

LIFE ON A PLATE
SEASON 4, EPISODE 2: FI GLOVER & JANE GARVEY

SPEAKERS

Alison Oakervee, Yasmin Khan, Fi Glover, Jane Garvey

Yasmin

This season of Life on a Plate is sponsored by Belazu, the amazing suppliers of Mediterranean and Middle Eastern ingredients. Their range includes premium olive oils and vinegars, pestos, pastes, and preserved lemons. And if you haven't yet tried their signature Rose Harissa, which is a staple in my fridge, then you are in for a treat. Belazu started 30 years ago when two friends, George and Adam, drove a van full of olives back from France. They began supplying chefs, then home cooks and have never looked back. Belazu ingredients are restaurant quality, and I've genuinely been a fan for a very long time. Their tahini from Nablus has a very special place on my kitchen shelf – it's so nutty and flavoursome. Their ingredients are such a simple way to enhance other flavours, and they transform any dish. Belazu source and develop their products very carefully, without compromising on quality and have gone above and beyond in their commitment to the environment and to looking after their suppliers. To find out more go to waitrose.com/belazu to discover the range for yourself.

Hi, I'm Yasmin Khan and you're listening to Life on a Plate, the podcast from Waitrose. Throughout the season my co-host, Alison Oakervee and I, are going to be talking to a range of fantastic guests from many walks of life and asking them to share their stories through the food memories, dishes and ingredients that mean the most to them.

Alison, hello.

Alison

Hi, Yasmin. How you doing?

Yasmin

I'm really good. Very excited to be back for Episode Two of Life on a Plate.

Alison

Good. I'm excited too I'm really looking forward to talking to our guests today. But before we do that, I want to know what you've been eating. What have you been cooking?

Yasmin

Well, as the weather has been turning, I have been moving towards soups, which are actually my favourite food. And I often say maybe one day I will write a soup cookbook because honestly, I could eat them for three meals a day. So in my veg box last week, I had a beautiful big cauliflower and one of my favourite soups is this roasted cauliflower soup with lots of cumin and coriander and turmeric and potato. And I roast the florets as well as the leaves and so I kind of use some of those on top as a bit of

decoration and it's just, yeah, my favourite. So that's what I've been enjoying this week. Yeah. What about you? What have you been cooking?

Alison

Well, I like to get ahead and I like to batch cook - it's this time of year, I have done a massive batch of Christmas cakes. So that before the madness of November and December starts, that has been ticked off my list and it's quite a few Christmas presents done as well.

Yasmin

How many do you make?

Alison

Twelve (giggles)

Yasmin

Twelve? You're joking! Wow, that is so impressive. So do you just do it like over one day, or...

Alison

I usually do it over a couple of days because they take such a long time in the oven. But I weigh out all the ingredients and have all the fruit soaking on the same day. And with all the brandy in the kitchen, it does smell quite pungent.

Yasmin

Oh, that sounds amazing. I'm gonna have to hit you up for that recipe after this conversation because today of course, we had the wonderful experience, didn't we, of speaking to two veterans of broadcasting. And it was kind of like the tables were turned this week because the two guests that we were interviewing are two women with decades of broadcast experience between them.

Alison

That's right. Their work runs the whole gamut from deeply serious to really hilarious. We have Fi and Jane. That's Jane Garvey who was one of the main voices on Women's Hour for 13 years until the end of last year. And Fi Glover who is another Radio Four main voice that many people will recognise from The Listening Project. She's also been a regular writer on Waitrose Weekend since we started, but together, they host the phenomenally successful podcast, Fortunately, in which they talk to celebs about all kinds of topics and diverse themes. They're just very funny.

Yasmin

They are so naturally funny. I really had to up my joke game for this episode. But what I loved about our conversation the most, I think, is not only do they have this really unique ability to just get to the heart of any topic in a really human and sharp way. They're also these two inspiring, strong women in their 50s, unapologetically themselves, and you just don't get to hear that that often.

Alison

No, you don't. And just so honest and brave just to say what they think, which is just a really refreshing listen.

Yasmin

Absolutely. I was also really glad when they both opened up about their views on women's equal pay and how that's been dealt with and reported.

Alison

It was fascinating, there was so much to learn. But it was serious, we had some light hearted movements, reminiscing about what they ate in their childhood and how they navigate the likes and dislikes of their teenage kids.

Yasmin

Absolutely. So, shall we begin then?

Alison

Yes. So, here's our conversation with Fi Glover and Jane Garvey.

Yasmin

Hello, Fi and Jane, thank you so much for joining us on Life on a Plate.

