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Annie: Hi, friends, and welcome to another episode of That Sounds Fun. I'm your host, Annie F. Downs, and I'm so happy to be here with you today.

Before we dive into today's conversation, I want to tell you about one of our incredible sponsors. This show is sponsored by [BetterHelp](#). A lot of us are spending our lives wishing we had more time. Me too. The question is, time for what? If time was unlimited, how would you use it?

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Intro: Today on the show, I get to talk with my friend, one of your favorite influencers, Nicole Renard, better known as Nicole the Nomad. Nicole is currently competing on Fox's hit show Next Level Chef with Gordon Ramsay in the social media chef category. And she is quickly becoming a fan favorite, y'all. You have got to catch up on the show. It is so good. If you have not watched any of this season yet, you have got to watch it.

She runs a food and travel brand called Nicole the Nomad and shares her favorite smoothie bowls and snack obsessions. I got to make a Chase the Fun-themed smoothie bowl with her not too long ago. We'll link to it in the show notes so you can watch the video. It was so good and so beautiful. It had edible glitter on it, of course.

You are going to love her if you don't already know her. I've been dying to have her on the show to tell you all sorts of things, but particularly about her life on Next Level Chef that is on TV right now on Fox.

So here's my conversation with my dear friend, Nicole Renard.

[00:02:39] <music>

Annie: Nicole Renard, welcome to That Sounds Fun.

Nicole: Hello.

Annie: It is long time coming.

Nicole: I'm so excited.

Annie: It needed to happen.

Nicole: I can't believe I'm in this room right now.

Annie: I know. Welcome to the studio.

Nicole: You're iconic. This is so iconic. I'm honored.

Annie: I am so glad you're here. For our friends listening, you are Nicole the Nomad on social media.

Nicole: Yes.

Annie: So the first question we're asking, Nicole the Nomad, in 2024, because this is our 10th anniversary, we are asking everyone at the start of the show, because the show is called That Sounds Fun, tell me what sounds fun to you.

Nicole: You know what I've been thinking about for a really long time? I think I'm gonna do this for my birthday party this year actually. I'm gonna have the Amazing Race in Nashville.

Annie: Why?

Nicole: I'm gonna get all of my friends together and split us up into teams and have challenges and different obstacles around town, like clues that they have to figure out. I wanna have a party, get everybody together, and just go around town and see who can finish the race quickest.

Annie: Okay, I've participated in one of these before.

Nicole: Really?

Annie: And let me just give you my one piece of advice.

Nicole: Okay.

Annie: Don't let people drive themselves because people get...

Nicole: Crazy?

Annie: Crazy. So if you require them to be in cabs or Ubers, they can't control the speed at which they get somewhere.

Nicole: Oh, wow.

Annie: They can only control getting to the right place.

Nicole: I literally never thought of that. That's actually really good.

Annie: I was in a car and the person driving, I was like, I'm actually very afraid because he's trying so hard to win that we were in a really... he was driving really recklessly. And I was like, "This is a bad idea."

Nicole: I didn't think of that. That's good to know.

Annie: No self-driving vehicles, only others driving vehicles.

Nicole: I like it. Only Ubers. Wow.

Annie: Or weird. Make him get on the General Jackson and do something off the boat. That's a great idea.

Nicole: Thank you.

Annie: When is your birthday?

Nicole: May 22nd.

Annie: Oh, it's coming up. Okay.

Nicole: Yeah.

Annie: Do you mind us asking how old?

Nicole: I'll be 29.

Annie: Okay. Oh, that's awesome.

Nicole: I'm almost in my 30s. How crazy is that?

Annie: Isn't that the best?

Nicole: Yeah.

Annie: 29 is incredible because you have accomplished a ton professionally. We want to talk about your pageant life. You just got married.

Nicole: I did.

Annie: He's so tall in real life.

Nicole: He is six-four.

Annie: It's surprising.

Nicole: Isn't that great?

Annie: I don't know why, because I remember you're always tall. And then I see you and Chandler together on the internet and he is taller than you. But then when I saw him in person, I was like, Oh, oh, oh.

Nicole: I think it does shock people because I think people who follow me online don't even know that I'm that tall. And then they're like, "Wow, you're tall." So Chandler's even taller than me. We're just two tall beans running around.

