

Missy Singer DuMars [00:00:00]:

Hello, and welcome to another episode of Women in Food. I'm your hostess, Missy Singer Dumars. This podcast is all about the intersection of 3 things, food, business, and the feminine. Each episode, I invite you to sit down with me and my interview guest as we dive into this intersection to spark your food, curiosity, share a favorite recipe, and give you some fun food explorations along the way. I'm fired by these women, farmers, chefs, bakers, cooks, writers, and food makers, who all bring their passion for beauty, nourishment, community, pleasure, connection and deep care to others through food. These are women who advocate and take action towards increased food awareness for themselves, their families, and their neighborhoods. Before I introduce today's guest, I have 1 request. If you could, go over to Itunes or whatever app you're using to listen and give us a rating and review.

Missy Singer DuMars [00:00:52]:

It's a simple act that helps other people find the show. Thank you so much. So today, I am really happy to introduce to you, Christy Knowles. This powerhouse of a woman started her career in food working in the S and P five 100 corporate food world for many years, leading the way, developing brands, and successfully growing business. Most recently, she leads the Mother Raw brand as its CEO taking the business from approximately 300 retail locations to over 8,000 and counting across North America. You'll hear her story with Mother Raw as it's really interesting picking up from the founder in a way that can both sustain growth while also maintaining the core ethos and values of the company. With a lifelong passion for health and wellness combined with a commitment to promote healthier relationships with food, This seasoned executive and busy mom still finds a way to what she calls lead with heart, balancing good business sense with what speaks to her spirit. Having said all of that, I am thrilled to dive into this discussion to talk food, business, and the feminine.

Missy Singer DuMars [00:02:00]:

Christy, Welcome to Women in Food. I am so honored and so happy to have you join us today.

Kristi Knowles [00:02:06]:

Thank you. I could not be more excited to start my day having An engaging conversation with another female powerhouse about, all things food, business, and feminine.

Missy Singer DuMars [00:02:17]:

Yeah. Totally. So I'm We're gonna go all the way back to the beginning of life as you know it. I wanna get to mother raw. I wanna get to all your stories about food and everything, but, Really, I I always love to start with kind of the question of, like, where your passion and interest in food started. Like, what are your early childhood memories of food.

Kristi Knowles [00:02:42]:

Oh, yeah. So my mom Didn't you know, she wasn't a collector of anything except Gourmet Magazine, you know, in the olden days when you actually had the opportunity to finger through magazines. And so she she would, you know, collect these Gourmet magazines. And I was drawn to them at a very young age and would Lose myself in reading about the recipes, about

the origin of food. And I remember back in, I think it was, like, grade 6 being asked to put together a presentation on what, you you know, what people what we wanted to do as grown ups. And I did a scrapbook, all about becoming a chef, and I remember going into my mom's Spice drawer and using, saran wrap to wrap little bits of the spices and to glue them to the pages of this scrapbook and describe what they were, their origin, and, what I would use them in.

Missy Singer DuMars [00:03:51]:

I feel like that's an early sign to welcome with mother raw going back to seasonings and flavoring.

Kristi Knowles [00:03:58]:

Yeah. Exactly. Isn't that wild how I find myself in a business today where that is what we do. We add flavor, you know, to to plants, basically.

Missy Singer DuMars [00:04:08]:

Yeah. I feel like you You might still have somewhere in your office a flavor journal with little Saran wraps of spices and compost that you wanna try.

Kristi Knowles [00:04:18]:

Yeah. So it, you know, it started then, and then, and then I I was just always, you know, very just interested in culinary, and I I had pretty pretty good taste buds. You know? I could describe food maybe a little bit differently, more accurately than other people my my age. And then, of course, my 1st career, ended up being, In food with, Unilever, the big company, Unilever.

Missy Singer DuMars [00:04:50]:

Yeah. What did you do for them?

Kristi Knowles [00:04:54]:

So I started out, right out of university in their marketing department Where I was responsible for, a brand called At the time, it was called Lipton side dishes, and now it's called Lipton, Knorr sidekicks. And they're basically side dishes of noodles, potatoes, rice, those types of those those types of things that are really convenient, and, accessible to to, to most people. So, yeah, got my hands right in right into it with that With that job.

Missy Singer DuMars [00:05:35]:

I I'm so curious about, like, having a a passion for cooking, wanting, As a little girl wanting to be a chef and then, like like, jumping into a more corporate, manufactured scale of food, like, I don't even know the question, but it's like, how Out of those 2 things, how does how did how did you make that jump? How do you make that jump from, like, loving to taste foods and cooked foods to that kind of corporate scale?

Kristi Knowles [00:06:10]:

Well, you know, that that time, my drive, coming through university, I was, you know, a business student, And, my drive is really to get into a marketing role, doing something that I enjoy. Like, for example, I wasn't keen on marketing in a, you know, financial institute, for example. That would not have interested me, but marketing food, bringing sort of my my my business, I I'm not gonna say business passion because at that time, I didn't I hadn't even run a business or been in a business, but my interest in business, specifically marketing and pairing that with something that I liked, which was food. So, to me, that just seemed like a great place to start to bring the 2 things together.

Missy Singer DuMars [00:06:58]:

Yeah. And I'm curious, you know, I get to talk to a lot of people and women in food businesses and especially farmers, but I think also chefs and other types of businesses. They hate the business part. They loathe it. They avoid it. And so I'm kind of curious, do you have any like little I mean, it seems like one thing for you to I mean, you naturally Enjoy business, but another thing is to bring business to other passions you have. But do you have any tips or advice on how to embrace the sales, the marketing, the business side of food for someone who that may be more repelled by it.

Kristi Knowles [00:07:43]:

Yeah. I mean, at the end of the day, this the skill set, you know, is very different. As much as I am Interested in in food and the origin of food, and, I don't think I would necessarily make a great chef. And, I mean, I I love I like to I love to cook when I have the time, and I love to cook for others. I again, like, I've got cookbooks that I just love losing myself in, But at the end of the day, I think that, you know, I I came at it as a businessperson first, and I was I had the skill set to do that Or at least I thought I did, you know, coming out of business school. And and They are you know? It's they are 2 different skill sets.

Missy Singer DuMars [00:08:35]:

Yeah. They are. And, as my listeners know, I coach a number of businesses and there is, who are service based businesses, which a lot of food businesses are service based businesses like shopping. And, a mentor once said to me or said to a group of us a lot of years ago that it's it's a shift from being a service provider that has a business to being a business owner that provides a service. Yes. And I think that's that's a good mindset. Now I come to farming the the same way like you're talking about. I come to farming with business background first, and I still and will always feel like farming is a massive learning curve and the business part I could do in my sleep.

Missy Singer DuMars [00:09:22]:

And so Yeah. It's always this question of how how for people that are business avoidant, the truth is is that we all have to interact and talk to people and share what we do. Otherwise, we won't have that business anymore.

Kristi Knowles [00:09:36]:

Yeah. Well, I think, You know, I think what you do in terms of mentoring and providing guidance, I I think the smartest thing that you know, in my case, Let's look look at it from the

reverse. So I run a food company. That food needs to get those recipes need to be developed somewhere, So I have to rely on the expertise of an of the person that, you know, we've hired to work with us specifically for that that task because they are the experts. So the first thing that I did when I started with this company is I hired The recipe developer. Because I knew that I couldn't do that by myself. Now if the the in the opposite, If it's you're a chef, knowing the first step is knowing that you may need help, right, on the business side. Mhmm.

Kristi Knowles [00:10:30]:

And while There may not be the means, you know, to to hire somebody, certainly, to have somebody as an adviser or a mentor paid or in kind or for free, depending on, you know, what what your network is like. I think it's just essential. Knowing what you don't know And asking for help is is the first step.

