

(introductory music)

**DISCLAIMER:** Welcome to *Taking Back Birth*, a podcast for women who know the truth about birth and those who want to explore the path of radical birth love. I'm your host, Maryn Green. *Taking Back Birth* celebrates the power you have to make decisions in alignment with your own truth. Decisions not subject to anyone else's authority. Decisions that create experiences that will change your life. *Taking Back Birth* is a production of the Indie Birth Private Contract Association and indiebirth.org. No material on this podcast should be considered medical advice. Birth is not a medical event.

(music)

**MARYN:** Welcome to Mothering #4. Only four in with this mothering series. But hey, that's more than one, right? And it seems well received. Lots of curious people and women in our community and kind of around the world. Curious about what we do at our house. And I guess that's just recently become apparent to me for whatever reason. Birth takes up most of my time as you all know. In a professional sense. So usually, I keep things pretty private for no reason other than it's our life. And in some moments, it seems just completely kind of uninteresting personally to share it. But we are in a unique situation. Our family. Nine, going on ten children. So I guess it's from that perspective that I might have something to say here and there. And today's podcast is going to be about food and eating. And honestly, I don't really know what's going to come out here or where this is going to go. I know it's something I wanted to talk about it. But being pregnant right now myself is unique especially around food and eating because I'm kind of eating all the time.

So that's kind of the first point, I guess, before I even get into it that that alone really does change our family dynamic around food. And if that doesn't make sense, I can explain it a little bit. But me being pregnant and for better or for worse being sort of in charge of at least half of the food decisions—Jason is pretty involved as you're going to hear. But yeah. Being involved in that changes things because I'm definitely eating a lot of food, a lot more than I would normally eat. I'm eating maybe different things than I would eat if I weren't pregnant. I'm eating more often. And this all effects everyone especially little children. And I'll talk more about timing of eating and how we do that. But you'll see that it kind of means everyone is probably eating a lot more, and that's fine. That's great. But whether or not that's our normal, I guess I couldn't really say except it feels different. So before I start, I have Henna here with me in my office, so that's her tiptoeing around. For heaven's sakes, dog. Lay down. She's my special dog that likes to get out of the house and hang out.

Before I start along the lines of sharing more about our family and our not birth life, I just released an interview on YouTube with my friends, Conor and Brittany. So if you didn't see that and you want to see that, go to their YouTube channel. Not ours. So Conor and Brittany Lifestyle, I believe is the name of the channel. You'll see it there. They have two or three channels though, so you'll see the interview. They are friends and people that I help support from afar for their own birth about a year ago. And just really cool, open-minded people that are living their truth. So that's what we have in common. And it was just really fun. I don't do a lot of interviews about my life. And on one hand, like I said, who cares? I'm not saying I should be. But it was just fun. It was fun to talk about things that weren't all birth related and, honestly, to get a chance to talk about how awesome my kids are. What mother doesn't like to brag in that way? So anyway, if you're curious and you haven't seen that and you just kind of want to hear more about our life, that's a pretty good representation. And they asked some really cool questions.

Okay. So we're going to talk about food and eating, in a big family to boot. First of all, I'm sure many of you have heard nutrition podcasts that we have here about pregnancy. So you may already know a little bit of my perspective, which is that food is really personal. It's really emotional. Can be anyway. I'm not saying it has to be this way for our children which is another topic. But as women, for one, often we have stuff around food, and I don't frequent parenting groups honestly. But just even in conversation with people, I'll say here in my community, in Sedona—which is not every community. It's unique in many ways. Food is a huge parenting topic. And I don't know how to say it really—I don't know. Unbiasedly. Or for it not to sound snippy. But there's a lot of competition, I feel, amongst parents here, in a sense, to feed the right thing. To not feed the wrong thing especially to other people's kids or things like birthday parties. I mean it's kind of a Sedona joke to me. And I'll get into this more. That people love to look a certain way here with how they eat.