Jane

Hello, hello. Very nice to meet you both.

Fi

Hi, Yasmin. Hello, Alison.

Yasmin

Before we begin, I've got a bit of a confession, actually. We've been kind of, you know prepping, you know what it's like prepping for a podcast, you know we've got Jane and Fi on. And we both realised that we're a little bit nervous for this one. Because we are interviewing two people who are, you know, famous for their, like extraordinary interviews and podcasts and veterans of broadcasting. So, before we begin, I wanted to ask you if you've got any tips for us, because we've just started doing this as a double act. This is actually one of our very first recordings together.

Jane

First tip, I didn't like veteran very much. What do you feel about that, Fi?

Fi

I assumed that was directed at you, so it just completely passed over me.

Yasmin

Not veterans.

Jane

That'd be right. Do you know what, I think there is only one tip, which is – listen.

Fi

So, I'd agree with that entirely. But I'd also say, because it's a podcast, the joy of podcasting sometimes is that you just say what pops into your head, don't you? That's what makes it different. That's what makes it more bouncy. That's what's made podcasting really successful. So, you know, that the filter that you might have for broadcasting, which is a kind of different thing. I think the joy that we found is to allow those questions in that normally would have a portcullis in front of them, you know, when the microphone goes on and you'd be thinking no I shouldn't say that. But I think the joy of this is that you can, so we're prepared ladies.

Yasmin

Do you like being interviewed? I mean, how do you find the process? Do you find that it's hard to switch from being interviewer to interviewee?

Fi

I think it is a little bit of a gear change. And certainly, with the book that Jane and I have written together, I think we, we've done quite a few interviews so far and we've got that double whammy of suddenly being together as well. So, there's all kinds of new stuff that's entered into the fray. And I did notice that she, and I don't know whether you picked up on this too Jane, but I think the interviews that we have done so far, you and I've both asked questions of the interviewer to the interviewer's mild surprise. I'm not sure that we've kind of learned how to do it actually.

Jane

I'm not sure we are very good interviewees. Because, to be fair, I think we both do have a natural curiosity, and we are interested in other people. And actually going back to the whole tips thing I think it's just about showing a decent level of interest in the way somebody else's life has panned out. There's always so many things you can ask people and so many different avenues you can go down.

Yasmin

Absolutely and I guess the trick is with two talented women like you, wondering where to start. But we're going to start with talking about your brand new book, which is called *Did I Say That Out Loud?* Why don't you tell us a bit about why you wrote it and what it's about?

Fi

So we do a podcast together that we started doing 203 episodes ago, which by our rudimentary Key Stage Maths identifies that as being about four years ago. And we didn't really know where that podcast was heading when we started. And it's turned out to have captured the imagination of quite a lot of subscribers. Jane and I think it did well, you know, not because we've got amazing brains or a brilliant intellectual take on the world. But because we're two women, talking about things that women talk about, in a way that women discuss things. So that's what we've carried on doing. It's been a really

wonderful thing to be part of. And we were approached to write a book that simply carried on doing the same thing. So it really is a book about the stuff as the title says, Did I Say It Out Loud?, The stuff that floats around in our brains, that sometimes you think you shouldn't have said or that you couldn't say, but it's actually important stuff. It's not just kind of fluffy nonsense. It's stuff that it turns out quite a lot of other women and some men are thinking about too. Does that sum it up, Jane?

Jane

I think so. It's a book to curl up with and to read in bite sized chunks and think oh yeah, actually that happened to me, or no, I totally disagree with what she said there or whatever it might be. And we've both been pretty honest about our lives and the way they've panned out and the challenges we've met along the way, and the stuff we've got wrong you know. Neither of us has... I mean frankly we've both made some fairly, well how can I put it, not everything's gone perfectly.

Fi

Darling, we've taken some tight corners.

Jane

And some creative risks.

Yasmin

Well, thank you so much for sharing them with us because I just think it's so much more real and compelling to hear people talk honestly about life, especially in like this Instagram age where you just see these like polished versions of people, constantly pretending that they're winning everything. I think that's probably the beauty of Fortunately your podcast as well really, because it feels to me when I listen to it that I'm just overhearing two friends at the kitchen table having a chat and over the course of listening it feels as if we become our friends, and it's just translated so well into the book which is really impressive.

Jane

Now it's really kind of you to say, but I do think we are different people, we think differently, we've got different life stories, different views, you know. I don't, funnily enough, I don't agree with everything she says. The plain fact is, Fi still hasn't understood that she's often wrong, that she needs to grasp that.