Missy Singer DuMars [00:10:54]:

Well, I think that's a great first step and and key piece, to mention because the vision and, plan that you have in mind is way bigger than you in a lot of ways. And I think those of us who are visionaries, I have the same, I guess, good problem. We have visions that are way bigger than just us, and there has to be a point where we get help. And it's I love what you said. Like, the first Thing you did was hire a recipe developer. That was like a key piece. And so thinking through what are what is essential to your business, whether it's a small private chef business or a large corporation, what is essential, and, you know, what's the best help to or support to do that, and there are so many ways. I so love that you mentioned, you know, even if you're a small business or you don't have the means to hire a full time person.

Missy Singer DuMars [00:11:52]:

I can't tell you the countless ways I've found volunteers, trades, you know, agreements of, you know, equity later down the line, partnership, collaboration. There's so many ways to, garner support and help and mentorship, until you can hire that person, if that's what you wanna do.

Kristi Knowles [00:12:17]:

Exactly. And, I mean, I would say that in my current, you know, my current situation, which is a much smaller business than, You know, the Unilevers of the world. I think one of the most important unlocks, has been growing my network and leaning into that network. I honestly never really needed to do that before. You know, I had jobs at big companies. My network was the company plus my external partners through the company, company, like agencies or what have you. And so the the big shit a big shift in Where I needed to focus my energies was in building that network and giving Back to that network and also receiving from that network. And that's been immensely helpful, very and time consuming And not always successful.

Kristi Knowles [00:13:20]:

Right? It takes time to to invest in that in that, but at the end of the day, It really has been my network that's helped me make decisions, that I otherwise, would have Taken much longer or been much more difficult.

Missy Singer DuMars [00:13:37]:

Let's I wanna dig into this. This is a super important topic. I think you and I are maybe more natural network builders. I know I certainly am, and I forget or I don't always know how to break down how to do that because it's so natural to me. So when you say growing your network through giving and receiving, say more. Like, For someone who's like, well, how do I do that? I don't know anyone. I'm new in this area. You know, whatever.

Missy Singer DuMars [00:14:02]:

I don't have a network. Like, where does where does someone start building a network in your opinion.

Kristi Knowles [00:14:09]:

Well, I I can tell you where kind of how I started, if that Mhmm.

Missy Singer DuMars [00:14:14]:

That absolutely helps.

Kristi Knowles [00:14:17]:

So Mother Raw, plant based, organic, you know, small growing business, entrepreneurial, natural food space was sort of where the brand started, and that area was fairly new to me. I mean, my last job my last job before joining, and building Mother Raw was with beverage company, known in the US as MillerCoors.

Missy Singer DuMars [00:14:46]:

So Definitely different.

Kristi Knowles [00:14:48]:

Right? Very different. And so the the 1st place I started it was just doing a lot of reading, like, literally, you know, googling different brands, different publications, different media. You know, I I think about Nosh and VegNews and just these different Different publications, I'll call them, whether they're digital and or physical, looking at some upcoming events, like, just Just googling, you know, plant based industry, organic industry, and seeing, you know, oh, these are the brands. Oh, these are the names of the people being, you know, that that that are are credited within within those publications. Let me look at them at LinkedIn. Let me see if there's, you know, 2 degrees of separation, 1 degree of separation. Hey. I really wanna meet these people this this person.

Kristi Knowles [00:15:42]:

I would reach out to my existing network if I saw them within so I use LinkedIn a lot, to see if, you know, there's any degrees of separation. And then, you know, I I went to an event called the Reducitarian Summit. Mhmm. And it was the 1st event of the Reducitarian Summit. It's very interesting. And I I it's I'm actually an introvert. It's difficult for me to go and introduce myself to people. I honestly I had no I, like, I had no choice.

Kristi Knowles [00:16:19]:

I've gotta do this if I'm gonna build this business, if this is going to have, You know, a chance to to to do what we believe it can do, I I just have to find a way. And I went up to people, and I literally, it's almost like a a shifting of my mindset to I'm on. Okay. I'm on. Let's go. I've always sort of been like that. I love public speaking, but only when I'm like I've got the opportunity to turn it on because I didn't like it before, but I've learned to love it. And this notion in my mind that like, my mindset just going to I'm turning it on.

Kristi Knowles [00:16:56]:

I'm going in there. I have something to give. They have something I I have something to give, and perhaps they'll have something to give. And I just I just started making introductions, I remember at that at that summit, and I was alone there. Most people were there with, you know, groups of people, and I I just did it.

Missy Singer DuMars [00:17:14]:

Yeah. You know, I, this is a this is a rich, great piece of discussion because I know a lot of people, especially farmers. They're they're farmers because they're introverted. Yeah. And they don't wanna talk to a lot of people. A lot Chefs too. They, you know, just wanna be in their kitchen and not deal with the public and things like that. And I found I love networking events.

Missy Singer DuMars [00:17:35]:

I have both introverted and extroverted streaks in me. But I found to get through it because I I'm not always comfortable in conversations or starting conversations that I pay attention and find 1 or 2 or 2 or 3 people who I'm just, for whatever reason, and maybe I don't even know yet, I'm drawn to, and, seek them out. So instead of feeling like I have to connect with Every single person possible in the room of, you know, a 100, 250, what, 40, whatever people. Like, who are the people that intrigued me somehow? Let me go talk to them and Maybe just tell them, like, I was drawn to you. I don't know why. Let's have a conversation and figure out. There's probably some way that, you know, we could support each other. And, you know, that simple question usually opens a conversation.

Missy Singer DuMars [00:18:23]:

And, in fact, for my listeners, one of my early interviews with Alison Dehoney Started our relationship started exactly like that. The 1st networking event I went to when I moved to this area, not knowing any farmers and Just, I, I think I shared the story in this episode, but I, she and I, I noticed she had a computer, I had a computer, and we were asking all the questions in this presentation and no one else really was. And I was like, okay. There's a smart woman. I gotta know who she is or what what's up with her. And and she and I were both off also the people asking questions about organic and unusual vegetables and, like, culturally appropriate vegetables and things like that. And so I went up to her, and I didn't know anything about her. I was just like, I, you know, I noticed you asked a lot of similar question.

Missy Singer DuMars [00:19:06]:

We were both asking kind of the same questions. I'd love to get to know you more and see how we can support each other. And to this day, she Reminds me that the way I said that, how we can support each other Yes.

Kristi Knowles [00:19:18]:
Spread it

Missy Singer DuMars [00:19:18]:
out to her. Not like, what can I get from her or what do I want from her, but how can we we're together to say, you know, in fact, I actually really need manure and compost for our urban gardens? Do you have any ideas? I'm like, my neighbor just told me across the Down in the country that he's got tons of, aged manure and compost, and maybe we can make that happen. And that relationship is now multiple years long, and he's now introduced her to other people that help her out. And she and I try and find time to have dinner or brunch at least once a year and connect, and I sell eggs to her for her, customers in the city and all kinds of things. But that I always found just picking 1 or 2 people that really draw you even if you don't know why, and introducing yourself is a good way to start.

Kristi Knowles [00:20:04]:
Yeah. I I agree. You know? I I think back to so does it let's say, kindred spirits that I've met along this natural Food sort of journey that I've been on with Mother Raw, and it's true like, I I think about some of the events that I've been to where, You know, we're all at trade shows, you know, selling our stuff, right, to buy it. And you're all hustling at your booth telling your story. And as I walk around, to to to see what others are up to, you know, introducing yourself Because you're in a like environment doing a like thing, and finding those few kindred spirits, You know, can make all the difference in the world. And as I'm just thinking, most of those kindred spirits that I've met have been female, is quite interesting.