And it's not my job to say how genuine or how intentional they're being with their choices. I really don't know. But from the outside meeting in groups or potlucks or parties or whatever, there's definitely a thought form here around the right way to eat. And so I'm probably going to blow that out of the water, and, often, we do as a family when we're invited to potlucks and such. Yeah. We usually make a point of trying to be a little bit more well rounded than we feel is usually offered. Just because that's the way we eat. I'll get into that. And also to make a point that we don't need to have these guilt and control issues around food with our kids. And we don't need to feel like it's a competition. And so if you're listening to this and you're offended or maybe the opposite. You're like, "Oh, thank you for validating my thoughts." Either way. I don't care in a sense. You do you. You parent like you know you should parent. You know your kids. Obviously, there are legitimate ways and things people can eat and can't eat.

So I'm not here to control that. I don't want to control that. And I feel like I've worked really hard in my own life to release a lot of control around food. And being pregnant is a great example.

I just have to eat what's needed by my body whether or not my mind wants to control it. So this is already getting into the weeds, in a sense. But the point is there is a lot around food. So maybe this will help you reflect on what you bring to your family, and that's both positive and negative. And maybe what your community offers or doesn't offer and just the culture at large. How we really do, I think, live in a time period where food is really a way of defining people. So how often do Jason and I laugh, and a lot, about food and the funny things people have around it and sure. We have funny things too. And even reflecting back on our grandparents and the fact that they didn't know what good nutrition was past eating what was available. And, of course, if it was sort of the time before processed foods, that was one thing. But certainly, my mom did grow up in an era of more processed foods. And I don't know. You can—people have different stories. Lots of people will be like, "Oh, well, all those people in my family died of heart disease." But I know for Jason and I and our families our grandparents were bacon and egg eaters every day. Good Midwest people. And lived long, healthy lives.

So I think there's just so much to talk about honestly now that I'm thinking about it. There's so much around this culture and what we go in with parenting. And so I'm just going to be honest about my experience and try to recall as much as I can about maybe the way we used to do things because the way we do things now with nine children is not the way we did things 18, 16 years ago. And I think that's for a lot of reasons. The most obvious is fewer children allows you more focus. The second one would be we were just less experienced parents. We were younger, so you could potentially equate those things to be more impressionable or being more under someone else's influence. And I think those things were true for us. So I think back to my daughter, who is going to be 18. And when she was a baby and a toddler and was getting into food, it felt like a big deal. And I know a lot of parents feel like that, and I'm not going to go into feeding a baby because, actually, part of that is on the rites of passage podcast.

But let's just say I was very cautious. I was very careful. I didn't know what it would be like to feed a person for the first time. I hear about all these crazy food allergies, and I just wanted to do the right thing. So she probably didn't have a very good variety, to be honest. And we did the baby food thing which, again, no judgment. But I don't do that anymore because I don't have time for that. And little kids in my house are going to get fed real food from older people no matter what I do. And I think that's preferable for my family. So that wasn't the case with the first one. And so it was very controlled. Very controlled environment for letting her explore foods and letting her try new things. And

one thing in particular, I remember, is I didn't allow her to have any dairy. Now that's fine. And at that time, that long ago, we lived in Chicago. And we didn't have access to raw dairy, which we do now.

So I'm not necessarily regretting that choice. Maybe that was a good idea. But it was just more the control aspect. And unfortunately or fortunately—I don't know what you want to say. She still hates dairy. She does like cheese in minor amounts. But all the other kids will drink the raw milk that we have now which I think is super beneficial for health. And I think that's been proven to me, but she won't. She's one of the kids that doesn't do that. But I think I set the stage for that one, so that was a lesson. So that was her. As we had the second baby, Egan, I'm sure I was more lax in recalling this. I remember—honestly, I don't remember. I don't. If it was him or the next kid, Tolula. But another great example was no sugar. No sugar. No sugar. No sugar. They never had any sugar. And I mean it was obsessive really when I look back on it although sure. You could argue there were benefits there. But I'm sure it was really frustrating. I know as my parents, as grandparents, to try and take care of my kids or feed them at that point because I was so particular.