Annie: That's right. Okay, tell everybody how y'all met. I love this.

Nicole: We actually met online. We met on Hinge. I was getting on the app to delete it because I never really used it and I thought I need to get rid of this. And he had just gotten on a few days before because he lived in Huntsville, Alabama, and was having a hard time meeting girls. Some of his friends actually convinced him to download the app and they're like, "Put your mile radius on a hundred so you get the girls in Nashville."

Annie: Oh, wow.

Nicole: And that's how my profile popped up. So we matched and started talking and then he deleted the app because he's like, "I just needed to meet the girl and I found her." Isn't that crazy?

Annie: Talk about your first date.

Nicole: We actually started talking when I was out of town for two weeks. I was working over Thanksgiving, first in LA and then in Orlando and he did not want to wait that long for me to get home to take me on a date in Nashville.

Annie: So sweet.

Nicole: And I told him, "Well, I'm going to be in Orlando for Thanksgiving." His parents live not too far from there, so he's like, "I'll meet you there." And my only window of opportunity was after this red-eye flight before I started work. So he drove down to Orlando at four in the morning to pick me up at the airport at 8 a.m. off my red eye and took me to breakfast. And that was our first date.

Annie: Oh my gosh, that is so cool.

Nicole: Isn't that wild?

Annie: In Orlando, which y'all love.

Nicole: Yeah. And we ended up getting married there. So it came full circle. We got married in Orlando last November and it's been so sweet.

Annie: Man, I love all that. Will you please talk about the thing you just did with Disney at the... You and I haven't talked about this in our real lives.

Nicole: Oh my gosh.

Annie: What in the world?

Nicole: Yes. Disney Weddings invited Chandler and I to come to Disney World for the week for an event with them to showcase all that they do for their Disney Wedding experiences.

Annie: I didn't know they did that.

Nicole: I didn't either.

Annie: Y'all got to try on dresses?

Nicole: We did.

Annie: I saw [K-Cup?] was there too. Were y'all already friends?

Nicole: Yes.

Annie: Okay, good. I was hoping. As I was watching both of you, I was like, "Oh, two of my friends are in the same place. I hope they know each other."

Nicole: So they have the official wedding dress collection of wedding dresses inspired by Disney princesses. And we got to pick one and wear it for the grand reveal of their newest wedding venue at Epcot at World Celebration Gardens. We did it after hours, so we were at Epcot from 11 p.m. to 1 a.m. to get these photos and videos.

Annie: Oh my gosh.

Nicole: It was the most epic fairytale experience I've ever had in my whole life.

Annie: That is so cool.

Nicole: It was awesome.

Annie: Which one did you pick?

Nicole: I picked Ariel. Ariel was my favorite princess growing up.

Annie: It was so fun.

Nicole: It was a dream. I loved it.

Annie: I just need to understand this Disney Wedding situation. You can just call them and they have it all set up like that?

Nicole: Pretty much.

Annie: I mean, this episode is not brought to you by Disney, but sort of.

Nicole: Disney actually has a lot of different wedding venues that you can choose from. Their most well-known one is the wedding pavilion at the Grand Floridian. You can get married in front of the castle at Magic Kingdom if you want. You can get married in front of the ball at Epcot. You can get married in the different countries in Epcot. They have a huge list of venues that you can choose from.

Annie: Why didn't y'all do that? Did y'all just decide you didn't want to?

Nicole: Yeah. We were planning a wedding very quickly, and so we didn't have the time to kind of go through that whole process. And when you do a wedding with Disney, you kind of have to use all of their people for photography, food, cake, everything. I already had some people lined up for stuff that I wanted, so it ended up not working out for our wedding. We kind of feel like we got a second experience to get married again with them, and it was so special.

Annie: This is what I was thinking about this morning when I was thinking about getting this shot to you. Is there a collab that has not happened yet that you're like, this is a dream? Is it a celebrity you want to make a smoothie bowl with, or is it a sponsor company like Disney that you're like, I would love to partner with them?