Missy Singer DuMars [00:20:58]:
I hadn't thought of that. Not surprising, honestly. And I was gonna say that, you know, I think it's good to remember in our like, the the food to me, the food food business, food industry, everything about food is Apparently a very, feminine oriented thing in a lot of ways. We, as women, I mean, our bodies are designed to feed people directly from the 1st food many most humans have. And, You know? So there's something really inherently feminine in food. But also, like, food, relationships and the feminine all seem to flow together. Like, I I think any of us who think of fond memories of food or fond associations with food, it's food in togetherness with other people or food that someone made us. And, Just even us with our own plate, being in relationship to food and where it came from and, and how it, How it got there is is a key piece.

Missy Singer DuMars [00:22:07]:
So it's not surprising that within food circles, you would find lots of amazing women. Mhmm. Mhmm. So I wanna get to how, like, the the transition from corporate, large scale food, to mother raw. Tell us how that happened.

Kristi Knowles [00:22:29]:

Yeah. Well, it's these stories Never are a straight line, and it certainly wasn't in in this case. So I had, I had left the corporate world, and was on a journey to figure out how to, Yeah. What I was gonna do next. And I I was pretty burnt out from, you know, 25 plus years of of big corporate, big jobs. And I I felt a little bit, rudderless and, A little soulless, I think. And, so I wasn't in a rush to find to find something. I I was taking some time and, figuring out a little bit around my volunteerism, what approach I wanted to take there, and so I wasn't in a in a rush to get a job.

Kristi Knowles [00:23:27]:

And then I was approached by a venture capital, group Who had just invested in this, you know, very small, company called Raw Foods. So, Raw Foods was started by a woman of the name Michelle Kauffman As are many of these, you know, small businesses, she started selling her dressings, at farmers markets, and her whole, reason, you know, drive behind this brand Was you know, this answering the question, why can't your salad dressing be as healthy as your salad? For those who don't know, salad dressings bought in the store are generally made with highly refined oils and, other sort of lab created, ingredients, And Michelle was a holistic nutritionist or at least she she that was the path that she was on, And she was just, you know, frustrated with this. So she, she had started this company and had got it into about 300, 350 stores within, The local area. And given that the proposition for her business was so this idea of it's organic. It's It's it's whole ingredients, you know, tasty, all these things. The this in this venture firm, invested in it, and they came to me and asked me if I would Be interested in just helping them maybe refine the proposition, figure out how to, from my experience, Get it showtime ready

Missy Singer DuMars [00:25:18]:

for

Kristi Knowles [00:25:19]:

a larger audience, etcetera. So to be honest, I wasn't that Keen in the beginning because what I was looking for was a role what I where I would have direct impact on You know, really direct impact on the decision decision making. And as a consultant, you don't have that. In fact, it's kind of the opposite. So I was like, I don't know if I really wanna, you know, do that. But, anyway, you know, the proposition was interesting. The team that they had put together was With the sales head of sales, head of operations were fantastic, so I did it. I started to to help with the, With sort of the the the business model and and the brand brand side of things.

Kristi Knowles [00:26:03]:

But then within a a couple of months, Michelle passed away. And, as the founder, you know, she was in her forties, Devastating, full stop. And then from a business perspective, when your founder is sort of that beacon of light, right, that guides everything, it's it's just pretty pretty tough to pick up and keep going. And, and so I was you know? And through that through that very challenging time, I agreed to stay on as a full time management, member, and to take the

vision, and to let's, Like, get it let's get it showtime ready for a broader audience, and, and that's what we've done.

Missy Singer DuMars [00:26:59]:
Quite successfully.

Kristi Knowles [00:27:00]:
Yeah. Yeah. Never a straight line. Right?

Missy Singer DuMars [00:27:03]:
Never a straight line. Oh my god. I have a 100 questions. Okay. 1st fun question. Ready for a fun question?

Kristi Knowles [00:27:09]:
Woo hoo. Fun.

Missy Singer DuMars [00:27:10]:
What was your favorite dressing flavor before mother raw, and what is it now?

Kristi Knowles [00:27:16]:
Oh, I like that. Okay. Before Go to Raw, it was like a classic lemon garlic, olive oil

Missy Singer DuMars [00:27:24]:
Mix.

Kristi Knowles [00:27:25]:
Yeah. Maybe a little honey for sweetness. Mhmm. Now oh, it's so hard to say the favorite, Because it depends on what I'm, you know, what I'm making. But I would say our roasted garlic Caesar is the bomb. So good.

Missy Singer DuMars [00:27:43]:
And you're gonna actually, I think, you use that in the recipe you're gonna share with us later. Right? Yes. Yeah, yeah, which we'll get to. We'll get into food geekery. I promise. I promise. But I I love the business geekery too.

Kristi Knowles [00:27:59]:
I have to say that, you know, that's my favorite, but I think Mediterranean is probably the The the most sophisticated from a flavor profile, and it's so flavorful that whether you roast with it, you know, you marinate, It's, like, super versatile and delicious as well with sun dried tomatoes and calamari, olives. Quite. Wow.

Missy Singer DuMars [00:28:27]:

That is a very, very complex flavor of both those together in a in a form. Exactly. There's so many sorry. My brain just exploded with ideas. That's what happens when I hear about a thing. I'm like, oh, You could do this. You could do that.

Kristi Knowles [00:28:47]:

Well, so just well, let's

Missy Singer DuMars [00:28:48]:

go back a minute. Tell us the basics of what Mother Raw is because our listeners may not know. Like, what do you guys do? What do you make? Obviously, we know it's dressings and marinades of some kind. We know it's raw. Tell us a little bit. Give us give us the spiel, the basics of Mother Raw.

Kristi Knowles [00:29:02]:

Sure. Okay. So Mother Raw is an organic plant based whole Whole food ingredient brand of salad dressings and marinades, dips, and condiments, newest entry. And we're simply on a mission to encourage more people to eat, more plants by making it super easy, convenient, and delicious.

Missy Singer DuMars [00:29:26]:

I love it. I love it. And what's the mission?

Kristi Knowles [00:29:32]:

Oh, Of course. You didn't say that. Oh, I know. How terrible. Oh my goodness. Our mission is to put good on good.

Missy Singer DuMars [00:29:41]:

I love that. I love that. I had to I had to ask. I had to ask. And just for my listeners, I have to say I was looking at the products and ingredients lists, which is what I go to first cause I use very few already packaged things like that. And I was blown away at the level of quality and whole ingredients that are in your products. Because

Kristi Knowles [00:30:03]:

Thank you.

Missy Singer DuMars [00:30:03]:

That's hard to find. It's hard to find. I tend to do you ever still, Now that you have access to Mother Raw, do you ever still make your own dressings or marinades?

Kristi Knowles [00:30:14]:

No. I don't because what I would normally do,

Missy Singer DuMars [00:30:20]:

you know, sort of be there.

Kristi Knowles [00:30:22]:

It's there, and it's it's even more Complex than I might spend the time doing. You know? Right. So I don't really see the Point, and it I don't know. It doesn't feel like a cheat because, you know, I've been part of making them too. So

Missy Singer DuMars [00:30:38]:

Right. That's true. Well, in a moment, I wanna talk more about how this path has led you back to having direct impact, bringing your voice forward, we're gonna talk about recipes, which we hinted at, but before we do that, I wanna take a quick break and share a bit more about how women in food is supported. As my listeners know, I care a lot about food and land, and this includes the success of food and land based businesses. I believe that sustainability goes beyond the land to how we grow ourselves and our business at the same time. I've noticed that many folks in the food and land space have fantastic concepts, strong passion, and deep care, but still struggle to market and run their business in ways that can make the impact they envision while also providing for themselves at the same time, and this is what we've been talking about so far. I always say that most farmers I know are great farmers, but dread or avoid sales and marketing. And I'm the other way around.