Fi

And the funny thing is I'm more often wrong when I'm in the company of Jane, whereas a lot of the time when I'm not I think it's okay.

Alison

But that's the thing we all love about your podcast as well as the book. It's the fact there's that ongoing banter between the two of you and you're correcting each other, and it did feel like you were reading the book to is, could just hear your voices.

Jane

Well, it's very kind of you to say.

Yasmin

So, you start the book, you know, those sections describing, you know, what identity and belonging meant for you Jane, you know, with the Liverpool connections. Fi, what it meant for you in terms of you know, Slough. There's this beautiful north south divide, and in what I was interested in, you know, from a food perspective, is in terms of identity and belonging from your different respective kind of upbringings. What did food look like for you growing up?

Fi

I had quite a strange childhood that was completely normal to me, as everybody's is, when my Dad left to go and work in Hong Kong when I was quite small, when I was about four years old, and we went over there and lived there for a couple of years, and then came back to go to school in this country. My Mum came back too so we had a really split upbringing actually, where part of the time we were in rural Hampshire, in a hamlet that was so tiny there was a postbox that was the kind of communal thing. There wasn't a pub, wasn't a shop, wasn't anything else, there was a postbox. God, we gathered around it. So, food was actually a completely different thing in one part of my life with my Mum to how it was, you know, when we went to Hong Kong to see my Dad. My Mum remains to this day a superb and dedicated gardener and looking back on it, we had an idyllic life on a plate actually as kids. With her there was always something that had just come out of the ground.

Yasmin

What kind of stuff was she growing?

Fi

Oh gosh everything. So she had a really big vegetable patch, there were always raspberry canes, runner beans, blackcurrants, all of those soft fruits, then all of the root vegetables. We'd quite often be, you know, pulling up potatoes and stuff and she just loved it, and also she was what, you know, seems now to be called an early adopter of that way of cooking and growing and staying quite close to your food. So I, you know, I have to pinch myself sometimes that that was there because we just took it for granted, you know, that's just how it was.

Yasmin

My grandparents were farmers as well so I have really vivid memories. We had like 10 dairy cows. I mean for me it really installed, I think, a love of provenance and food. Did you feel like it did that for you, Fi?

Fi

Well, I think it did, but it took a long time to come back, you know, as I think a lot of things from your childhood do, you know, you leave them behind and it's only, maybe, you know, 30 or 40 years down the line you think actually my place in this I recognise from a long time ago. So I've gone back to trying to cook, and in fact I mean I've always cooked, but I've gone back to try and cook in that kind of way. I'm a hopeless gardener so I'm not even going to pretend that I'm growing my own stuff

Alison

But you're cooking more seasonally

Fi

Yes, yeah, and I'm grateful to my mum, you know for, for doing all of that. But can I just throw in as well the caveat that we also had so much 70s rubbish in our lives as well. We were no stranger to Butterscotch Angel Delight, reformed ham, Primula spreads, and I love all that kind of stuff as well. You know, if it's just got kind of salt, sugar, and it's quite pale, and there's not an awful lot to chew, I'm quite happy with that as a childhood memory as well.

Jane

But what did you eat when you went to see your dad in Hong Kong then?

Fi

Well, just completely different food. I mean you know Hong Kong is not a rural environment so every single thing is brought in from somewhere else. So back in the 1970s we had powdered milk. We had, I mean there's quite a lot of fish, the fish man used to come around on his motorbike and, you know, slap down various, to us, unidentifiable fishes and get out this enormous machete and just chop the end of one, and you pay a couple of dollars for that wrapped up in newspaper.

Alison

I need to confess Fi, I had the same childhood. I grew up in Hong Kong and we moved there when we were four, so that fish man with a basket of fish coming round to your door and slapping it down.

Fi

Brilliant! And I always remember that fish because it had been skinned already, expertly, and wrapped up in newspaper, and sometimes, even by the time it was served on the plate, it still had a hint of newsprint on it. But obviously we ate loads of Hong Kong Chinese food, you know, we went to far more restaurants than we would ever have gone to if we'd been back in the UK, and that's just the way it was. We lived in a small flat, you didn't do, kind of, entertaining, you know that just wasn't a thing, so you know, we ate a lot of Chinese food and to this day I still love it but I can't claim to cook that and I wouldn't I wouldn't dare to. So that's my odd childhood mix.