Nicole: Gosh, I can think of so many, but the first thing that came to mind, I started a series where I make smoothie bowls inspired by country artists. And to get Dolly or Reba, Oh, my gosh, I would retire. That would be it for me

Annie: Don't retire. I love learning from your smoothie bowls. They're so thick. You've taught me so much.

Nicole: That would be so fun.

Annie: We have to link in the show notes. When you made one that matched the cover of my Devo's Chase the Fun.

Nicole: That was one of my favorite ones.

Annie: It was so fun.

Nicole: That was great.

Annie: Thank you for doing that with me. I loved it. I was like, oh, my gosh, this is absolutely matching the cover. You also did the Taylor Swift series.

Nicole: Yes.

Annie: Brilliant. For every album. How are you going to do the new one that's black and white and gray?

Nicole: Listen, I didn't think... is it Folklore or Evermore that's also black and white?

Annie: Oh, you're right.

Nicole: Because I did that one. It actually was one of my best tasting bowls I've ever made.

Annie: Oh, really?

Nicole: It was an Earl Grey bowl.

Annie: Oh yeah, yeah, yeah.

Nicole: Which sounds interesting. But the liquid that I used was this really concentrated Earl Grey tea and I added black charcoal. It ended up being super beautiful and so yummy.

Annie: So you've done black and white.

Nicole: Yeah.

Annie: Okay, great. You just get to loop back around to it.

Nicole: Yeah.

Annie: Well done. How did you end up at Nashville?

Nicole: Honestly, the Lord. I was living my best life in L.A. I've always wanted to live there. Ever since I was a kid, I thought, "I'm going to be Hannah Montana one day, and I'm going to live in Hollywood and do the thing." And I was. I moved to L.A. I was loving my life there. I had a rough start-

Annie: From Washington.

Nicole: Yeah.

Annie: I went to college in Orange County and lived there for four years. But in 2017, when I graduated, I became Miss Washington. So I lived in Seattle for one year.

Annie: And then was in Miss America.

Nicole: I did compete in Miss America in 2018. And once that was done, because that was my full-time job for my first year out of school, I moved back to LA.

Annie: Got it.

Nicole: So I was in LA for about two and a half years. And to be honest, it was a rough start. I struggled for about two years to make things work and make ends meet. And then right before actually the pandemic hit is when I felt the Holy Spirit ask me to start leaning into food content.

I didn't know what that meant, but that was right when everything blew up online. So my accounts went from zero to 2 million almost overnight. I started doing content full-time the summer of the pandemic. I was thinking, "Here we go. I finally made it. But like, we've got some momentum, things are starting to pick up and I can do this now and sustain myself and not barely survive in this city." And it was maybe six months after that, I woke up at four in the morning and heard the Holy Spirit say, "You're moving to Nashville."

Annie: No. Just that direct?

Nicole: Yes. I said no. I literally said-

Annie: Did you know anybody here?

Nicole: I had like one or two friends, not many. And I just thought, "This has to be just a crazy thought in my brain. There's no way this is God, because why would He want me to move when things are just getting started?"

So I woke up and made myself some tea, got in the Word, and it was so clear. I started praying about it, and the conviction was so heavy. So I was like, "God, if this is you, which I still think this is so crazy, because it feels so out of the blue, I need confirmation today."

Annie: Oh, wow.

Nicole: I wasn't messing around. And I'm thinking, "Surely He won't give it to me. This can't be right." And then I got confirmation in three very specific ways that day. And all arrows pointed to Nashville. It was wild.

Annie: In your life with God, how many times has He been that direct with you?

Nicole: A handful. Maybe two or three other times. That being one of the clearest.

Annie: Yeah. I have like two. In 40 years I have two. The other decisions are more like, what do you want to do? Or what makes the most sense? But there are two that were like, do that.

Nicole: Yes. The other time I was 17 in my senior year of high school. So it was 10 years before that. And I woke up in the middle of the night again, and I could not fall back asleep, and so I started praying. And instead of talking, I just tried to listen the best I could. And in the midst of that, I've never heard a voice so clearly. And it kept repeating the same thing over and over again.

It said, "You were going to feed people around the world. You were going to feed people around the world." I had a vision of myself in other countries learning how to cook different ethnic foods and then using that food to feed people and gather people around the table. And I freaked out because at the time I was a prof... not a professional dancer, but I was competing in dance competitions and I thought I would do dance professionally, move to New York. I didn't know anything about this thing that I was seeing, or food, really.

