, which then also gives us those times for conversations. And so it seems like in my house, at least that's when the teenagers are most likely to open up is when they're eating. So...

Giada: Yeah, for sure, and allowing them to be part of what they're eating. So, I, from a young age, have always asked Jade to pick a dish that she likes. And, you know, as the years have gone by and now as she begins her teenage years, she looks at TikTok and she's like, "Oh, this TikToker made this. Let's make this together, Mom." And that allows us also to bond and have food discussions. And I think that...You know, I've taken Jade over the years to farmers' markets, even when she didn't want to, all over the world and allowed her to, kind of, see where the food comes from. We've gone to farms, and we have had those gifts for us that we've been able to do that. But really allowing Jade to see where food comes from, and how it's grown, and picking it, and understanding it, and making her a part of our daily meals, and allowing her to choose what she wants to eat.

And sometimes she says she wants to eat, you know, pasta twice a day. I look at her and I'm like, "But why? Like, what else...? Why do we even wanna eat that twice? Once a day is plenty. Pick the day...You know, pick the meal you wanna eat it at. If it's lunch, great. If it's dinner, that's fine. But we're not gonna eat pasta two, three times a day, it doesn't work that way, or sugar. And, you know, starting your day with sugar is not a good idea. If you wanna do that on a special occasion, awesome. But we can't do that on a regular basis. And this is why." And, you know, she goes to a friend's house, she does exactly the opposite of what I've said. And she comes home and she's like, "Okay, Mom, I don't feel very good. And I can understand now what you're saying. My body really doesn't like it that way." So I think part of it is guiding them and showing them, and part of it is letting them, sort of, go on their own journey and having the ability to come back and sharing it with you.

And I don't criticize. You know, I just, sort of, lend an ear and listen. And that's it. And so, I think that's part of it as well. I try not to say, "I told you so." I try. Sometimes I do because none of us are perfect, but I certainly try. And modeling, like you said, is really important. So I make very conscious choices when I'm around Jade as to what I'm eating and how much I'm eating. And, you know, that we all eat it together as a family, and also making her spend time with her grandparents, and her cousins, and her aunts and uncles, even if, you know, as they get older, this teenage time, they don't really want...they wanna hang out with their friends, not their family, making her understand that it's really important to be with your family. It really, really is, and watching them, and building that sense of community for her, especially because she's an only child.

Katie: Yeah, that's a great point as far as, like, not judging the food either. I have people ask me that, like, "Oh, your Wellness Mama, like, you must never let your kids eat sugar in food." And I'm like, "Oh, absolutely not." The way I see it in my house, it's my responsibility to make sure there's always nourishing food. And so the things I tend to cook tend to line up with how we normally eat at home. But certainly, especially when they start getting to those ages but even before that, like, I'm responsible for making food and they're responsible

for eating when they're hungry. If they're somewhere else, it's not my decision or my responsibility to choose what foods they eat. They've learned more from eating foods they wouldn't normally eat and going, "Oh, I don't feel good," than I could have ever taught them by trying to control what they ate. I think the natural lessons are really important. And as they get older, they become more and more independent. And that's something important for us to respect but also just to be there, like you said, to ask the questions and to be an example too.

Giada: Yeah and to chat it through, to talk it through. I do think letting go of control is probably a big lesson, as well as patience for ourselves, you know, and for our kids. I think there are days where I'm upset with myself because I either had too much sugar or I had, you know, an extra drink or something. And in the beginning, I would make myself so anxious and upset, and think, "Oh my God, now I've, sort of, poisoned my gut and I'm gonna end up with a sinus infection the minute I travel because, you know, my immune system was so fragile at the time. And then I, over time, started to realize, okay, that anxiety is seriously gonna cause me to have a sinus infection. It was just one day, and the next day, you make it better. You know, you drink more water. You be more mindful of the things that you're putting in your body.

And that's why in my book, I have a three-day reboot because when I know that when I'm traveling and working, it's very difficult for me to stay eating super clean. It's tough. So, I let myself eat whatever I want. And, you know, I do whatever comes naturally and whatever I'm craving. And if it was an extra bite of that brownie, or if it was a couple more cookies, or it was an extra drink, or it was a larger plate of pasta, whatever it might be, okay, or a giant cheese plate, any of those things, then I come home and I do my reboot, which isn't liquids. It's not a liquid diet. It's a whole food diet. And I wouldn't even call it a diet. It's just a few days of eating a little lighter for my gut, and for my stomach, and my digestion, and my immunity, all of it. And really feeding it, making my own chicken broth, cooking in batches, brown rice, lentils, quinoa, lots of greens, different leafy greens, cruciferous greens, and eating, you know, from a plentiful color of the rainbow, orange fruits and vegetables.