Jane

So, I grew up in Liverpool, as I discuss in the book. My mum is a good cook, she's still a good cook. I've got incredibly fond memories of the cooking provided by both my grandmothers. My Grandma Garvey was just the most fantastic baker and she made the greatest gravy on God's Earth. I mean, I don't know how she did it, I don't know what was in it. But I will always remember Gran Garvey's gravy and she also used to make really exquisite butterfly cream fairy cakes. That was the sort of high point of our Sunday afternoon very traditional tea. We used to go to the Garvey grandparents every single Sunday. And my mum's family, the O'Neill's, my Nana O'Neill was also a great cook. I've got such good memories of Sunday lunch round at the O'Neill's because my grandparents would sit at either end of

the, what seemed to me, this really long table and my Gran would, my Nana rather, would always struggle because she had false teeth with the meat. And so she had an obsession with whether or not the joint was tough or not. And she'd always cooked it, I should say. But I can hear her now saying "Oh Jim" - that was my Granddad - "Jim, Jim, I can't eat this, it's too tough. How are the children going to manage?" and he'd just say, "Oh shut up, Mary, it's your teeth".

Alison

Tell us, what do you always have on your shelves?

Jane

My household has changed so I've got one daughter at university, one who has been to university and is now back home. The eldest daughter is a vegan, the youngest is a vegetarian with an occasional fish habit.

Alison

Is it enforced on you - veggie and veganism?

Jane

I suppose at home it is. Enforced seems a bit strong. No, no, I know exactly what you mean. When I'm out I will often...

Alison

Do you have a steak?

Jane

Well, interestingly, I'm not that interested in red meat anymore.

Yasmin

But I think it is an interesting point there that I think that a lot of people are probably navigating now. And by a lot of people I kind of mean myself because I started dating a vegan this year. And I probably shouldn't phrase it in that way.

Fi

It sounds like the title of a fantastic book, *I started dating a vegan*.

Yasmin

And it was really interesting, and obviously we're happily together now but in the early months I, you know, was not shy of kind of talking about it. I found it really challenging because I'm a food writer and I love all kinds of food, and I'm an omnivore and I kind of try to eat good meat, good quality meat and not a lot of it, but I certainly don't have an issue with it. And I feel like as increasingly more and more people are vegetarian or vegan, it's interesting what's happening in people's homes around this at the moment, and I do think it is leading to a lot of our kitchens changing. And I don't think that's a bad thing at all, but it can be tricky to navigate.

Jane

I mean my 21 year old literally looks the picture of health. So who am I to argue? I have to say now she mostly cooks for herself, it's less of a faff for me than it was.

Yasmin

Do you then, as a household...? Because when I grew up it was very important in our house - and for me culturally actually - for everybody to be eating the same food because there's this sense of, I think it's an anthropological thing as well, of when you share the same meal you kind of bond. And we would have these debates. In your house, do you all eat different things sometimes? Is there an effort made to all eat the same thing? Does this even matter?

Jane

I definitely think it matters and I love the idea of the three of us eating together and we do sometimes. But increasingly, you know, the eldest one is working and the youngest one isn't here a lot of the time now. I'm working much more than I used to when they were younger. And then there's Deliveroo. I'm not going to pretend we don't get Deliveroo because we absolutely do. I'm actually cooking just for myself tonight, and I've got myself a nice piece of fish and I'm going to thoroughly enjoy it. But to go back to the question about what we've always got in, at the moment we've always got in chickpeas, baked beans, tins of borlotti beans, cannellini beans, mixed beans, we're big on beans, tins of tomatoes, pasta, rice and I'm just a cheeseaholic, so I've always got blue cheese, cheddar cheese... What else do we always have in?

Alison

Having a combination of beans in the house, if they're in the tins, they're just so easy to just pop into so many different dishes.

Jane

I love beans.

Alison

What about you, Fi? What do you always have in your fridge or cupboards, just for go-to dinners?

Fi

Gosh, go-to dinner. So, I've got an experimenting vegetarian teenager and an omnivore teenager, and one of them is a really really keen cook already, which I'm incredibly grateful for. It does mean that our fridge is a joyful kaleidoscope of oddness on any given day because it contains things that have been cooked or waiting to be cooked. Oh my goodness. One thing that I think many parents of teenagers will identify with is the shelf that just becomes the sauces shelf. I don't remember in my childhood having more than two types of sauces - a bottle of ketchup and a bottle of salad cream wasn't there? But now there's a whole, and I mean no exaggeration, there are probably 20 different bottles, nozzles, jars of sauces that seems to have hove into view, so that's always there. And actually, you can cheer up the dullest of bean-based meals with good old dollop of sriracha or peri peri on top.

Yasmin

There's this bit in the book where you talk about your relationship, Fi, with your deep fat fryer, but you don't really expand on it. So I thought, I know, I'll get the scoop. I'll get the scoop of the interview that you're doing on the book. So tell me about your deep fat fryer.