Missy Singer DuMars [00:31:38]:

Farming is my learning curve, but I know business really well. Besides hosting this podcast and running my farm, I'm a business coach having coached hundreds of entrepreneurs from across the world in a range of industries to mindfully grow their business. So if you're listening to this podcast and conversation as a food or land based entrepreneur who's looking to what the next phase of growth for your business is? This kind of coaching could be for you. If you'd like support in this way, You can go to my website to have a 90 minute session with me, and that website is womeninfood.netforward/workwithmissy, m I s says Y, and I'll put the link in the show notes as well. Here's the deal. I want every listener to thrive and particularly land and food businesses to Thrive, because, honestly, I believe that your business, land and food based businesses, success is our future and the future of our planet and humanity. So once again, that's women in food dot net forward slash work with Missy. Our local Yelp Buffalo has also been a wonderful supporter of women in food programming almost since the beginning video series in 2020.

Missy Singer DuMars [00:32:47]:

Did you know that you can search specifically for women owned businesses on Yelp? Support your local women owned businesses by visiting them and writing a Yelp review. Download the Yelp app now and use the filter for women owned businesses. So, Kristy, With that, I wanna get more into I know you've shared with me that besides being burnt out, One of the key things you are aware of that led you to leave the big corporate organizations was feeling like your voice was not heard or appreciated as it could be. And I'm curious to hear more about how that was for you and then how that's changed as you've stepped into mother raw.

Kristi Knowles [00:33:32]:

Yeah. I you know, it's it's Big business, there's so many layers that go into decision making or the opposite, which is actually making a decision, which is not, you know, not not actually making the decision and having Having, initiatives linger. And I think in the end, for me, It was like no matter how I I spent so much time thinking about how to manage the different stakeholders. And in order to get a recommendation, you know, to that next step, I think about, Like, how much energy was okay. I have to I have to bring this person on board and this person on board and this person on board, and I was Fairly senior. I mean, I was I was a senior I was a senior executive myself, but you're still, you know, you're still needing to, bring along with you several different departments and parts of the organization in order to move forward. And At the time, part of my role was running innovation, and, we had a you know, my group had a very clear vision of Non beer innovation within a beer company. Mhmm.

Kristi Knowles [00:34:57]:

Beer was declining. Nonalcohol drinks were Growing as were, you know, at the time, other cocktails, let's call them, you know, ready to drink kinda cocktails. And We had a whole plan about how we were going to drive innovation in these areas, and that would be the future. And, You know, after many, many attempts in in a a long time of trying to get a voice for that, just Couldn't. And that's just one example.

Missy Singer DuMars [00:35:29]:

I have to say, like, trying to be a a woman with a voice in a beer company It must be challenging, so think of beer and beer companies as a very masculine led product. Yes.

Kristi Knowles [00:35:44]:

At the top. Yes.

Missy Singer DuMars [00:35:46]:

Yeah. Awesome. And in fact, one of my future guests, we were just talking about that because she has a bar for women, and we're talking about what kind of drinks and things are are the top sellers. And I was surprised at the answer. I'm not gonna say it because I wanna surprise our listeners, but it wasn't what I expected. And, but it was still you know, it was definitely not beer necessarily.

Kristi Knowles [00:36:08]:

Right. Right. So, you know, I was trying to hold this tension between, you know, we're a beer company And declining, and the opportunities in non beer, and here's what a non beer world could look like. And, You know, it just I just didn't get get it done. You know?

Missy Singer DuMars [00:36:33]:

No one would burn you out.

Kristi Knowles [00:36:36]:

Yeah. You know, that was just part of the job, but that that was sort of the like, oh my god. And then to see now, you see non drinks just exploding, and you see nonbeer ready to drink

Cocktails and all these other things, like, exploding. And, man, you know, I thank god if we just taken some risks. You know? And if I could just have gotten, you know, some traction on that. But there were so many other factors involved. Right? I mean, we're a part of a larger conglomerate. We were going through, you know, a merger. There was massive downsizing.

Kristi Knowles [00:37:24]:

Like, all of these things converged at a time where I was trying to hold the tension of the organization towards the future. Mhmm. While we are very mired in the past and the present. And so, you know, this doesn't land on any one person's shoulders. This wasn't a unique experience within corporate life. It was just my experience.

Missy Singer DuMars [00:37:45]:

Right.

Kristi Knowles [00:37:46]:

And, while I'm super proud of what we did, it just you know, I just didn't have I just didn't want to have to manage all those stakeholders anymore, and I didn't wanna have to spend more of my time figuring out how to influence, internally. I wanted to spend my time my my my time more knowing that it's not a black and white situation here. Like, you always have to influence people. Right? I mean, you just Yeah. Do. But I just felt like that was getting in the way from having an impact, so I think that's what was tiring about it.

Missy Singer DuMars [00:38:24]:

And so what's different now with Mothera?

Kristi Knowles [00:38:28]:

So first of all, we're smaller, so there's fewer stakeholders. I do report to a board of directors. So there is quite a bit of formality within a small organization as a result of that, but my board it is, extremely supportive and helpful. So, you know? So it's smaller, so there's fewer people involved. I'm the CEO. So by definition, I have more of an impact because the big decisions are kind of left well, not left to me, but with me and my management team. And, I kind of you know, I own when it works and when it doesn't. So, you know, I think I think that those kind of things have and and we were starting from scratch.

Kristi Knowles [00:39:24]:

So coming into a big business, my past was with Unilever, with Campbells, and with, MillerCoors in the US. I worked for the Molson Coors business, which was in Canada, but it's all part of MillerCoors now. But, you know, we were smaller too. Right? So I when I started, it was the brand was still called Raw Foods. It was in just over 300 stores, and nobody knew about it. So the ability to impact went to market was, you know, a 100% within within my court and the management team's court.

Missy Singer DuMars [00:40:05]:

Right. So for someone who, a food entrepreneur who does have a product and is working the markets, working there maybe local, regional. What how do you elevate to that next level? Like, what What are some steps or tips that you would share, like or places to begin? Because I know you probably can't say the whole thing because it's a big it's unique and different for every business and big, but, like, where where to start? How what's what's the starting point to step over that line?

Kristi Knowles [00:40:40]:

Yeah. Well, I'll I'll start by saying go in with your go into the food business, Particularly, you know, if you're gonna sell through retail customers, with your eyes wide open, it is a difficult It is a difficult business. It's very expensive. So I'm just gonna start there because I think it's important to know that That that you know, what what you're you're up against. So my my experience Has been having venture capital, so it's a little different. I'll put that on the table right away. Right? I've been able to I came into a situation where there was some venture

Missy Singer DuMars [00:41:22]:

venture venture capital. Right. Right. Right.

Kristi Knowles [00:41:24]:

Right. And then I've been able to raise venture capital. I'm not saying that that's necessary. Like, every, you know, every everybody each individual takes their own approach, but I would say that if you're Starting out, get really, really good in a very sort of focused, Localized way. So what I mean by that is, you know, when if you're if you're a let's say your Your product, is a natural food product so that, you know, your consumer is a natural food consumer. If you can Create a successful model with natural food chains first in a local area. Do that. Do it really well.

Kristi Knowles [00:42:14]:

Understand your business upside down and sideways before Taking that step to say, oh, I'm gonna expand now into you know, let's say I've you know, I'm on the, I'm I'm with customers in the east side, of of the country. I I but there's big volume in natural foods in the On the west side of the country, so I'm gonna go launch in the west. It's a whole new dynamic with freight costs and, Yeah. All these other things. So if I was starting out as the founder of my food business today, I would get really good at doing things on a smaller scale and show that I can be profitable doing that, and that I can grow with, You know, my my my my turns within those stores, and then I would think about what does it look like to get bigger.

Missy Singer DuMars [00:43:07]:

Yeah. I like that. I mean, I've seen that so many times where someone has an idea, and, basically, what you're saying is market test it well.

Kristi Knowles [00:43:17]:

Mhmm.

Missy Singer DuMars [00:43:17]:

Market test it well. And market test it doesn't mean it doesn't go well and you give up. It means you refine and and try again, and refine, and try again. I always love the saying that failure's just feedback.