And then taking it easy on the fats and the sugar. No sugar, no alcohol during that time, very minimal amounts of gluten, but really no gluten. I substitute with brown rice, or lentils, or quinoa. Lots of chicken broths that I make myself or vegetable broths because those are really soothing, and lots of liquids. But I still eat normal food. And I think that that's really helped me to find peace within myself, and allow myself a break, and remove some of that or at least meet the anxiety so that it doesn't overpower me when I don't do what I think I'm supposed to do. And that's, kind of, what I've been teaching Jade along the way as well.

Katie: Yeah. Oh, and to your point, you know, guilt and stress are some of the worst things you can put in your body. So if your food is causing that, let go of those before you let go of the foods entirely. Figure out a healthy relationship.

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gum, or gram of stevia. I love adding the vanilla flavor to a smoothie with some berries for an easy meal (and my kids love it too). The Peanut Butter blended with some cacao and macadamia milk makes a great protein-packed afternoon pick me up. If you haven't tried Four Sigmatic, I also love their lion's mane coffee in the morning and reishi packets at night! Go to foursigmatic.com/wellnessmama and code wellnessmama gives 10% off

This episode is brought to you by Wellnesse. That's Wellnesse with an E on the end. We make personal care products that go above and beyond just non-toxic to actually be beneficial for you from the outside in. I realized years ago that even some of my most naturally minded friends and family members who made an effort to eat organic food and be really cognizant of what they brought into their homes were still using certain personal care products, mainly hair care and oral care. And the reason was, they weren't willing to sacrifice how they looked and felt just to use natural products. And none of the natural products they were finding really lived up to the conventional products as far as how effective they were. So, I resolved to change this and realized I had things that I've been making in my kitchen for years that worked just as well and that I could share with other families, and thus Wellnesse was born. You've probably heard that what goes on our body gets into our body and that many of the chemicals we encounter end up in our bloodstream. To me, this means non-toxic and safe should be the absolute bare minimum baseline for any products that are in our lives. But I wanted to take it a step further. I wanted it to use this to our advantage to actually put beneficial ingredients in our hair care, toothpaste, personal care products so that we could benefit our body from the outside in. Why not use that wonderful skin barrier to our advantage? Our hair care is packed with ingredients like nettle, which helps hair get thicker over time. Our dry shampoo has scalp promoting products that really help follicles stay strong. And our toothpaste, for instance, has a naturally occurring mineral called hydroxyapatite, which is the exact formulation or exact mineral that's on our teeth that's present in strong enamel. So they're all designed to work with the body, not against it to help you have stronger, healthier hair and teeth. We now have a hand sanitizer that doesn't dry out your hands like many hand sanitizers do. I would be honored if you would check it out and I would love to hear your feedback. You can find all of our products at wellnesse.com.

So, I'm so curious, I hope you're okay with me asking a somewhat personal question, but you have this outward-facing brand where you cook these incredible, gorgeous foods all the time. I'm so curious what life at home is like and if that's what normal mealtimes look like, or do you ever just have days where you cook something that's frozen and, like, you know, hang out with your daughter and not cook?

Giada: I don't cook things that are frozen unless I've defrosted a piece of fish or something like that. I don't buy or make frozen meals. I don't do that. I have actually never done that. I'm sure my daughter has because her dad is a little different. But I don't do that. And I don't order in fast food either. Those are two things we don't do. But having said all that, there are nights where, you know, we'll either just make some eggs for dinner or, you know, something very, very, very simple. I will order in pizza, stuff like that, that is, sort of, an indulgence for us, or Chinese food, or something that we don't normally eat. And it isn't always relatively healthy. Like, we order in hamburgers, but just not from a fast food joint. It's just a hamburger from, like, a restaurant and french fries. Like, we do eat those things.

And those are, sort of, the nights that, you know, a lot of times Jade calls a special mommy and me, girls night as she likes to call it these days. And we make popcorn or Jade loves microwavable popcorn, so we do do that and we add some chocolate chips to it. And sometimes, Katie, I'll make some plain pasta, which Jade loves, and this is gonna sound gross to you, but a little bit of cooked plain pasta and a little bit of Nutella mixed in. I know. But we do love that. So that's our version of ordering McDonald's or, you know, frozen meals. So, that's, sort of, the extent of it, but no, I don't do just straight frozen meals. I didn't grow up that way I guess.