I saw myself in a hallway, walking down a hallway, almost like a hotel with doors on each side. I reached out to open the door that I picked, and the door swung wide open and I walked through. And so-

Annie: Before you even touched the doorknob.

Nicole: Before I touched the doorknob.

Annie: You're 17 years old.

Nicole: And then I fell asleep.

Annie: Nicole.

Nicole: Annie, I woke up the next morning and I thought, Gosh, that was a weird dream. But I opened my phone and all of it was written down in my notes. And I was like, "Okay, either I wrote that down before I fell asleep and don't remember it, or it was the Holy Spirit." I don't know what it was, but it's still, it's the first note in my phone, I'll never delete it.

Annie: Oh my gosh.

Nicole: I didn't know what that meant until literally 10 years later, now I'm doing content full-time, and it has to do with food and recipes and smoothie bowls. Before that I struggled with an eating disorder throughout college, and there was a moment where I was like, "God, I think you might have the wrong girl, because how can I feed the world when I can't even feed myself?"

So it's been so cool to look back now on this journey that's over 10 years of how God is unfolding these things that He told me when I was 17 that all have to do with feeding people on a global level. And none of it made sense to me at the time.

Annie: That is unbelievable. And even to this day, who knows where else that could go?

Nicole: Yeah.

Annie: I mean, you're just at the one part, one chapter of the long book. So who knows where that... how tightly do you hold on to? Now that you've seen that... I'm thinking about our friends listening who are like, "Wow, I have a dream for my life that I feel like God has given me or that I hope for." I mean, I have dreams for my life, and I'm like, "I can't say that. I can't say I had a note in my phone from the Holy Spirit."

But I have dreams for my life, too, particularly that we haven't seen come to pass yet. You've seen part of yours happen. I've seen part of mine happen. I've dreamed of publishing a book, and here we are. When you start seeing it, what's the next thing? Do you go, okay, thanks, God? Do you dig in deeper? What's your next move when you start to see Him answering the vision you had, the hope that you had, the prayer that you had?

Nicole: Ooh, I try to be faithful with what I have today because every day looks different. And I'm like, God... One thing I know about my life is that everything changes so quickly. I could be thinking one thing for my life, and if I make these five-year plans, 10-year plans, God is just so funny. And He just throws something right in the room. He's like, Nope, we're actually not gonna go that way.

So instead of doing that and getting all wrapped up in my plan, I just try to be faithful with what's in front of me and ask God, like, Hey, what do you want me to do today with the capacity that I have today? Because also my capacity looks different every day.

So one thing that I'm really grateful I learned early on after I had that vision when I was 17 was that, hey, feeding people can look a lot of different ways. I might not be able to travel the world and be feeding nations right now, but if I get... at the time in LA I was pursuing acting. Like if I get booked on set, I could bake cookies for the crew and I could feed people in that way. Or I can, you know, write an encouraging message and post it online. I can feed people even figuratively.

So trying to remember that call, but like get creative with how that can look. Because I also never thought that I would be a girl on TikTok who had a huge following for making food. But hey, that's feeding people too.

Annie: Yeah, that's right. How do you balance...? It's like the greatest area of your strength was also a great area of pain, of dealing with an eating disorder and also you make food on the internet and now on our television constantly. Does that voice ever whisper to you anymore? Do you still have to have boundaries around your thoughts on food? Or is it just like freedom?

Nicole: I'm at a place now where there's freedom. It has way less power over me now than it ever did. But it's something I wrestled with because I remember when God was kind of in the beginning stages of working through all that, I was like, Man, this is such a big weakness. There is no way I can go public, even about what I'm struggling with." Because I was convinced that I was alone, I was convinced I would lose all my friends. I was convinced people would think less of me.

Annie: If they knew...

Nicole: Yes, that I was struggling with this. I held a national title at the time, and I thought, "Gosh, I can't share that I'm struggling with this, because people expect me to have it all together. People expect these things from me. And gosh, God forbid I come out and say that I'm struggling with something, that would just ruin everything." So I believed those lies for way too long.