Kristi Knowles [00:43:31]:

You

Missy Singer DuMars [00:43:31]:

know Yes. Taking taking lessons from the tech industry and and things like that, too, of iterate and get feedback iterate, put it out there, get feedback, iterate, put it out there, get feedback, iterate, etcetera, etcetera, until you have a product that works really well and is the quality you want and everything like that. I also you also said something really key, which was, like, know your consumers. Yeah. And that's very evident with mother raw, the way you talked about Product, when I asked you, you know, tell us more about mother-in-law, it's like, you know who your buyers are. You know who wants that, You know, that particular product really well. You know them inside and outside.

Kristi Knowles [00:44:14]:

I I love your comment about iteration. I think that is so important. And if you're if you're focused on sort of a like, doing that and you're still small scale, it's not expensive, And it's fast, right, to iterate? Yeah. If you're bigger, if you've, you know, expanded across the country and now you try to iterate Change things. It becomes a lot harder and more complex. Mhmm. So we've we've iterated Several times. Several times.

Kristi Knowles [00:44:48]:

It's constant. We're going constant optimization on even the product side where, you know, we get feedback, we adjust. We get feedback, we adjust. Now it gets more complex and expensive, as I said, because now you've got Packaging and now you maybe brought some ingredients that, you know, on a larger scale that now you may not need anymore. Right? So so doing that Really early on, and we I mean, we did do it really on early on, but, you know, as we grow, we learn more. Right? Right. But we have updated our recipes, a few times now based on On on feedback that we get based on our own, you know, experience with the products, Because you have to. Like, every every experience that your consumer has needs to be a positive experience.

Kristi Knowles [00:45:41]:

So how do you get, If you know that it's not quite as positive as it can be, make that your priority to clear you know, to to to take that Step to to iterate, and that could be on the product. That could be on the packaging. Obviously

Missy Singer DuMars [00:45:56]:

I'm just gonna say for the home cook, that applies too. Yes. Like, you make a dish. I mean, I I just as I'm hearing us talk about it, I'm like, that works with chefs and recipes and home cook cooking too. I mean, I I get teased a lot at my table because I very passionate about cooking, and I make something, and I sit down and I eat it, and I'm instantly Already making a list of how

to change it next time or what I would do differently, and they're like, just enjoy it. It's really good. I'm like, oh, I enjoy it totally, and I'm already thinking about, like, how to improve. And how I want it like, I want this part crunchier and this part saltier and, you know, I put too much lemon juice in, and it's too tart or whatever. And, You know? Oh, the texture's not really what I was hoping for.

Missy Singer DuMars [00:46:38]:

How could I change it? You know, that's what I'm thinking all the time, even just for my household and my family. You know? You get feedback from them. They love it. They don't love it. And instead of giving up, it's like, oh, well, how can I change it? How can I make it better? How can I take this feedback and adjust? And so, yeah, I love this. This lesson can apply to the dinner table or huge corporation or anywhere in between.

Kristi Knowles [00:47:01]:

Yeah. Absolutely. Absolutely. And the the other thing, I think, you know, about, That we as we were discussing the importance of, you know, staying sort of small and and iterating and making sure that, You know, it's working is just really understanding their financials. It's so important. Mhmm.

Missy Singer DuMars [00:47:22]:

I

Kristi Knowles [00:47:22]:

think that's an area where People struggle if you haven't had that experience, and, certainly, I have I have experience, and I also have, external, expertise, to help on that because of the scale that we're at now. But, You know, when you're small, you it's pretty straightforward to to to figure out or to get help to figure out sort of your your margins all the way down to Your, you know, your your EBIT. Right? Your your actual how much are you making? Because without that, Your cash flow is always gonna be a problem. So it's just, like, as as painful as it can be To get your head around the the numbers and the profitability today versus what the profitability could look like in 6 months, it's just It's essential.

Missy Singer DuMars [00:48:14]:

And it can be really simple, you know, for any business. I I do so much on paper and pen still.

Kristi Knowles [00:48:21]:

I mean,

Missy Singer DuMars [00:48:21]:

I'll I don't get me wrong. I love a good Excel spreadsheet. I am, like, a huge Excel nerd, but, and everything ends up there eventually. But, when I'm at the county fair, like I just was, it's like my counting each day is with pen and paper in a little notepad that gets carried in a pouch with the, you know, cash and the change, and I do record keep. And then at the end of the 12 days of the fair, the first thing I did was sat down with my bookkeeper. I went over All the notes and

gave it all to him, and he can, you know, translate that into the books. But you know? So it doesn't have to be complicated. And for business owners I was just telling a business owner about this.

Missy Singer DuMars [00:48:58]:

There's even fun things like just literally shove your receipts in a box, and their service is like Shoe Boxed where you ship it in an envelope to them and they scan it all and sort it all and send you the digital files back and it's handled. Right? You know? There's just so many tools and ways to do those things. And, you know, I maybe I'm just a weirdo, but I have fun and, like, I dread doing the numbers, but I have fun, once I see them, and it's really it's so becomes so clear so quickly, like, oh, this worked. This didn't work. Like, I know my eggs are not profitable. You know? Mhmm. I know that my eggs are actually a marketing investment, not a profit center. You know? Like, people come for the eggs and then they find out about the other things that do make money and, making that decision consciously and seeing, like, are there ways that I can make it at least breakeven, if not slightly profitable? And, you know, can I play with it? What else can I do? And so it is fun to know the numbers, because then it kinda equips you with a pathway to creative problem solving.

Kristi Knowles [00:50:06]:

Yeah. Yeah. Exactly. And and and I think, you know, really just understanding the cash flow side of things becomes super important if you're investing, you know, your own money and cash is king and just, you know, having somebody help you with that if you know, the reality is when you're dealing with just like in your business, I'm sure as well, but in the retail retailer world, food retailer world, they they will, Yeah. They don't necessarily pay quickly. Right? So your receivables can kind of build up, while you're, you know, paying on other invoices. Your inventory can build up. So there's just there's just it's it's an important component, which, I've had to learn a lot more about as well because when you're working with a large CPG company, you're not really worried about cash.

Kristi Knowles [00:51:01]:

You're worried about profitability, but you're not worried about cash. So it's very different.

Missy Singer DuMars [00:51:06]:

Right. Right. But you

Kristi Knowles [00:51:07]:

never had to learn it all. Right?

Missy Singer DuMars [00:51:09]:

Yeah. And it's interesting as you say that it's such a different cycle. I mean, the same questions are still there and it's such a different cycle on a farm. You know, on a farm, being based on the seasons and the climate, or we have, like, once a year to iterate. You know? Like, I have to wait a whole year before I iterate again. Like, oh, This crop failed. It was not successful. Nobody liked it.

Missy Singer DuMars [00:51:30]:

Or it was hard to grow and didn't grow well. Like, I have to wait a whole year to try again. Right? So it's a it's it's for me, it's been a process of, slowing down from that fast process and thus it does require even closer management of funds, and that's why there's so many books like Lean Farm and, you know, more and more farmers I'm seeing are figuring out winter farming and things like that because because you do have like half a year, at least in the northeast here, United States, where I mean, there could be nothing to sell, you know, so you have to budget and manage that stuff really carefully. But what I wanna go to before we get into your recipes and get back into food, fun, and play, is One of the things I know you talk about is, like, leading with the heart, and now that you're CEO of this more values, perhaps more values based business. I'm kind of curious, like, how how does that actually manifest with how you're leading mother as a business. How how do you lead with heart? What are some examples? What does that look like?

Kristi Knowles [00:52:39]:

Yeah. I think coming from big company And perhaps the the the male energy associated with that. It's a very harsh environment.

Missy Singer DuMars [00:52:51]:

Mhmm.