And it's not that I'm not. We'll get into it. But a level of control. So I can't remember who it was. But by the time they had their first birthday, it was probably the third—third or so child. It was different. And I remember having sugar introduced. Not in large amounts but by that point I was kind of over the over controlling. But that's how it goes generally, right? Is that we evolve or we change. And we only know if we can look back and assess that positively or negatively or what we want to do with that. But that's not the way we are anymore. And, again, more kids, less time, just more going on, and really just some different beliefs, which I'll share around food and around health and those sorts of things.

So one thing I do think is important—and this goes for pregnancy. And it goes for feeding children is, at an early age, teaching them that food feels good. It shouldn't be a brain operation. And unfortunately, many of us are so far into our lives that we really have to perhaps try at that. Your brain kicks in with, "Oh, I know you want that piece of pizza, but that is not good for you." Kids don't really have that. At least, not at a young age. So teaching them that food is pleasurable and should be pleasurable. And not teaching as much as we can bad and good although I admit that's hard. And I think it sort of spills out sometimes sort of unconsciously. I'll find myself definitely saying things that I have to say, "Do I believe that?" Like the sugar thing. Like yeah. Lots of sugar isn't good. But where is that line? And do we draw it? Or do they draw it? Or how do we navigate these things? To me, that's more interesting. It's more creative than just saying, "No sugar," because that doesn't really work, in my experience. It doesn't work

in our house. Really telling a kid they can't have a thing—unless they're deathly allergic, which makes total sense is probably going to backfire on us.

So all things in moderation is the motto we go with in our house. We try really hard to not label things as bad although I think describing them, if they're not the greatest, is helpful. So teaching kids how to read labels and, "Can you pronounce that word? What is that thing in there? Yeah. You don't know? Well, that's a chemical. So chemicals aren't the best things for our bodies," et cetera. So just because all things in moderation doesn't mean we have to act like everything is created equal. But, again, creating this feeling of not being allowed, I found is hard. But yes. I definitely do also kind of put my foot down. A great example is it's hot here. It's summer. Our air conditioning was out for more weeks than I can count. It's now working. Thank the lord. But it was hot, and the kids got really into ice pops. And normally, we would make those kind of things. We do make those things. I think I bought the things for them to make them in. But older kids sometimes—they get these ideas of convenience and fun that definitely starts to test boundaries.

So they bought a box of Otter Pops, which, if you don't know, are just pure chemicals. And I didn't say anything really the first time because one box amongst nine children—not a big deal. Nobody is really getting all that much. So okay. Let them have some autonomy there. Certainly, they know—at least the older ones. They know. They know that's not the best choice, but that's what they chose. And I let it go. But then it happened again. They brought home the next box, and I said, "Absolutely not, you guys. That's enough. You're old enough to make a better choice than that. And more importantly, if you want to choose that for yourself and you're 17, I mean go for it." I'm not into restricting or telling them what they absolutely can have at that age. I think it starts to feel ridiculous. She's in charge of her own body. However, the younger children, the babies, are not. They don't even know what they're eating, so it's not okay, to me, to go feeding them this crap. And it truly was crap. And for all the excess drama in a sense I think there are nowadays around food allergies, I also think they can be real for sure. And I don't like the idea of all those dyes. And our one child, Ever, seems to not be able to handle fake dyes, so she just couldn't participate anyway.

But there. There's a story. I mean we're not perfect. The kids definitely buy crap, or they try to. And then there are limits that have to be set. But at least, I mean—and maybe this sounds crazy. But I think it's great that they, at least, think they can bring it into the house. No one hid them. It wasn't a secret because, I think, that also gets weird. And I grew up with some friends like that who weren't allowed to eat anything and were always sneaking food around. And I think that's really powerful energy to hold your whole life around food. So I'd rather be open about it. They can test the

boundaries. And I'm free to say no. Get rid of it. And more times than not, when things like that are brought into the house, I don't hesitate to just throw it all into the trash. And I don't feel bad at all. They wasted their money. Not the choice I want for my household. So that's my spiel about moderation.

