

LINGOKIDS - EP30 WITH TC

EMILY: Hey there! Welcome to Grown Up with Emily. A Lingokids podcast that helps kids discover how to be whatever they want to be.

JACK ZHANG: You just gotta start doing it. You know, start cooking for your family, start cooking for your friends. I think the most important part is you just have to do it because the more you do it, the more muscle memory you build, the more [00:00:45] understanding you build a food. I never went to culinary school.

Everything I've learned is just from me. That having that curiosity of like look I you know, I've tried [00:01:00] something and I'm like, I want to try to make this on my own.

EMILY: Mmm giving cooking a try Winson. What are you making?

WINSTON: Well, I'm trying to make spaghetti Emily, but it's turning into a big gloopy spaghetti [00:01:15] monster.

EMILY: Oh ! Pass me that strainer and let's get some of that water out. It looks like you may have boiled the noodles a bit too long.

WINSTON: Oh, it's all sticky and hard at the same time. We can't eat this. And I thought cooking was [00:01:30] fun and easy.

EMILY: Cooking can be a ton of fun. It just takes practice, that's all. Oh, you know what?

There's a chef named Jack Jong who creates incredible dishes for his two year old. He's a master at making food that's both [00:01:45] delicious and fun. Actually, let's see if I can give Jack a ring. Maybe he'll give us a cooking lesson.

WINSTON: Oh my gosh, really? Ask him if he delivers. I mean, yes, please! Call him! Call him!

EMILY: Okay, okay. [00:02:00]

Jack? Hi! This is Emily with Growing Up. Yes, I'm fine. How are you? Oh, that's wonderful. Listen, my assistant Winston and I were just watching some of your amazing cooking videos [00:02:15] online. We've been having some trouble cooking spaghetti, and we were wondering, do you think you'd be willing to give us some pointers about cooking?

Maybe walk us through one of your recipes? Really? Oh, Portuguese tarts? That's [00:02:30] great! We'll come over right away!

WINSTON: He said he'd help us?

EMILY: Yes! Ah, we can go meet him at his kitchen now. He's got a recipe for a Portuguese tart he wants to share with us.

WINSTON: A Portuguese tart? I don't know [00:02:45] what that is, but it sounds yummy.

Oh, I'm getting hungry just thinking about it, Emily.

That must be Jack's house! Oh, I'm so excited to meet a real life chef!

EMILY: This [00:03:00] is going to be great, Winston. Oh, hi Jack.

JACK ZHANG: Hi.

EMILY: Thanks so much for having us.

WINSTON: Thanks for agreeing to help us out, Jack.

EMILY: Yes, thank you. Could you tell Winston a bit about yourself?

JACK ZHANG: My name is Jack Zhang. I am a [00:03:15] chef. Well, kind of a retired chef now.

I'm more like a private chef for my two year old son. And I make these videos where I make extravagant meals for him.

EMILY: How did you get started as a chef, Jack? Have you always been interested in food? [00:03:30]

JACK ZHANG: Growing up, I was raised by my grandparents and my mom. Most of the cooking was done by my grandparents, and they immigrated from China, and it's funny because my grandfather is [00:03:45] from northern China.

And my grandmother is from southern China. They have very different cuisines. So in the north, they eat more bold flavors. A lot of chili, a lot of spice. [00:04:00] Uh, and then in the south, it's more of an emphasis on fresh ingredients and letting it shine more than just throwing a bunch of sauce on it. So I had a lot of exposure to [00:04:15] both these styles.

I actually didn't discover my passion for cooking till very later on. I was 21 years old, just about to finish college, when I moved in with a few of my [00:04:30] friends and we ... The scientists split the chores, so I naturally took on the cooking role and we split groceries and every night I would look up some recipes and try to replicate them and make them really [00:04:45] tasty and present them to my roommates.

Most of the time the reactions were very positive. So I didn't go to culinary school. I graduated from college with a degree in geology, studying rocks. And I [00:05:00] realized this is something I just couldn't see myself doing for the rest of my life. And this was around the time when I was really interested in cooking.

I really did pick up this passion.

WINSTON: Oh, that is so cool! I mean, hot, because you know, I like bold [00:05:15] spicy things too. Hey, did your family ever make any special food that you just really, really loved and maybe try to make yourself?