Kristi Knowles [00:52:53]:

And, you know, there's a bit a little bit of kill or be killed. You know? Mhmm. And I don't wanna be that I don't wanna be that person. I mean, why expect I expect performance, and I've had to Let people go because they weren't performing. And I've had plenty of stern discussions, You know, with the team when, you know, things haven't gone the way that they need to go. So it's not about being it's not about looking the other way When things don't go well, but it's just also about recognizing that, like, you know, we all have lives outside the office. When you're in a big company, nobody really, You know, at that time, anyway, I I'm not and I'm not saying those specific companies are any different, but, you know, at the end of the day, you had something to get done. Like, you stayed all night to get it done.

Kristi Knowles [00:53:44]:

And somebody, you know, wouldn't necessarily ask you what the impact was on your life of of having to do that. And so I just Heart just means, like, with, like, the real person, right, on on your like, just showing some vulnerability when it's appropriate. I I remember sharing. We did a an exercise as a team about, you know, 6 pitchers. It brings 6 6 pictures in in whatever format you want to sort of tell a little bit of a story about your life. So it's a nice way for, you know, people to get to know each other. But I just I broke down in tears talking about Kind of the the the changes that we made as a family to accommodate my stepdaughter moving in with us. And I just, like You know, if if that had been in a big company, I I would have been embarrassed or, I don't I don't know, ashamed, felt weak.

Kristi Knowles [00:54:39]:

But in this case, it was just this is who I am. Right? Like, this was an important thing in my life, and it probably says a lot more about me than, you know, the priority meeting on the business we're having next. So I think it's a it's a it's that. It's building in time for people to connect as real humans. You know? We just did a bowling event in June with the whole production team and ourselves and, and, like, the front office team, we we call it. And the they are, the most amazing like, the the production team is the most amazing team, and they are super connected. But, you know, connecting to the front office team, especially through COVID, because we weren't allowed in the office because of COVID. The production team was there the whole time, but not The front office.

Kristi Knowles [00:55:28]:

So it really disconnected the teams.

Missy Singer DuMars [00:55:30]:

Mhmm. So, you

Kristi Knowles [00:55:30]:

know, we did this bowling event, and and, I mean, it was just such a blast. It was so silly and fun, but we, you know, We all just participated as 1, and there was no this is the boss, and this is you know, we all spread out into teams, and I don't know. It's just, you know, laughing as part of the group, not not being separate from the group.

Missy Singer DuMars [00:55:52]:

Are there, are there different ways that you handle tough the tough those tougher conversations with with that you

Kristi Knowles [00:56:00]:

I would say with I I'd say pace like, one one thing is my team You might laugh at this, but I've become much more patient and sort of how can I help how can I help this person get to that next level? How can I, help them understand the gap between what was delivered maybe and what needs, Like, what the expectation was through the conversation of our values of, you know, curiosity, trust, respect, And just kind of a, okay? Let me help you versus, oh my god. You've created this stress now because we're late. And the but there's a point where that might you know, tough decision or it's tough to tough discussions still have to come, but I, you know, turn to our values, which we, You know, created with the team that we had at the time. Some of those team members have moved on, but, you know, using that as our Beacon using the beacon of put good on good. So another example would be, more kind of related to the business would be, Through COVID, we decided we made the decision that we would be we would provide our customers who were just Struggling. Right? Our retailers were just besides themselves with supply chain issues, but we would supply a 100% on time and it's in full. And that was a decision that cost money, but it was a decision that we made because our company's Ethos is is all about, like, delivering results, respect, building trust. And So we we made that decision based on that as well.

Kristi Knowles [00:57:45]:

Obviously, you know, We we hoped that it would translate into better relationships with retailers, right, preferred kind of relationship with retailers over time. And in fact, in the end, it did open new doors for us because we were able to say, look. This is a company that provides This type of service, because this is who we are. This is what we believe in. These are our values as a company, and we delivered a A 100% on service and time through COVID, and no other company I came across could say that. And it actually opened new doors for us with new.

Missy Singer DuMars [00:58:21]:

Yeah. I really wanna point out this thread in our conversation and the thread I've seen in other food conversations. 2 of your values you mentioned are trust and respect, which to me, both are about tending relationships. And that brings us back to how you started with building mother Ra by tending relationships, building out your network through both giving and receiving. And so to me, that seems like a strong theme. And interestingly, I was just with culinary students, 2 chef teachers and myself, working with them. And the discussion was the same Discussion was about respect, whether it's respect your ingredients, respect your colleagues in the kitchen, respect your tools by taking good care of them. And, I think there's just something to say about tending relationships.

Missy Singer DuMars [00:59:19]:

And, to me, that is part of feminine business and my listeners have heard me talk about this many times. You know, women are the hearth keep keepers and the hearth Keepers are not just cooking food, although that is part of it, but everyone gathers around the hearth. Everyone gathers in the kitchen at a party. Right? And, We're we're the tenders of the relationships and the interrelationships. You know? Where do you go when you need an ear? You need someone to talk to. It's like the mother, the grandmother, the The person tending the hearth, the person in the kitchen, you sit at the table, you pour a cup of tea and you pour your heart out. And it's the hearth keepers who are usually women who know what's happening in their community and in their family and tend those things. And so I love that you're talking about it on a large business scale and we can talk about it in our own home at the same time.

Missy Singer DuMars [01:00:13]:

But that seems to me a really strong theme in how you've built a successful company with Mother Raw. And I wanna point that out to our listeners that attending relationships with respect and trust is actually a possible way to build success.

Kristi Knowles [01:00:28]:

Yes. I I I love I love that you sort of see that trend that thread, I should say. And, You know, the the when times are toughest you know, maybe when when you you have Messed up or you you didn't have you know, things didn't turn out the way that you had had hoped, and that in you know, that that has that impacts somebody else, you know, another relationship. Being honest, Open, brave about it is it it I like, it's the only way. It's the only way, and, ultimately, You get oftentimes, you come out the other end of that relationship with an even stronger one.

Missy Singer DuMars [01:01:13]:

Yeah. Indeed. And I love, A musician I love, Michael Franti, and his wife, Sarah. They did a video a couple of years ago now where they talked about that. And, You know, when there's tension between them to walk away and realize there's a choice. Like, do I is it more important to be right, or is it more important to create more connection? You know? And, I think about that sometimes in tense moments, you know, just to pause long enough to ask myself that question, and, usually, the answer is connection, and so how can I foster connection and depth in this conversation, as well as resolve whatever the thing is, you know? So anything else you wanna say about that? Because I wanna get to food.

Kristi Knowles [01:01:58]:

Yeah. Let's get to food.

Missy Singer DuMars [01:02:00]:

Let's get to food. So tell us a little bit more about the actual mother raw products, because we keep alluding to it. But just tell us, like, why are they so special? What what's cool about them? Why should we pay attention to them?

Kristi Knowles [01:02:11]:

Sure. So, you know, again, it goes back to all of our products are organic and, Plant based. They're nonallergen, the leading allergens. I'll just stop there for a moment. And and the reason for Those sort of guardrails is so that we are as accessible to as many people as possible. So if you have an allergen, you know, to nuts, you can have us. If you're gluten free, you can have us. If you're a plant based eater, You can enjoy us.

Kristi Knowles [01:02:49]:

If you just wanna eat real whole food, we're we're the dressing or dip or condiment for you. So that's, you know, at the highest level. We are made, in our own Facility in Toronto, Canada where we, you know, it's a it's a small team of amazing people making this, making this product.

Missy Singer DuMars [01:03:15]:

And, in Toronto, you have access to such great, raw in that region. Well, I mean, I'm in the Ontario region also on the other side of the border, so I'm not far, like, wave across the water to you. Exactly. You know, it is such a great region for access to really great raw ingredients.

Kristi Knowles [01:03:36]:

And so we, and we're, we are in glass. Mhmm. And Our products, except for our new condiments, are all, in the produce section, you know, where produce is sold. So we're refrigerated. Our dressings and dips are refrigerated. That's where the most healthful, Natural products, in those segments are, and that's where we want it to be. So we're sold right next to, You know, the veggies, that we they hope that you consume more of as a result of of having our products, and, you Yeah. It's kind of a circular thing.