But I think having those conversations too are helpful rather than, again, these really strict boundaries. Let kids figure it out. And some kids—and I probably have a few of these too—don't seem to have the same limits other children might have around sugar. And I know I'm going to sound like such a Pollyanna, but I don't like sugar. I didn't like it as a kid. That doesn't mean I don't enjoy a really fabulous dessert. But ironically, my mom is a candy junky. My mom had candy in our house in a drawer. We called it the candy drawer my whole life. And it was gross to me. It all tasted the same. It all was gross. And anyway, I think that's kind of cool. So my point being that yes. We're all different. Some people will naturally be drawn to this or that. But there's also something to be said for having everything accessible within the reasonable limit that you might set as a parent because my mom having that candy drawer did not mean that I ate candy. It actually did the opposite. With some of my kids, if I had a candy drawer, yeah. It would be a problem.

So I don't know why that is. I don't know. Just people being different. Different people having different limits although many a time I have said, especially to older kids, "Hey, that's your body. That's your body. And if you don't feel good later or you're tired tomorrow, I want you to remember this. I'm not going to tell you what you can and cannot do. But it seems to me like you might be moving past that limit of what is reasonable." Anyway, I do think they ultimately have to learn for themselves. So that doesn't mean a free for all all the time especially for younger kids. But I am specifically talking about the older kids. I'm not going to police them. My son will get on his bike and drive around, and I'm sure he'll come home every now and then with a soda, which we do not do in the house. And okay. That's—he's going to do that because he's 16. Then I feel like he should do that too. And I say to them regularly, "At a certain point here, kids, we are not going to be responsible for you in that way." And I know that might seem really fun and awesome, and it is in a lot of ways. But we won't continue to pay your dental bills, for example. Not that any of them have dental bills now. They're really, really healthy kids which I think is also a reason that I've been blessed in that way. I think we've been lucky in a lot of ways. I think we've been, of course, really intentional in other ways to create their health. But I'm not dealing, thank God, with a bunch of sickly children that can't handle anything.

So to that end, maybe I'm a little bit more lenient than some parents feel they can be. So all things in moderation especially for younger kids. Again, I don't really believe in

super strong nos around whatever it is unless, again, it's sort of passing the limit, right? So you have a little kid that—Belgium made muffins the other day. She made almond meal muffins. They were pretty damn healthy. But a tiny bit of sugar in there. Probably coconut sugar or something. And Deva. Deva kind of latched on because she's 3. And that age, if you aren't putting food in front of them—my experience—then they're just going to eat whatever they can find like little, tiny animals. And I think when kids are hungry and/or thirsty—yeah. Sugar is attractive. So she had one muffin. That's what everyone had. And then she got the idea that she needed a bunch more. It's like no. That's not what we're doing. But the first one, sure. And I didn't control that or try to tell them when they could have it. It's just like, "Yeah. Everybody can have one. Just go for it. And what's left is left."

So yeah. I was referring to a childhood friend, who I grew up with. And her mom was really controlling about food. And I don't know more than that because I was a kid myself. And honestly, I haven't talked to her in quite a long time, and I don't even know how I'd bring that one up. But her mom was really controlling. And thinking back, this was the 90s. The ideas of health—well, they're probably just as ridiculous as they might be now, right? Who can say? But in my mind now, they weren't healthy. I don't know what her mother was trying to do other than maybe she had her own food issues and stuff. So yeah. This friend was limited a lot of the time even in high school. And when she had the chance, she kind of went crazy with food and kind of did what she wanted. And so being the kid with her, it's not like I was an adult. I kind of had access to the way that felt for her and how much she really hated being controlled by her mom and being told what to eat. And then on top of it had these ideas about restriction and was afraid to gain weight. And right. All the things that kind of all of us would love if our kids didn't inherit from us.

Different kinds of diets. I mean this could probably be its own podcast. Let it be known that, especially in pregnancy, I've worked with women of all kinds of ways of eating especially here. Raw vegans. Fruitarians. Paleo. You name it. And I'm not going to say they're created equal, but that's your choice as an adult. And if people understand the needs of pregnancy and they're willing to make it work for their bodies and their babies, whatever. That's being a midwife. However, I don't necessarily have the same point of view with children meaning that I don't think we should be putting our kids on any time of anything unless—I don't know unless because I've never had the unless in my house. But you might if your kid is immune compromised or is dealing with something outside of the scope of this normal conversation. I'm talking about the vegan diet in particular for children. And this is opinion. A lot of it. And I'm sure there is research. But personally, I don't need the research for my own family.

