

“Put My Jugs on the What?”

In August 2002, I began filming **Barefoot Contessa** despite having previously sworn off cooking shows. A friend's enthusiastic description of the British show **Nigella Bites**, hosted by Nigella Lawson, piqued my curiosity about the format. After securing a tape from my associate Eileen, who had facilitated the introduction of Jamie Oliver to American audiences, I was impressed by Nigella's warmth and ease in front of the camera but was adamant that I was not her.

Eileen persisted in encouraging me, emphasizing the need for authenticity and the importance of my personality in the show. She arranged a conversation with Rachel Purnell from Pacific Productions, which unexpectedly turned intriguing. Rachel valued my style and proposed a small crew to film in a manner that wouldn't disrupt my life. Eileen suggested a trial of thirteen episodes, easing my reservations.

As I took on the challenge of bringing **Barefoot Contessa** to life, my vision was to combine cooking with the essence of my social life—food is a way to bring people together. I wanted to include friends like Jeffrey in my culinary journey around East Hampton. The crew's method was immersive; they captured my daily life, often following me during grocery shopping and at home.

Despite initial struggles with filming, such as understanding the different British terminologies and managing my anxiety, the experience grew more enjoyable. The crew, mostly British, created a supportive, family-like atmosphere on set, which made filming easier. The process included trial-and-error filming techniques, ultimately simplifying to a single take after realizing the authenticity of my first attempts was the best.

With the filming came personal challenges, like handling an emergency in our Paris apartment when a bathing incident led to water damage, which surprisingly turned into an opportunity to purchase the upper unit I had long desired. Juxtaposed with the ongoing filming, I prepared for **A Mediterranean Feast**, gathering friends to replicate a real dinner party. Despite my self-doubt about my on-screen performance, the feedback was unexpectedly positive, reinforcing that my nervousness contributed to a relatable charm.

Looking back, I recognize that my foundational principles of food and hospitality remain unchanged over the years. My first experiences in the Paris apartment with Jeffrey became cherished memories, marking our dream fulfilled, even amidst the challenges of adapting to a new cooking environment in France.