But it's funny that when I opened up and was vulnerable about what I was going through, it opened the floodgates. And it was like the one thing I was running away from was the one thing God was trying to use to reach people.

Annie: Wow.

Nicole: And it all had to do with food. So that is a really powerful part of my testimony that I don't talk about as much anymore, but that's really what gave me the strength to continue to lean into these areas I feel God was calling me for and I did not feel ready. I did not feel qualified. But I'm like, all right, if you're asking me to do it, then I'm going to say yes, because I know you're going to provide.

Annie: I mean, that is legit my observation as your friend, is that He keeps putting you in situations where you, for sure, don't have everything you need to succeed. It's not a cut on you. It's literally, He goes, "I want you to climb that mountain." And you're like, "With what rope?" And He's like, "Just start walking."

Nicole: Oh my gosh.

Annie: And when you do, the rope appears every time. I've seen it twice in person and more in your story, but like, What? Why does He keep doing that to you?

Nicole: Honestly, I don't know. But if I were to guess-

Annie: It's hilarious.

Nicole: ...it would be that He wants the glory.

Annie: That's good.

Nicole: There are things that are happening in my life, and I'm like, "Y'all, I cannot point to anything but the Lord because I should not be here. I am not qualified. I am not ready. I don't know why I'm here," and I'm the first to admit it. But God wants all the glory, and He's doing stuff in it that's just so fine and wild to be a part of because It's all Him.

Annie: It just really is.

[00:18:11] <music>

Sponsor: Hey friends! Just interrupting this conversation to tell you about one of our incredible partners, [Factor](#). You know, I'm here for any meal option. That means I don't have to cook very much. And that is Factor.

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That link and pretty much every other link you could ever hope for are in the show notes, or we'll send them to you Friday in the AFD Week in Review email. And you can also sign up to make sure you're getting that in the show notes below.

Sponsor: And I have another incredible partner to tell you about, [Magic Spoon](#). Y'all I am a cereal person. But whether you're cereal in the morning or a cereal as a snack or cereal before you go to bed, you are going to love Magic Spoon.

Listen to this breakdown. Their variety pack has zero grams of sugar, 13 to 14 grams of protein, and four to five grams of net carbs, and there's only 140 calories per serving. It's keto-friendly, gluten-free, grain-free and soy-free. My kind of cereal. Their variety pack includes four flavors: cocoa, fruity, frosted, and peanut butter. We currently have the peanut butter one in the office and it is such a good mid-afternoon snack.

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Magic Spoon is so confident in their product. It is backed with a hundred percent happiness guarantee. So if you don't like it for any reason, they'll refund your money. No questions asked. Remember, start the day off right with a delicious bowl of high-protein cereal at magicspoon.com/thatsoundsfun and use the code, Thatsoundsfun, to save \$5 off. Thank you to Magic Spoon for sponsoring this episode.

Sponsor: All right, we all know the way our hair or skin looks can sway our mood and impact our day. If one of them feels off, it just feels like the day is starting off on the wrong foot. I've never found beauty products that really fit my personal hair goals, but ever since I switched to a custom hair and skin routine with Prose, I've noticed so many benefits: healthier, shinier hair and healthier skin too.

With Prose, personalization is rooted in everything they do, from their in-depth consultation to their made-to-order model. For example, my custom shampoo and conditioner, which I love, they formulate to make my hair more manageable, shiny, hydrated. It's amazing, y'all. They truly deliver.

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Okay, back to our conversation with Nicole.

[00:22:25] <music>

Annie: We got to skip ahead. We got to skip ahead to you and I sitting at lunch last fall before I went to New York and you were like, "I think I'm going to Ireland." And I was like, "What? What are you talking about?" I mean, that is the profound situation. You being on Next Level Chef is the profound situation where I see God going like, here's an opportunity that you don't have everything you need to succeed, but as we speak, you are succeeding on this show.

Nicole: And another element of that, too, is the timing wasn't ideal. And I think that was just another thing where He gave me the option. I could've said no. I almost said no to this opportunity because the timing was not good. But, I mean, there's a lesson in that, too, that, like, hey, the timing might not be good, but are you still gonna obey and say yes and take that leap of faith? So I got the call-

Annie: And you auditioned, right?