Kristi Knowles [01:04:16]:

Right? Buy more veggies. We can help you with ways And tasty. Yeah. Exactly.

Missy Singer DuMars [01:04:22]:

Cool. So being the busy woman you are, you have a recipe to share with us that makes home meals much easier. Yeah. Yeah.

Kristi Knowles [01:04:33]:

Yeah. Yeah. So, our, My our thing on Sunday or my thing on Sunday, I guess, because I am the one who does the cooking, is, you know, how am I gonna make a week's Worth of food that can just easily be grabbed from the fridge and made into all different kinds of things, deliciously, easily fast. So I'm a sheet pan girl. I don't know if you're a sheet pan girl.

Missy Singer DuMars [01:04:57]:

I am sometimes. I'm getting better at it, especially because my household complains about how many dishes I create in cooking a meal. So if I could do it all on 1 pan that's less dishes.

Kristi Knowles [01:05:07]:

Exactly. So why do we love like, why do I love sheet pans? Exactly that. It's literally 1 pan, you know, a knife and a cutting board. You can base you don't need a recipe. You you just need to follow a method, and that's That's how most consumers, cook. Right? That's how most of us cook. It's based on, okay. I kinda know how to how to take The this technique, this approach, and now I can add a little bit of this or that to to shift it up, but sheet pan is is super easy, Versatile.

Kristi Knowles [01:05:42]:

And what's great about it is, you know, I'll do these sheet pans, and we'll talk about each one a little bit in a men in a moment. But but, basically, I take the results of these sheet pans, and I throw it into glass containers, and I put it into the fridge. So my fridge looks beautiful, right, on a Sunday because you've got these, like, veggies roasted sitting there in these glass jars or glass containers. And then for the rest of the week, It's like, oh, what's the side I'm gonna have with, you know, with meal a? Oh, I can, you know, I can just oh, I've got this beautiful roasted sweet potato, sheet pan that I did. I just need to warm it up quickly, and that's my side. Oh, what am I gonna bring for lunch, to to work? So I'll put, you know, maybe some kale or something at the bottom of of a container, and then, I'm gonna throw some of the, the the brussels sprout sheet pan I did and, oh, yeah, some of that sweet potato Sheet pan, I did. I'm gonna put that into a container, and I'm gonna bring that to work, and it's delicious. And I didn't touch 1 dish Other than what I did on Sunday in order to, you know, to to make that.

Kristi Knowles [01:06:53]:

So that's what I love about sheet pans. And mother raw is It's it's like the magic that brings it all together because you can take any variety that we have. We have, you know, a sesame ginger, Japanese. We have the Mediterranean I talked about. We have The Caesar that I talked about,

we have balsamic that's, like, to die for. And you can you can create Any kind of medley, that makes sense to you, take that with one of those varieties and, like, ta da. You didn't have to do anything but pour this stuff out of a bottle. You didn't have to make up your own list of spices and all that kind of stuff.

Kristi Knowles [01:07:33]:

So

Missy Singer DuMars [01:07:34]:

And I will point out whether or not you have access to Mother Raw, you can kind of do it. You can make your own dressing and do that. You can Have your favorite brand, whatever that is, and do it. So that that is the fun part. And I think it's great to share, you You know, just because something is labeled salad dressing, it can be a marinade. It could be thickened into a sauce. You can, you know, use it a lot of different ways. So you have your top 3 favorite sheet pan combos.

Missy Singer DuMars [01:08:04]:

What are they?

Kristi Knowles [01:08:05]:

Okay. So, as I I'm a garlic lover, and, we have both a Caesar dressing and a roasted garlic Caesar dressing. So either works in this. I I tend to use the roasted garlic Caesar because I like that roasty toasty note. Basically, my favorite way to to to use, the roasted garlic Caesar is With sweet potatoes, I don't I don't honestly, I don't think I've come across someone who doesn't love a good roasted sweet potato. Pepper. So I actually, the 1 1 veggie I don't love is green pepper. I like Red, yellow, orange, all equally.

Kristi Knowles [01:08:50]:

Don't love green, so I'll do sweet potato with red or yellow orange pepper, onion, Roasted onion again, like, so

Missy Singer DuMars [01:09:00]:

So good.

Kristi Knowles [01:09:00]:

Delicious. Like, oh my god.

Missy Singer DuMars [01:09:02]:

Edges caramelized. Yeah. So good.

Kristi Knowles [01:09:05]:

And, like, Sometimes I'll just do a sheet pan of onions because, like You can

Missy Singer DuMars [01:09:12]:

add them to anything. I mean, you can take roasted onions and then blender them back into another dressing also.

Kristi Knowles [01:09:21]:

I mean, I think it is the most underrated Vegetable ever. And I don't actually like raw onions. They don't they don't, let's just say they don't agree with me. They stick around a long time.

Missy Singer DuMars [01:09:37]:

Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. But Do you have a secret for how not to cry while cutting an onion?

Kristi Knowles [01:09:42]:

I've tried. I've tried. I've I've tried, like, the bread in the mouth. And what's your what's your hack?

Missy Singer DuMars [01:09:48]:

I I know there's hacks around how you cut it, but I often, like, make my tongue really saliva y and, like, stick it out while I'm cutting because then the theory for that Technique is that the whatever's in the fumes is attracted to wetness, which is why it goes to your eyes. So, hopefully, it, like, goes more to my tongue and my eyes. And I feel like it's somewhat true because I I still cry some, but maybe not as much, but I definitely taste it on my tongue as I'm sticking it out. So if someone walks into the kitchen when I'm cutting onion, it it looks rather ridiculous because I'm standing there with my tongue sticking out, cutting an onion, Maybe still shedding a couple tears. It's like definitely a a strange strange view for anyone else. I'm usually like, and they're like, Oh, okay. You know?

Kristi Knowles [01:10:36]:

Exactly. Well, I'll have to try that. And and, you know, I'm alone this weekend, which is a rare thing.

Missy Singer DuMars [01:10:41]:

Oh, good. So you could do it without Anyone seeing the silly face?

Kristi Knowles [01:10:45]:

There you go. So for this sheet pan so it's basically a combination of, like, Just chopped up into bite sized pieces, sweet potato, red pepper, onion in sort of equal parts. But if there's you know, if you got a huge sweet potato and a small onion, it still works. Sometimes I add tofu, for protein. I happen to be plant based. So, you know, for me, this is a really easy way to get Protein into my food, and quite frankly, could use any protein with it. But I like to keep my sheet pan Plant based focus so that if you are serving a protein, outside of that, you know, and you you can use this as a side dish. I like to do that, but you can, of course, do this with chicken or whatever.

Kristi Knowles [01:11:31]:

But then all I do, literally, I take, like, half a bottle maybe of the roasted garlic dressing, and I just put it into a bowl with the the chopped up veggies. I use my hands, take off any rings. Take off your, you know, any, bracelet. Just get your hands in there. Coat everything nice and juicy. Oven, 375, 30 to 40 minutes. It depends on how big you've cut your sweet potatoes. So sometimes I'll cut my sweet potato smaller than the other vegetables, and I usually turn them once.

Kristi Knowles [01:12:04]:

And then, if They come out and they're not as, like, moist as you you want, like, certainly, like, I'll put some more dressing on and just precoat them a little bit, And that's it. Like, that's my roasted garlic vegetable sheet pan.

Missy Singer DuMars [01:12:21]:

Alright. And so then you have 2 other combos that we will put in the show notes. What are they? Yeah.