I think a varied diet is best for children and their development and the fact that they're growing a brain in a way that we only do once in life. And then they're moving into a hormonal phase, it's big. It's big to grow. It's big to grow up. And I just personally don't see that any kind of restrictive diet would feel good to me as a parent. So I've tried those things, but I don't put them on the kids. And who knows what they'll do when they get older? I became a vegetarian, and I'm not anymore. But the first time I tried that, I was probably 14 or 15. I also wouldn't control a kid that age if they decided to stop eating meat. I might do my best with my argument, but I wouldn't control it. But little kids, I'm talking about. It's just been my experience here in a very highly vegan culture in this place that it's not healthy. And who can say? I can't either at this point what the effects would be. Lifelong or on extended health of a kid that was in utero vegan and vegan all the way. I don't know either because we're not at that point. But I know that there certainly are some health problems specifically dental problems that I see more than prevalent here with people I've either (a) worked with as clients or just (b) in our social community because, as I kind of alluded to, being plant based or vegan or whatever word you want to say is seen as superior here. And I don't know if it's like that where you live. So I don't have to go on and on. I don't know exactly how it got that way other than I think there's this whole way of equating that to being higher vibration. I obviously don't agree.

So do what you will with yourself. But consider that animal products can be really beneficial and done in a healthful, balanced way for children. And another reason that that seems to make practical sense to my brain is that little kids don't eat a lot. Generally. So if you're vegan, I mean my experience watching is that those kids eat fruit. That's pretty much what they eat because they don't eat a lot. And a two year old, in a lot of cases, isn't going to perhaps eat the same more complicated vegan fare that an adult would sort of make themselves eat or possibly enjoy eating whereas omnivorous children are eating everything. So the chances of getting all those micronutrients and macronutrients and fat and protein and iron, it's just so much easier. So again, I'm not here to tell people what to do. I know there are lots of reasons, spiritual, et cetera, that people choose such things. But I'm speaking of our family, and that's not something I'd be willing to try.

So I think another idea I've wanted to share is that I guess along the lines of moderation and omnivorous, in our case, is that if everything like food group wise is accessible and normal then that's what's available. So with little children, unless you have big kids coming into the house, they can't have it if you don't buy it. And that was something that hit me when my kids were little. It was like, "Oh, yeah." So don't bring them to the store because you'll have ten arguments/discussions with your three year old about all the things they want to put in the cart perhaps. And a lot of those things might be good.



But it's hard. Deva is very hard to navigate the store with. So don't buy it, if you don't want them to have it. Or I guess if you buy it and it's not for them, then you go to hide it or something like that. But having things just be normal, like I don't know. I think it's funny especially newer parents, so you might be one of them. And this might ring true, if it's not offensive in any way. But have this obsession about they have to eat their vegetables. And, again, I don't know what that is. I don't know what this thing is that has happened to our culture. Yes. Vegetables are good, but this emphasis on more. I mean if little kids don't eat that much they're not going to eat that much of anything. Vegetables or other.

But anyway, why does it have to be this big deal? Well, because most people don't eat that way. So if you don't eat that way, why do you expect your kid to eat that way? And if you don't eat that way, then they don't see you eat that way, so why would they want to eat that way? I mean kids are really just going off of what's in front of them and what they're seeing. And that's really powerful. So I guess it's a plug to clean up your own diet in the way that you think your kid should be eating. So if you've come to the conclusion that vegetables are great but not a huge focus then don't make them a huge focus. You don't have to sneak them in everything. I mean kids are wise to that anyway. And I've always sort of refused to cook for children in a way. They eat what we eat. We're not making other food in any way, shape, or form whether it's sneaking in vegetables or feeding a kid macaroni and cheese at every meal because they won't eat. I just—I have never done that. I will not do it.