Nicole: I did.

Annie: So you even put yourself in a "I don't know that I have everything it takes, but I am going to bet on myself".

Nicole: Well, I honestly didn't think I would even be considered because it's a Gordon Ramsay cooking show. I'm like, They're not gonna pick me. I'm a girl who-

Annie: And Richard Blaise, I'm such a fan.

Nicole: I blend frozen fruit together for a living. Like I make smoothies, I bake. They're not gonna actually consider me. I've auditioned for shows on Food Network before and

I never make it to the very end because I don't ever have the technical skill they're looking for. So I auditioned for this back in the spring and honestly forgot about it.

Annie: What does it look like to audition? Back me up to... is there a website?

Nicole: It's like a casting website. You fill out an application, and then if you get called for an interview, you do a Skype interview with the producers, and they put together a little package that they then send to the network, and then they pick who they want to come on the show.

Annie: Oh my gosh, so it's just like a process.

Nicole: Yes. And I made it through a couple interviews, but then I never heard from them. So I thought, okay, they passed. Awesome. And then I got engaged in July, and so I thought, "Well, great, now I can focus on planning a wedding. I don't have to worry about the show." And about a month and a half later, I got a text asking me if my passport was still valid, and I'm like, "You've got to be kidding me."

It wasn't a final confirmation, but they're like, "Fox loves you. They think they might want you for season three. Just keep these dates open." It was a month before the wedding.

Annie: Oh my gosh.

Nicole: So Chandler was kind of freaking out. I was like, "Hey, I can say no to this if this is too much. Our relationship is more important than me going on some TV show. I really am trying to pray about what the right decision is." So I got the confirmation a week before they wanted me in Ireland. And I was in Switzerland.

Annie: Switzerland.

Nicole: I was literally in Switzerland and I thought, Man, the timing of this could not be more wild because I landed in Nashville, I had one day to unpack, do laundry, repack, and get back on a flight to Dublin. And I was there for three and a half weeks. Wild.

Annie: I know we can't talk about past what we know. But when you start recording... Let me tell you where this is coming from. I was in a group one time that was a similar group to this, where it was handpicked. It took a lot of interviews and all the things. And when the group got together, I was the only person with our belief set. And that was pretty quickly identified more like them being like, "Oh, you're a Christian." And I was like, "Hahaha, I'm terrified. Wait, I'm the only one here. Wait, what?" So it was a new experience for me.

When you got together with everybody else, did y'all talk about that stuff? When you get with all these other chefs, are you like, Tell me about your real life? Are there other people who believe what you believe? Or were you kind of like, on your own emotionally, spiritually, socially?

Nicole: In the beginning a little bit. Because we had three episodes of auditions. So there were eight people that got eliminated before we even started.

Annie: Oh, wow.

Nicole: So there were a few people that got eliminated that I really connected with. That was kind of a bummer because then they weren't there.

Annie: Were they global or is it all Americans going to Ireland?

Nicole: All American.

Annie: Why Ireland?

Nicole: I think it's just cheaper to film, cheaper to produce. So Gordon put up the largest soundstage in all of Europe on some random cow farm and we filmed it out there.

Annie: Oh my gosh.

Nicole: It was so random.

Annie: Oh my gosh.

Nicole: But amongst the top 15, I forget that the chef culture can be pretty aggressive and pretty vulgar. And so even just with language and the words that I use or don't use, that made me stand out like a sore thumb. To be honest, after being in such close quarters with everybody for so long, that really did start to weigh on me. It's just heavy.

So a lot of prayer... I mean, I did feel lonely a lot. But it was such an incredible experience, and I learned so much. I mean, I've never been more terrified and scared in my whole life. It was the hardest thing I've ever done because I was the least experienced there.

Annie: Wow.

Nicole: I knew some, but I really didn't know what I was doing. And a lot of what I did on the show, I was learning for the first time. I did a lot of things for the first time on the show in the moment. I'm like, I just have to go for it because I don't even feel like I should be here. And I've got nothing to lose.

And once it got past a certain point, I'm like, Listen, I thought I'd be gone by now. So if I get eliminated today, it doesn't really matter. So I'm just gonna go for it, start taking risks. But Annie, I cannot even explain to you these... it was like an out-of-body experience when I was in these kitchens and I thought, "Okay, today's the day I'm going home."