Fi

Well I'm just going to be really honest with you. A deep fat fryer was a frowned upon thing in my childhood. So sometimes we would have a piece of fried food but it was a really special treat, and the idea that you would have on your kitchen surface a permanent item which you could just pop something into and it would come out gorgeous and bad for you, that wasn't going to happen. So I resisted having a deep fat fryer until about two years ago when I bought a mini one and we've never looked back.

Yasmin

Give me your top three fried things that go in the fryer.

Jane

Mars bars.

Fi

No, so actually we did try doing doughnuts once and that needs a bit of work, that needs a bit of work, because you've still got to do something with that. I'm not a baker. You've got to do something with that to make them light and fluffy. They were like golf balls.

Yasmin

Alison, have you got any tips, any doughnut making tips?

Alison

Just patience, I think. Just to make sure that it rises properly and then really hot.

Fi

Yeah, I've got no patience so that didn't happen at all. But my top three would be Halloumi sticks. I mean the simplest thing in the world, dusting of flour, dusting of paprika, shove them in. I mean they're just wonderful, aren't they?

Yasmin

Can't beat fried cheese.

Fi

So naughty, fried cheese! And I am in search of the perfect chicken schnitzel. Haven't managed to do one yet because it's a mini fryer. I mean really stop me when this gets too dull. But the secret, I think, of any kind of schnitzel is to have quite a thin meat isn't it because otherwise it's just burnt on the outside and still barely cooked on the inside. And it's problematic in a mini fryer.

Alison

What about with mini fillets?

Fi

Alison, are you heading towards a goujon?

Alison (laughing)

Yes, sorry, yes I am! I was just thinking it would fit in a mini fryer.

Fi

We have tried, we have tried. And sometimes it's been, you know, very successful. It is a bit hit and miss. And, what would the third one be? I mean, you know, we just put anything in breadcrumbs and shove it in. But I think actually sweet potato fries. Whenever you buy them in frozen form, I've not seen them just in raw form, so I've only bought them frozen. I challenge anyone to cook an even plate of sweet potato fries. They're just burnt around the edges of the oven dish and not properly cooked in the middle. So a deep fat sweet potato fry is also a thing of wonder.

Yasmin

Oh, that sounds like delicious snack food, which I want to ask you about more in a minute actually because I'm always fascinated by what people's writing snacks are. But first, tell me about your writing process. How did you actually put the book together?

Jane

Well, we wrote it, I left Woman's Hour at the end of last year, so the end of 2020. And we were in lockdown at the time. And we stayed that way, didn't we, I think for the whole of - I've so lost track of things - but the whole of January, February and March. And we dedicated that time to writing this. I think Fi was doing other stuff, but I wasn't really doing very much else at the time. And so we wanted to write a book that would sort of follow the format of the podcast in that we've never discussed before an edition of Fortunately, what we're going to talk on Fortunately. So I might jot something down that I'd like to mention to Fi, but I wouldn't tell her because that just feels too close to structured radio, which is exactly what it isn't ever meant to be. So we thought we could write a book and we'd each write a chapter about something that interested us, but we wouldn't tell the other what it was really. We'd write about 2000 words, whatever it was, two and a half thousand, ping them over and Fi you came up with the idea that we should cross over and send each other something - was it nine o'clock on a Monday morning? That was it, wasn't it?

Fi

Yes. And between nine and ten. It had to be there by ten.

Jane

To be exact. And then the other one would read what the other one had written and then write a response. And there's things I feel strongly about that probably... I mean, I am obsessed by Christmas,

which I think Fi feels less invested in. And there are other things that - frankly her trip to that ridiculous wellness institute is something that I would never have undertaken. But I enjoy hearing about her doing it. So it was, it was written in that sort of spirit that we would try to be true to ourselves and completely honest about our own experiences of the world.

Fi

Yeah and it would have been misrepresenting both of us if we tried to tell anybody what to do with their lives because as our lives are filled with, you know, I suppose pretty much the same as everybody else's triumphant tragedy. Sometimes it doesn't feel like an equal measure and sometimes it does. And we don't want to lecture other people about how they should live and I enjoy finding out about things that Jane has done because the way that she tells those stories is always with an honesty and authenticity. You know it's just helpful.

Yasmin

What fuels you writing the book? What were your writing snacks?

Fi

Oh gosh, well I have to write first thing in the morning. I have to write when it falls out of my head. So yeah, so I'm quite a lark anyway, so I would write not having eaten anything at all.

Alison

What about coffee or anything like that?