JACK ZHANG: Let's see, I think one of my favorite things and one of the things that my grandfather used to make is [00:05:30] scallion pancakes, which to this day I am still just trying to perfect my own recipe.

WINSTON: It's pretty neat that you learned all these recipes from your family.

JACK ZHANG: And yeah, these recipes have really shaped the way I cook. [00:05:45] I feel like I tend to enjoy making things that require very little ingredients. But it takes like a lifetime to master.

WINSTON: Chef Jack, what exactly is a Portuguese egg tart?

JACK ZHANG: A [00:06:00] Portuguese egg tart is this flaky, crispy pastry shell filled with this sweet egg custard filling.

EMILY: I've had one before. They're kind of small, right?

JACK ZHANG: You can gobble one of these up in just a couple bites, but [00:06:15] they take hours to make. It all starts with making the puff pastry dough.

WINSTON: Mmm! Puff pastry? Let's do it! How can I help?

EMILY: Well, it looks like the recipe for the dough says we'll need [00:06:30] butter, flour, eggs, oh, and salt.

WINSTON: I'm on it!

JACK ZHANG: This is the most important part to get right. Because it gives you that satisfying crispy and flaky crust on the outside that goes so well with this [00:06:45] sweet and savory filling. So we begin by making the dough by folding butter into it many, many times.

WINSTON: Folding it in? Oh, I see. You actually fold the dough I just made with flour and eggs into the butter.

Can I try? [00:07:00] I almost dropped it. Butter is tricky.

EMILY: Butter really is tricky.

JACK ZHANG: Once you have the butter sealed into the dough, you can fold it in half, roll it out flat, repeat this several times, and you're [00:07:15] gonna have these many, many layers of butter and dough. This technique is called lamination, and it's used in several Flaky pastries.

WINSTON: Oh, okay. I think I got it all folded in. [00:07:30] Um, now what?

JACK ZHANG: We can let our finished dough rest in the fridge as we move on to the filling. The main ingredient in the filling are eggs. But, we're only gonna use the yolks [00:07:45] because that's where all the flavor and the richness is located.

WINSTON: Mmm! The yolks are so rich and golden!

JACK ZHANG: So we mix in some sugar, some flavorings like cinnamon, vanilla. [00:08:00] And some lemon zest.

EMILY: Oh wow! Those ingredients smell so good too!

JACK ZHANG: Prepared in our tart tins, we can pour this filling into each individual tart.

WINSTON: So you pour the filling right [00:08:15] into these little cups of dough I helped make? Aww!

JACK ZHANG: We bake them in a very hot oven.

500 degrees Fahrenheit. In about 15 to 20 minutes, they will come out beautifully crispy.

WINSTON: And what will they be like when they're done, Jack?

JACK ZHANG: [00:08:30] The egg filling will have set perfectly, and there's even going to be a little bit of caramelization on the top. This is when the sugars react with the high heat and create these [00:08:45] new, uh, toasty flavors.

Kind of like a roasted marshmallow.

EMILY: Mmm, I love roasted marshmallows.

WINSTON: Oh, me too, me too. Especially at summer camp.

EMILY: I want to take a quick minute to tell you and our [00:09:00] listeners about Lingokids. You know how I started every episode by saying that it's a Lingokids podcast? Well, Lingokids is the number one learning app for kids.

They believe that learning can be fun, and I think so [00:09:15] too. They transform screen time with educational and interactive games, videos, and songs. And you can play all these on their app. What do you think, Winston?

WINSTON: What do I think? Sign me up! I can't wait to try [00:09:30] these when they're done.

EMILY: Wow, thanks for showing us how to make this delicious dessert, Jack.

Now, I'm sure this tart goes down very well with lots of kids since it's sweet and tasty, but I was wondering about the other dishes you make, like green eggs or [00:09:45] cauliflower puree.

WINSTON: Yeah. I mean, most kids would probably be like, Ooh, you spewy. I'm not gonna go anywhere near that green stuff. Ooh. Hey, Jack.

Were you ever a picky eater when you were growing up?

JACK ZHANG: I don't remember really being that [00:10:00] picky. I mean, of course there were things that I didn't all didn't eat. That's, I think that's just normal for every, everyone, not just kids.

WINSTON: Sometimes I see food that I'm like, eh, I don't know about that. But if I see my friends like Emily, eat it and like it, well [00:10:15] then I wanna try it too.