But yeah. If kids see you eating salads and vegetables and liking them and making them taste yummy, they will eat them because when they're little they don't have any stigma about it. So Cove. I mean she is over 1, and she still doesn't. She will eat kale. If she can chew it, that's kind of the problem with her at the moment. She will eat mushrooms. She loves vegetables, if I'm eating them. And Deva is super into vegetables, always has been. And that's another thing. I think kids are different, as mentioned. Some kids definitely do seem to gravitate less towards meat, and some totally gravitate towards it. I think that's just our own personal chemistry. In fact, just because it's cute, Deva calls meat meap, with a P on the end. She's called it meap since she could talk. So she doesn't often like meap, and we must remove meap from some of her food. But then other times, she'll eat meap, so I don't really understand. I don't know exactly what that means to her always.

But anyway, with those two younger ones, it is true. They will eat salads, and so do some of the other ones. True and Deva—or no. True and Ever, the other day, wanted salads for lunch. So for Ever, it's about having a good salad dressing. That's her key. So go with it. This is how kids find what they like. This is how they explore it. No one is

forcing them to do it. But they see that you like it. And they try it, and they're like, "Oh, that's really good." So yeah. Not to make it sound like everybody is eating salads all the time in our house. And actually, if they were, I'm not even saying I think that's healthy or the best thing. I'm not trying to paint that as superior, but there's some kind of focus that most people seem to have on the whole vegetable thing. So I thought I'd mention it, but my kids equally love meat and seafood and greens and sandwiches and fruit. They really do eat absolutely everything.

Kids have gotten pickier. I have found that as they're growing up. So I don't know if there's a solution for that, or if it's just, again, personal preference. Like a couple of my kids lately have decided they don't like salmon, and we eat a lot of salmon especially when I'm pregnant. So our rule at dinner, at least, is like, "Well, here's what we made. You eat what you want, or you don't eat." We don't allow other meal making. So they'll just eat parts of the meal, I guess. But can you imagine making nine different meals? It's not possible. Wow. So this is going on longer than I thought. I guess I had more to say.

So meal timing is just something I wanted to hit on because I have tried both of the opposite ends of the spectrum. So just sharing for me what's felt better, and, of course, each of us makes our own choice. So by meal timing, I mean when are your kids permitted to eat? When do you offer them food? Blah, blah, blah. Do you allow them snacks in between? How controlled is that? And, again, I'm not saying there is a right way. But with this many kids, it's something that I've really released control about although fully admit that some days I am frustrated. And I want to clamp it down. I think I did that yesterday actually. They had—it felt like they had eaten nonstop from 8:00 a.m. And here it was 12:00 p.m., and I was like, "You guys, this is enough. It is lunch time. You have lunch, and then that's all. That's all until later. Way later." So do you ever have it down? No. Because you're constantly gauging like, "What is this I'm in? Are these kids actually hungry?" And you try to figure that out. Maybe they didn't eat a lot yesterday. Or maybe they didn't eat a lot for breakfast. Or maybe they're just thirsty. Or maybe they're just bored. I have one, in particular, who I think just goes to food sometimes when he doesn't know what else to do. And he's 8. True is 8. So I have that awareness. I also don't want to make him feel bad about it, but it's asking good questions sometimes, I think, of kids that are starting to be able to figure it out. Like are you hungry? Why are you making that?

And for him, honestly, I could see him doing something with food perhaps later in life. The kids all joke about it. They say he's going to have a restaurant called True's Food and Drink because he just likes food. And he just likes to be preparing it and making it. So I don't want to discourage that. But I cannot have kids eating every minute of every

day. (a) that's a lot of money, a lot of food that a lot of it may go wasted which is really sad. But that doesn't really happen every day because if it did then I would be clamping down more. But I used to be more regimented. And my sister, I think, is this way still with her kids. And, again, no judgment. I think it really works for her. She has seven children. And I'm pretty sure she still really limits breakfast is at this time. Lunch is at this time. And they are allowed a certain snack in between the meals because she does her shopping week at a time. So they really—they have what they have. They live really rurally, so that all makes perfect sense to me. And hey, if it works for her, more power to her because I don't know that my way—it feels like it's working every day.