Fi

A *huge* pot of coffee. I mean, you know, bigger than the biggest extra, extra super one that you can get in a coffee shop.

Yasmin

An American sized one.

Fi

An American sized one, so if I had my way in a coffee shop, there would be all of those sizes and then there would be jangling because that's what I want. I want a pint of coffee that makes me jangle.

Yasmin

And what about you Jane? What are your writing snacks?

Jane

Well, I do snack. I was gonna say I snack terribly. But I am actually really aware as I get older that you know food has always given me such pleasure. And I love eating and I love appreciating other people's great cooking. I love eating out. I just love food. I love textures. I love smells, tastes. My children are you know, vegan and vegetarian, but they both love food as well. And both families, their dad's family and my family, full of people who are good cooks and appreciate fine food. So we're very, very

fortunate. I couldn't work on an empty stomach, I don't think. So for breakfast every day I either have the five berry yogurt bowl from a well-known, very much on every high street corner emporium with a French name because I like to do the thing as recommended by Michael Mosley of getting up in the morning and doing your first-thing-in-the-morning walk before you do very much else. And in lockdown I would go as far as to say that that probably contributed to my ongoing relative sanity, and it is all relative

Yasmin

That's what I aspire to do every day.

Jane

I mean, I don't do it every single day. I, for whatever reason, couldn't quite get out of my bed this morning to do it, but I wish I had because I think it was a beautiful morning today. In lockdown it really did help me. And I just felt calmer and somehow sort of restored. But I do need to eat three times a day and I've been like this my entire life. And I do not understand people who say things like, I forgot to eat. And I just think *why* would you forget to eat? As soon as it gets to 12 o'clock...

Fi

Do they say it in that voice because they're so weak with hunger they've lost their normal voice?

Jane

They are. They're just worn out.

Yasmin

So there wasn't anything specifically then that was, you know, because some writers need, I don't know, I was a big chocolate hobnobs fan for my first book. I was always fueled by that.

Jane

Do you know, Yasmin, I can do without biscuits. They are not my thing. Never been keen on biscuits.

Fi

But into the void left by the biscuit does fall the chili nuts, the enormous giant buttons...

Jane

Peanuts. I love

Fi

The mini magnums. Quite a few things go in.

Jane

No, like I say, there's plenty I enjoy. Biscuits I can say no to.

Yasmin

I'd love to talk to you a bit more about Fortunately, which is just a phenomenon isn't it? Jane I was listening to you on Elizabeth Day's podcast where you described it is one of your proudest achievements in your working life and I found that really extraordinary. I'm not gonna call you a BBC veteran, but as someone who's done a lot of broadcast work on very high profile, you know national shows, talk to me a little bit about why you felt so proud about Fortunately and why it's been so special for you.

Jane

I think it means the most because we did it ourselves. There was no huge backing. I mean with the greatest respect to a Woman's Hour, it's the program that people love and identify with. It was never the presenters. I mean, Jenny Murray did it for decades and so perhaps she's a slightly different case. But with me, I was always aware - and don't get me wrong I really rate myself, I really thought I was quite good - but it was, to my annoyance possibly, it was never about me, it was about Woman's Hour. And people are still listening to it in their millions and I'm so glad about that. And they always will and I'm really proud to have been a part of it. But I was only ever going to be a part of it and a tiny part of the history of something that has been going now for 75 years. So that was one thing. 5Live before that, I was really proud of that because that started you know, I was the first voice on that network. But again, I was a small part of a huge organization with a tremendous amount of backing and a lot of goodwill from the BBC who wanted it to succeed. Two middle aged women starting a podcast, talking to each other about anything that came into their heads, with no great interest from the bosses, no enormous bandwagon of publicity behind it, no PR machine, to make a success of that, frankly, is a bit of an achievement. And you would agree with that wouldn't you, Fi, that nobody apart from us has given it any publicity really?

Fi

It was just that wonderful feeling as well which I'm not sure you get more than once in a career where you can smell the magic of it. We just knew that we were building an audience which is such a kind of ghastly, you know, "shall we sit in meeting room one at 3.30 and discuss building an audience" but I really mean it you know, we started off with not a single listener. That's the thing about podcasts. So you don't walk into a studio and pick up an audience from Nicky Campbell and you're going on to an audience with Martha Carney. There isn't anything, there's absolutely no tripwire at all for us. We just had no audience, and then from no audience I think we're currently on 22 million downloads.

Yasmin

Amazing.