EMILY: That's true, Winston. Jack, I have another question for you. What is it like cooking as a chef in a professional restaurant? Is it different from cooking for your family at home?

JACK ZHANG: Cooking in a professional setting is [00:10:30] so different. Because as a head chef, you have so many responsibilities. So you need to worry about ordering the ingredients.

Sometimes shipments get [00:10:45] delayed. Sometimes the ingredients that you're waiting for to start service, they don't show up that day. Or maybe the truck driver missed his route or something, and you have to adapt on the spot immediately. So maybe that means changing up the menu, [00:11:00] or just taking it, taking the dish off altogether.

And you have to worry about the cost of all the ingredients, because in the end, you're still running a business. It doesn't matter if you own the business or not, [00:11:15] someone is running the business. So, as a head chef, you have to make sure you're not just losing money.

WINSTON: Oh, the tarts are already starting to smell so buttery.

Jack, when you're working as a chef in a restaurant, are there lots [00:11:30] of different people helping you out?

JACK ZHANG: I like to refer to our restaurant crew almost like a, like a pirate ship. Right, so you have your head chef, who's the captain. Now the captain needs to pretty much know everything about running the [00:11:45] ship, because he's the one giving out the orders.

So the head chef is in charge of pretty much everything, including dish washing. Because that is something that's part of the restaurant job. I think a lot of people forget that that's even a position, but I've washed my [00:12:00] fair share of dishes. Because when you don't have your dishwasher there, you gotta, you gotta jump on, or you gotta get someone else to jump on.

Uh, so you got your head chef, and then you have your sous chef, who is, like, the right hand man. So, he will [00:12:15] fill in if, for whatever reason, you're busy doing something else. He'll command the crew, if needed. And then, down the line, you'll have your line cooks and prep cooks.

WINSTON: That'd be one busy pirate [00:12:30] ship.

Wait, did you say a lion cook? Like, lion?

EMILY: No, no. A line cook, Winston.

WINSTON: Oh, a line cook. What's a line cook? I've never heard of that.

JACK ZHANG: If you're a line cook, what that means is [00:12:45] you are the one responsible for firing the food, which means when a customer orders a dish, cook it on the spot and you are responsible for sending it out nice and hot and perfectly cooked.

And then prep cooks are the ones that come in a little earlier [00:13:00] during the shift and cut up all the vegetables or the meats, all the garnishes. They just prepare everything so that the line cooks can have an easy time making the dish that they need. [00:13:15] Then you have your servers and bussers who serve you your drinks, ask you if you need anything.

So yeah, the whole restaurant is pretty much a giant operation and every cog in the machine needs to be [00:13:30] working correctly to have like a smooth service, a smooth night in the restaurant.

WINSTON: Wow, restaurant cooking is one mighty big operation. Pretty different from just cooking for your friends and family.

EMILY: It sure is, Winston.

WINSTON: Oh my gosh, are [00:13:45] the Portuguese tarts already ready?

Mmm. Oh, golden tarts straight out of the oven.

EMILY: Wow, what a pro, huh Winston?

WINSTON: Okay, uh, I'm gonna need to get some of those tarts in my belly, [00:14:00] uh, right now.

EMILY: Here, I'll pass you a few, Winston.

WINSTON: I can't wait.

EMILY: Bon appétit, Winston. Give it a try.

WINSTON: Oh, wow. This might be Okay, this [00:14:15] might be the best Portuguese tart I have ever had. And I mean, yes, technically, it's my first. But I love it. It's perfect. Thank you, Jack.

EMILY: Mmm, oh my gosh, I am with you on that, Winston. It's got that [00:14:30] perfect balance of savory, oh, and sweet.

WINSTON: I am so stoked to cook with all these great tips you told us about today, Chef Jack.

But, where should I start?

JACK ZHANG: You just gotta start doing it. You know, start cooking for your family, start cooking for your friends. It could be [00:14:45] anything. Or I saw something on TV, or on the internet, where I'm like, wow, that dish looks amazing, I wanna see how it tastes like.

EMILY: That's a great tip, Jack. Oh, thanks so much for meeting with us and showing us what it's like to be a [00:15:00] real chef, chef Jack. This has been absolutely amazing. Mmm, yeah. Thanks, Jack!

That's all the time we have on Growin Up today. But we hope that Jack's story has inspired you to get in the kitchen and cook up some [00:15:15] amazing recipes for you and your family and friends.