So I'm the opposite of that though for the most part. I really also want to respect that they may be hungry at a time when food isn't supposed to be served, right? As adults, don't we know that? Do we limit ourselves? Do we set an alarm? I mean hopefully not especially in pregnancy. You eat when you're hungry. And teaching that and having them be able to acknowledge and listen to their food cues is really important, right? Because what happens when people don't know they're hungry, right? That can totally happen to adults especially. They lose that connection. They don't even know when they're hungry. Or maybe it goes the other way, and someone constantly feels hungry. But it's just because way back maybe the cues kind of got messed up. So I don't want to discourage their bodies from knowing what they need. But, again, we're parents here, right? So I think we have to do our best to interpret what might be going on and also provide some structure occasionally. So if a kid is hungry and they just ate figuring out what do you feel like eating and getting a clue as to what maybe their bodies are craving or needing? Or, like I said, and not to diminish someone's desire for food, but I have found especially with younger kids that often they're just thirsty. They haven't learned to interpret 100% yet what thirst is versus hunger. Or asking little kids especially, "How does it feel in your body," when they say, "I want that. Or,"—Deva is famous for it. "I want you to make me this. I want this." She changes by the minute. But I get one thing out, and she's on to the next thing. And it's like, "Okay. I know you're 3. But what do you want?"

And I don't know that we always come up with an answer, to be honest. So I'm kind of going down a weird rabbit hole. Sometimes I think she just wants the attention of it because she'll walk away and play for an hour, right? So how hungry was she? Sometimes it's just something to do. And then yeah. Of course, sometimes she really is hungry. And with Deva, because she is still so young, I have to keep my brain engaged with what she has eaten last because she can't really make her own food. Everyone else is making food, so we actually call her the baby raccoon because she'll just go to people that are eating and eat up half their food. So that's how she survives

and gets what she needs, I guess. But in other words, keeping up with what a younger kid has eaten because their mood can really suffer. Their sleep can really suffer. Low blood sugar or just lack of calories, so I do pay attention to her. But when it gets excessive, it's like, "Whoa. What is happening?"

So that's where I get where parents want to make really strict rules. I can't even remember who was telling me this. It was so long ago. I don't know. Somebody—it was probably their mom or their grandma, who had a lot of kids. And maybe they really had a sign that put up that said like, "The kitchen is closed." And they did. They closed the kitchen in between when it was being used to signify that the kitchen was closed. So I think that can totally work for people. There are days I wish that did work, or I could make that work better because when kids eat all day—and is I the same kid eating all day? No. It's nine kids eating at the time that they want to eat means the kitchen never stops. The food never seems to get put away. It's a disaster. Thank goodness, the kids are in charge of cleaning up the kitchen. So if they weren't, I guess maybe that's where I would draw the line. And that's probably where my sister has drawn the line because her kids are younger than mine. So I don't know. Just a bunch of things to think about. There is no right. There is no wrong. We're all just figuring it out. So if you think I have this figured out, I don't. I'm just going with what feels right in my house and what feels good with the kids. And even what season it is and what else we're busy with and, if we're going out to the park a lot or they're swimming a lot, then they're going to be more hungry.

So it's just not a static situation at all. Food is constant. And that's one thing about having a lot of kids. It never stops. It never, ever stops. So who makes food in our house? Well, the kids make their own food for the most part except for the younger ones. The older ones are very good at cooking for them or sharing. So I can't say I'm slaving in the kitchen all day. They take care of a lot of it, and I'm kind of supervising the choices or what's available. Rune loves to tell me there's no food. It's just a funny thing he likes to do, which I think means there's just nothing he feels like making for himself. I don't know if that's laziness or I don't know what it is. But yeah. He often likes to say, "There's no food." "Oh, what do you mean? There's eggs. There's bread. There's cheese. Make something." Dinner is made by Jason almost exclusively. Yes. He is a wondrous being. I am not exaggerating. It might seem like I am, but I'm not. He loves to cook. He's in charge of dinner. I may help by getting whatever is needed, but I really don't help cook. At least in pregnancy and, rarely, ever. I don't really enjoy it at this point in my life to be completely honest.