Katie: That's good to know. And I've never heard of the Nutella and pasta trick but...

Giada: No, it's the same as Nutella on bread, right? Because pasta is basically a plain starch unless you add flavoring to it. So, we just like it. We melt it in and then we eat it in front of the TV, followed by microwavable popcorn or just plain popcorn.

Katie: Oh, that's awesome to know that you have the days where it's not as hard and not as detailed as well, makes me feel better.

Giada: Oh, absolutely. Yes, absolutely. And you know, even when I am cooking, I don't always make it look quite as beautiful. In fact, Jade will complain sometimes. She's like, "Wait, isn't that in your book?" And I said, "Yeah." She's like, "Well, the picture doesn't match what you just put on my plate, Mom." So there are moments where, you know, I don't take the...I'm not quite as detail-oriented. But I definitely cook a lot. But for me, personally, cooking, to me, is part of my meditation. It's part of my de-stressing. It always has been even as a young child. So, the feel, the touch, when I'm not in front of the camera and cooking, I tune out. I'm in my zen moment, I'm doing a ballet dance in the kitchen. For me, that is very soothing. And I realize that's not the case for, you know, other people. But I really do love it. The only part I don't love is the dishes. But other than that, I do love it.

Katie: I'm with you on that. I feel the same way about cooking and yeah, if the dishes could just wash themselves, it would...

Giada: Yes, that would be fantastic.

Katie: Well, as we get near the end of our time, another somewhat unrelated question I love to ask, and I'm so curious your answer, is if there's a book or a number of books that have had a profound influence on your life, and if so, what they are and why?

Giada: I think that Julia Child had a profound influence on my life. You know, I went to Paris to study cooking at Le Cordon Bleu, and she did as well, many, many eons before me. But I think I modeled a lot of my, sort of, relaxed sensibility, television especially, from the way she taught, very relaxed, very easygoing, fun, joking, feeling like you're not really talking to a professional, but just another person who's enjoying cooking. So, I think she has a profound effect. And as for my health journey, you know, Dr. Sara Gottfried, I've read a couple of her books. One of them's called "Younger," the other one's, "The Hormone Diet," all of those are, sort of, trying to nourish myself in all of those, sort of, understanding the female body and how connected it is to everything that we do because I was just so desperate at a certain time because Western medicine just wasn't helping. And so, finding, sort of, people who spoke my language. And so some of those books really helped me to do that.

And then, I think that, for me, personally, my family has really helped me a lot. And when I say both in my life journey, finding myself and understanding my body because as I was going through this, I realized my mother has similar symptoms, my aunt, my sister, like, a lot of us have it. We just never shared it. And I think that's why I say community is so important so you can share information, and you can start to understand the root of it. And I will say that for my food journey, my grandfather and my aunt were a huge, huge part of it. My aunt because she had no children, and so I was like her child when it came to food. We had such a connection. She had such a love for it. And she traveled the world making movies and would bring back food from different cultures, recipes, ingredients, and we'd play with them. And I think that helped root who I am, and what I do, and my sense of community and family. And my grandfather's just influence on me with the stories of our past, and our heritage, and the way that he interacted with food, the touch, the smell, the feel. So more than books, it's storytelling through my family, my friends, and then different doctors.

To be honest, Katie, I read but I'm not as an avid reader as I should be, especially for someone who writes. I should be more of an avid reader. But I never have been. I've been more of someone who relates to things like this, like a podcast or storytelling or interacting and talking to people. So, that's my two cents.

Katie: I love it. And I feel like a perfect place to wrap up considering the theme of this has very much been connection, and family, and learning to listen to yourself and your own journey. So I think that's a perfect ending to a wonderful interview. And I know how busy you are and how busy motherhood is. I'm really appreciative of your time. I love that you are talking about health and wellness now as well. I think you'll be inspiring to so many people and thank you for all the work you've done.

Giada: Oh, thank you, Katie. Thank you for taking the time today.

Katie: And thank you guys as always for listening, for sharing your most valuable assets, your time and your energy, with both of us today. We're so grateful that you did, and I hope that you'll join me again on the next episode of the "Wellness Mama" podcast.

If you're enjoying these interviews, would you please take two minutes to leave a rating or review on iTunes for me? Doing this helps more people to find the podcast, which means even more moms and families could benefit from the information. I really appreciate your time, and thanks as always for listening.