Fi

It's because people joined in the fun, and it's been fun. That's the other thing about it, which is not to say that other jobs that I've done haven't been fun, and I'm sure Jane would say the same. It's a glorious industry to work in. It really is. But this is just our own work. We were given - as a kind of dusty Lego set that nobody else really wanted to play with -and we built something with it. Our audience have shaped what our podcast is because we really didn't know what it was when we started. But because they've joined in and they send us their funny emails, and they understand what we're talking about,

and during lockdown, I don't say this in a pretentious way, but it properly had a sense of being needed, actually, because we were all going mad. We were going mad. I was at home on my own with the two kids and Jane, you know, is on her own, with one coming in and out and one full time there. Nobody had the faintest idea what was going to happen. We were just in this ship. It was bumpy and nasty. And we had a sense, didn't we Jane, that we weren't alone, and that people were appreciating the fact that we could tell them that? I mean that sounds a bit kind of pompous. But it really did help actually. It really, really did help.

Alison

I'm speaking as somebody who spent lockdown in a house on their own, you know, all or most of 2020. Your podcast each week was just brilliant to know, "oh there are other people that are thinking the same as me" and kind of, you know, talking about your hair getting out of control and that kind of thing. It was fantastic.

Fi

So that's so lovely to hear, Alison. I think, you know, the loneliness of those lockdowns was just so hard to tell people about, wasn't it? Because who was listening? I mean, that's the point if you're on your own in your house, who was listening?

Alison

No one was listening. And also, you couldn't listen to the news because that just made it worse. So that's why your podcast was just like "Oh, it's going to be normal. It's going to be nice, but the same time it's going to be real." And that's what everyone was craving.

Jane

I am a fanatical radio listener and I love live radio. And so I was listening throughout the lockdowns to my colleagues, some people on 5Live are my friends who I was listening to, Rachel Burden, for example. And I really admired her, for example, for keeping going, keeping sounding chipper. And I know she's got four kids, she's got a Mum and Dad to worry about, she's got all sorts of things going on. But what we could do but she couldn't, she couldn't express her fears. She had to be that calm, "come on!", kind of galvanizing "yes, let's get through another day together". Whereas Fi and I on the podcast, it was a place of safety for us to say, you know what, I've had a really bad week, and this has happened, and I feel this. I never knew during that time, I'm sure like you, who to be most worried about. My Mum and Dad who I couldn't see hundreds of miles away? My children who were missing out on so much stuff and missing their friends? Or myself, frankly, some of the time. I'd just think, "Oh, I can't do this anymore." You know, I'd be wandering the streets looking for toilet roll. It wasn't a barrel of laughs.

Yasmin

What I find fascinating about that is that you launched that podcast pretty much off your own back, didn't you? But now the BBC seems to be really behind it, which I guess you must take as a real testament to your ideas and your hard work?

Fi

It was always a BBC project. It was a BBC podcast. And I think that they just weren't particularly interested in it. I've said it before that I think there's a problem probably high up in all parts of the media, where men rate other men and women at the top have had a tendency to also rate men ahead of women. I've never pretended that women are not complicit in this to a degree, and possibly, because they don't even know they're doing it, or their own sort of - what's the expression - their unconscious subconscious misogyny plays a part in them just not treating women in quite the same way as they would treat men. I mean this is all sounding very pompous and serious. But I think the powers that be at Radio 4 are probably still a bit mystified by *Fortunately*, still not really sure what it is, or who's engaged by it, or why they are. It does now appear on the network, although both Fi and I find it hugely embarrassing. And if I ever find myself catching it, I turn it off.

Fi

I switch myself off very, very quickly.

Yasmin

Just to pick up on what you said, Jane, because I do think this is something that probably a lot of people associate with both of you. You have been really outspoken at times in the last few years around some of the challenges of being a woman working at the BBC. I mean, I'm just fascinated to know, do you feel as a result of Samira Ahmed's case and lots of other women speaking out, do you feel like the culture is changing or has changed?

Jane

Oh, I think I think it has, I think up to a point, I mean, it's never going to be perfect. And of course, we should say that the BBC is a great organisation in many ways. For a start, I'm still employed by them, in spite of the fact that I have been outspoken about the issue of the equal pay issue at the BBC. It was never the worst employer in the world, and lots of other media organisations delighted in reporting on the equal pay problem at the BBC whilst failing to acknowledge their own problems in that area. So let's be absolutely clear about this. It's a problem across the known world. So certainly not restricted to the BBC. And our reason for doing it with BBC women was always to basically say quite clearly, if this is how privileged women are being treated, and we are privileged, how do you imagine women in less privileged environments are being treated? And I just think, along with a lot of other middle aged women, I just couldn't bear the fact that this same issue might be impacting on my daughters in 25 years time. And I've had opportunities that my mother and my grandmothers could never have dreamt of. But I still think that Fi and I are probably members of a generation that has had the opportunities, and we've had incredible opportunities, but we haven't had the same remuneration. We just haven't. We will, I'm afraid, die not having been as well paid as some of our male contemporaries.