And dinner time feels like a big chore to me. Maybe that's not the best attitude. But anybody with little kids, imagine a whole army of them hungry and tired and napless in

some cases because they're past that point. Dinner is not my favorite time of the day. It's not very relaxed. And with the older kids being busy, especially during the summer, we do allow them to stay out because that's the beautiful time of day here. It seems really counterintuitive to call them home when the best part of the day is from 6:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m., so a lot of them aren't home. Anyway, dinner is kind of a crazy time at our house. And that's maybe a better podcast left for another day.

Clean up goes to the kids. The older ones—they have it divided up amongst the three or four of them. So that's a beautiful thing although I won't lie. There are often disagreements about whose things are left in the sink. "Oh, So-and-so didn't fully finish cleaning up. That's not mine to clean." It definitely drives me crazy, but we mostly get through it. And it's not a job I'm willing to take up the slack in just because they want to complain. Yeah. My job is to buy the food and feed them, and they can manage cleaning up. And for the most part, they do a really great job. And it makes them more conscientious about the mess they're making, I think. So that's how it all works.

What we eat? Like I said, everything. Mostly organic. Mostly, mostly, mostly organic. Mostly whole foods. Not the store. But mostly foods that are whole. And ideas and recipes, honestly, feel like a bit of a struggle. So I don't know. People could send me fun recipes that you have. We like to grill. That's been something since it's been hot. My son, Egan, really likes to grill, so he's kind of in charge of that. He's an excellent cook, if I haven't mentioned that on another podcast. He's the kid that when I get home from recording this will say, "Mom, do you want food?" And he'll make something delicious from scratch using all the things he can find. So definitely some talented food cooks in our house and kids that like to play with it.

One thing, I'll be honest about, is I wish we were gardening more. I wish local foods felt more accessible. I don't love the feeling of buying everything that comes from God knows where even if it's organic. But also we have so much going on. And yes. Food is important. But getting them fed with high quality food is sometimes where it stops. I don't have all day to plant a garden. And we did. We did try a little one this year that Amelia is in charge of. But it's small. And what are we going to get? 50 little tomatoes. I mean that's not—it's fun. But in other words, it's not really producing to feed us. At least not this year. So that is a goal of mine and something I sort of wish I had more time for. But I'm also not super passionate about. I would love for someone else to do that. Maybe one of the kids will take it up with Amelia. So that's somewhere I definitely feel like we could do better.

We don't really go to Sam's Club or discount stores like that mostly because we don't have them. We'd have to drive an hour to an hour and a half. And my time is just more

valuable than that, at this point. So yes. We do not always make the smartest financial choices for food in favor of convenience meaning our time. Not convenience foods. But our time. Jason and I both have a really packed schedules and births, et cetera. So just being honest. I think there are lots of people out there doing a really great job with homesteading and making things from scratch. Even my sister is incredible. She makes everything. She has her own bees. And has honey. She makes her own bread. And it's easy to feel like kind of a failure compared to people like that. I don't. I'm just admitting that—yeah. There's some feelings there of just, "I wish I could." But I'm honest with myself, and I don't think I can. I can't fit those things in. And I know if they were really important I would. But they're not. So being with my kids is more important. Doing all the work that I'm blessed to do while raising them feels more important. And so it doesn't mean it's more important to anyone else, but that's my life.

So those of you that are doing all those things and growing your own food and all of it, I totally bow to you. I think that's fantastic. It's so amazing. I do believe it is so valuable to the earth and to our world. And may we all do better, I guess, in the ways we can. So I think that's all because this really has gotten kind of long as it is. I hope you enjoyed this, and I'd love to hear more from you about other mothering podcast ideas and ideas in general. So as always, it's [maryn@indiebirth.org](mailto:maryn@indiebirth.org). Have a great day.

(closing music)