Kristi Knowles [01:12:26]:

So, interchangeably here, you can use the Mediterranean dressing or our Greek dressing, both super flavorful. They have the oregano. The difference is the Mediterranean has a base that includes the sun dried tomatoes and calamari Olives, so it's super, like, complex and delicious. Yeah. But, basically, this one, I just I'll use, like, zucchini, and tomato, onion again. And I like to have small cherry tomatoes in this, so you don't you know, you just you don't even have to do anything with them. You just throw them in. And so

Missy Singer DuMars [01:13:07]:

the Cherry tomatoes roast so beautifully. They, like, blister, but they hold together. And then when you bite into them, it's just like this explosion of tomato goodness.

Kristi Knowles [01:13:16]:

And they're not as acidic. Right? Like, there's a sweetness. The acidity sort of mellows. So exactly. So, This is a nice combination with the Mediterranean and Greek, I find. Mhmm. And it's lovely, like Like I said before, sort of over, like, kale, you know, like, for a nice light lunch, spinach,

Missy Singer DuMars [01:13:38]:

spinach, for dinner.

Kristi Knowles [01:13:40]:

Yeah. Oh, yeah. Like salad.

Missy Singer DuMars [01:13:42]:

Like, fresh cucumbers, a home the roasted veggies, some hummus.

Kristi Knowles [01:13:47]:

Oh, you're so good. I'm just thinking to this, this past 2 weekends ago. You're

Missy Singer DuMars [01:13:54]:
making tonight.

Kristi Knowles [01:13:56]:

Yeah. We had friends over, and and I did, They they they enjoy, like, kind of like a like chicken skewers, right, and pita. So I did this, and that was the topping. Yeah. Perfect. With Tzatziki, hummus's options. Like, you know, it was kind of a make your own deal, but This was the this was like you you put this on top, and it was so good. So this doesn't cook as long because it doesn't have the potatoes in it.

Kristi Knowles [01:14:23]:

So I usually do 375, 20 to 30 minutes, and, again, I turn it once. And you just chop all of this up. Don't have to chop the tomatoes, though. You just throw those in whole, and you just mix them up with your hands again, and they can go in onto a sheet pan at the same time as The roasted garlic sheet pan, and I do I do 3 at a time. That's why I put 3 recipes here. The third one, all all Our balsamic dressing is made with, premium balsamic, vinegar As well as, I wanna say, all of our dressings are made only with extra virgin olive oil. But the balsamic, we use some dates to give it a sweetness and the thickness. Nice.

Kristi Knowles [01:15:09]:

Yeah. It's fast. It it we launched it last year, and it's in the top 3 now. Like, It's just it's great. So I because fall's coming up, I okay. I'll show like, brussels sprouts and just white or small yellow potatoes. This mix is just just a nice it's a little bit of a heavier mix, but I love brussels sprouts, and this is how I've got My husband and son to eat brussels sprouts. So, basically, just having the brussels sprouts and small potatoes into, you know, similar size, bite sized pieces, cover in balsamic.

Kristi Knowles [01:15:44]:

By the way, this works great with caesar as well. And you Place it in the oven again. It's 375 to kind of that 30, 40 minute turning once until you want the potatoes, and the breast Supposed to be quite, like like, soft. Fork tender. Yeah. Fork tender for sure. You don't wanna bite into a crunchy brussels sprout. This is Or potato.

Kristi Knowles [01:16:05]:

Right? So, you know, check it, obviously, to make sure you're happy with the doneness.

Missy Singer DuMars [01:16:10]:

I love it. Yum. Thank you. So all these recipes will be in the show notes and on our website. You can download and make yourself, as well as come up with any other combinations. There's so many options I can think of, so I I love it. It's a good way. I I've done that here.

Missy Singer DuMars [01:16:28]:

Although they don't last a whole week if I do it because because we eat them for every meal.

Kristi Knowles [01:16:34]:

Yeah. Totally. It decides on you know, depending on I

Missy Singer DuMars [01:16:37]:

have to do a Sunday and then again on maybe Wednesday or Thursday to make it through the week. But Yeah. You know,

Kristi Knowles [01:16:43]:

it that's fair enough. And and what what I love about that, it's healthful. Right? It's a Helpful. It's like grab something. This is what you grab. And and if I don't, like, it I didn't do this this past Sunday for Just I was visiting family and such and such. This week has been a struggle, like, for me to eat properly, because I didn't do it. Right.

Kristi Knowles [01:17:06]:

Right. I mean, I could've done it, like, Monday, Tuesday, I suppose, but by then, I'm into My week. You know?

Missy Singer DuMars [01:17:13]:

Yeah. Yeah.

Kristi Knowles [01:17:14]:

So when I don't do it, I really miss it.

Missy Singer DuMars [01:17:17]:

I get it. I get it. Well, I have 2 last questions for you because we're out of time. 1st question is: is there a woman who is really, inspiration, influence, for you.

Kristi Knowles [01:17:35]:

Yeah. So I'm gonna answer this question very differently probably than than what you're expecting, and I It's just it's true for me right now, so I'm just gonna say it, which is, I've been spending a lot of time, in nature. So I had the privilege of going to Africa, doing safari. I was in the Rockies for a while doing a bunch of hikes, And it's just, you know, being in nature. You're there all the time, I suppose, as a farmer, you know, hands in the dirt. Like, it's just what I love. And so my inspiration right now is very much coming from mother Earth. And When I say that, what I mean is, you know, when you're walking in the, you're hiking in the Rockies and you're climbing through different elevations and You're you see a tree growing out of a ragged nook and cranny of rock High in the Rockies, and you're like, wow.

Kristi Knowles [01:18:38]:

Like, how how incredible the perseverance, The patience, the the renewal. Like, though those those are the things that right now I'm just really focused on Trying to be to stay centered on is, you know, mother Earth is very patient until she's not as we you know? But It's unpredictable,

but, like, still able to renew and grow. And I don't know. They're just something that's It's just stuff I'm meditating on right now.

Missy Singer DuMars [01:19:15]:

Preaching to the choir here, my friend. Yeah. Absolutely. I love that. Mother Earth is the Oh, woman who inspires you right now. I love that. I love that. My last question, we've talked about so many different topics, your story, leading a values based business, bringing your voice in the business, food, all kinds of things.

Missy Singer DuMars [01:19:37]:

Is there anything we didn't talk about or a Final message that you want our listeners to walk away with?

Kristi Knowles [01:19:44]:

I I'd say, you know, one one of the things that I don't think I've emphasized enough and I I really wanna pay tribute to is it takes a village.

Missy Singer DuMars [01:19:54]:

Mhmm.

Kristi Knowles [01:19:55]:

And my team is amazing. So a CEO is often like, oh, you're the one who's doing you know, you do get the credit. You do thing. It's not. It's it's not me. I listen very carefully to what to their advisement. And and so I think it just it it takes a village. And and and In my case, you know, I have a team, but my village is beyond that team.

Kristi Knowles [01:20:19]:

It's the network that we talked about. It's, it's it's It and and I've surrounded tried to surround myself with cheerleaders, you know, people who believe in me when when I doubt myself because there are Plenty of times where you I question myself. Right? I I'm I'm humble enough to know what I don't No. And, I've I've survived through the hard times by, you know, Going reaching out to people who who I know from my my past or who I currently know who can just remind me what I do well, because dwelling on what you don't do well doesn't doesn't help. It's important to identify and find solutions for, but it's It's mostly important to surround yourself, I think, with people who who believe in you, who give you sage advisement, and, Who reminds you, you know, who you are. Yeah.

Missy Singer DuMars [01:21:21]:

Well, that's a beautiful beautiful note to complete with. Thank you so much, Christi, for sharing your stories and recipes with us today. To all our listeners, I hope you enjoyed this episode up women in food and got a bit of inspiration for your next meal. A last request, if you could go over to Itunes or whatever app you're using to listen and give us a rating in review. It's a simple act that helps other people find the show. Once again, thank you for accompanying me on this delicious adventure. Join me around the table for our next episode and get ready to eat.