Alison

It's time for our Kitchen Grill quickfire round. Please answer spontaneously, but please feel free to elaborate. Tea or coffee?

Jane

First thing in the morning, I have two mugs, and it's always two mugs as I'm not in a rut, of tea. And then my next beverage will be a flat white.

Yasmin

What kind of milk?

Jane

Cow's milk, skimmed. And a sweetener. But not in coffee, just in the teas.

Fi

So specific! I don't drink tea. Jane finds this really, really difficult. It might actually be the sign that I'm an alien. So it's always coffee and just way way too much of it in the morning. It has to be super strong. And it is just with normal cow's milk and it always has quite a heaped teaspoon of brown sugar in it.

Alison

Oh nice. How about mash or chips?

Fi

Mash.

Jane

Chips.

Alison

Fried or poached?

Jane and Fi

Fried.

Alison

Something that you agree on. Butter or olive oil?

Jane

Butter.

Fi

Oh that's really tough. Can I not have both? No? I just really do like a good olive oil. I don't want to be ashamed to say that. Sometimes in your supermarket, your Waitrose supermarket, I can be lost in wonder in your olive oil section.

Alison

There's quite a choice.

Fi

Yep. And much more so than I would be in your butter section actually. So I'm going to go olive oil.

Alison

Good. Chocolate or crisps?

Jane

Nuts!

Fi

Crisps. And a lot of them.

Alison

Fruit or veg?

Yasmin

Can I just say that Fi actually grimaced at this question?

Alison

After your mum's upbringing and all that freshly..?

Fi

Oh, so yeah, it would always be veg. I really struggle with fruit. I really do. I find some of it a bit offensive. So always a vegetable.

Alison

Is it acidic? Is it the acid?

Jane

I have an apple a day now which I thoroughly enjoy. Other than that, I have the odd broccoli spear. I'm also a big fan of spinach. I do like spinach. I'll often choose spinach as my side dish in restaurants when I'm having my chicken.

Fi

She's ever so cultured.

Alison

Spicy or mild?

Fi and Jane

Spicy.

Alison

Good. A restaurant meal or a sofa supper?

Jane

Restaurant.

Fi

Oh, at the moment a restaurant. I don't want to see my sofa ever again. You know people always say that sofas have an indentation of your buttocks in them? My buttocks have an indentation of my sofa after the pandemic and I want that to go.

Alison

Starter or pudding?

Jane

Oh, now it used to always be pudding but I'm more of a starter woman these days.

Fi

Definitely a starter. Not a big fan of the pudding at all.

Alison

And high tech or wooden spoon? I'd class your deep fat fryer as high tech, not a wooden spoon.

Jane

I have to say I can't choose I'm afraid. I really can't. That's a tough one.

Fi

So I would go high tech because actually we've got a kind of gadget graveyard that attests to my love of the gadget purchase. The worst one was a waffle lollipop maker. So it didn't make waffles, it just made waffle pops. So that was infuriating on every level. Yeah. Because I think you want a waffle pop once in your life.

Alison

So are you supposed to cook it and then put a stick in as it was cooking?

Fi

Yeah so it's a special little machine that you dribbled the waffle mixture in and then you put your little wooden sticks in. You know like the kebab ones. You put those in and then you shut the lid and it made waffle pops. But nobody in our household has ever subsequently said "Mum, can I have a waffle pop?".

Yasmin

Well, thank you for that quick fire round. It certainly broadened my understanding of high-tech cooking equipment. And thank you so much for joining us. I'm holding your book again as a kind of reminder to myself, and to remind to everyone listening to go and get a copy. It's called Did I Say That Out Loud? Fi

and Jane, thank you so much for taking the time to speak to me and Alison. It's been a real pleasure having you on the Waitrose podcast.

Jane

Thank you, Yasmin. And thank you, Alison.

Fi

Thank you very much. lovely to see you both.

Yasmin

You've been listening to Life of a Plate from Waitrose with me, Yasmin Khan. Thank you to my co-host, Alison Oakervee, and our guests Fi Glover and Jane Garvey. If you've enjoyed this conversation, you can find more like it by subscribing to Life on a Plate wherever you get your podcasts. And to learn more about the series, go visit waitrose.com/podcast.