All of a sudden my hands were doing things that I did not know what they were doing. It was like Holy Spirit took over and he was being ratatouille up in my head because I'm like, "I didn't know I knew how to do this." And I'm cooking and the chef's come, Richard Blais is my mentor, he comes over and he's like, "Nicole, tell me about what you're doing." "I don't know, I don't know what I'm doing, but it's working and it's fun and this is amazing."

Annie: So there are professional chefs, there are home chefs, and there are social media.

Nicole: Yes.

Annie: Those are the three groups?

Nicole: Mm-hmm.

Annie: Will you kind of explain... Now, I am a massive fan of Next Level Chef because I watched last year because a guy I follow on social media that I love, Shea Spence, he was on. And I like cooking shows anyway. So will you kind of explain Next Level Chef? Because it is like one in a million kind of show.

Nicole: It is. So it's actually based off of the horror movie, The Platform, if you got to see that.

Annie: Oh, I did not know that!

Nicole: The producers are watching that movie and are like, "That would be a great cooking show."

Annie: Wild.

Nicole: So essentially there's three levels of kitchens: Basement, middle, and top kitchen. The basement kitchen is like a prison kitchen. There's just terrible equipment.

Things are rusted. There's holes taken out of bowls. There's dome vibes. It's worse than it looks on the show, if I'm honest. It's terrible.

Annie: It looks terrible on the show. You don't have anything you need.

Nicole: It's awful. Middle kitchen is your standard commercial kitchen. It's got better equipment. Nothing super fancy, but you're good up there. And then the top kitchen is your state of the art, everything super bougie, nicest equipment. You've got all the fancy stuff up there. So this platform lowers from the ceiling.

Annie: It almost looks like an elevator without walls. It goes between all three floors.

Nicole: Comes down to the first floor. When it turns green, you have 30 seconds to run to the platform and grab everything you need for your dish before it starts to lower, and then it goes to the middle kitchen. They have 30 seconds to run and grab all their ingredients, and then it lowers to the basement.

By the time it reaches the basement, not only do you have the worst kitchen and equipment to work with, but you get the last pick of ingredients.

Annie: The leftovers, yeah.

Nicole: And there's sometimes barely anything left on the platform.

Annie: And then you're also competing because there's three or four of y'all in the basement. So y'all are all grabbing for the same protein.

Nicole: And a lot of times the ingredients don't make sense together and you just have to make it work. So the first official day when we got through the auditions, the draft day, when I went in that day, I prayed and I said, "Lord, just let me start on the middle or top kitchen because I think at least I would have a fighting chance." And I started in the basement.

So that alone just gave me so much more anxiety than I already had going into it, because I'm like, "I'm already not starting off on a good foot." And the challenge was so... it just ended up being so chaotic. I was convinced I was going home. Luckily, I didn't. I was so sad one of my teammates actually went home, but that saved me and kept me through another round.

Annie: Yeah, because somebody from... Well, it's not even necessarily from the basement, but one chef from one of the floors leaves every week.

Nicole: Yes. One chef gets eliminated every week now.

Annie: Will you tell the story of the lamb curry?

Nicole: Oh my gosh, yes.

Annie: When you posted the story on social, I was like, the Lord is woven into this entire story.

Nicole: He literally is. I was looking through cookbooks the night before the curry challenge.

Annie: So they let you have that.

Nicole: You have cookbooks, magazines in the green room, but you can't have technology until you get back to the hotel. So I couldn't look up anything until I got home. But I was in the green room and I was looking through one of Gordon Ramsay's cookbooks and I came across this lamb curry recipe and I was just reading it and I was like, "Man, I think I could do that."

So I wrote it down in my journal and I remembered the base ingredients for it and I'm thinking, man, if there's a chance I get lamb tomorrow, I'd love to make that." But I was in the basement, so I wasn't counting on it. So when that ground lamb came to the bottom, I was like, "That is the lamb of God right there, I'm grabbing that."

I grabbed that lamb, and then I had everything else that I wanted. I grabbed the canned tomatoes, I grabbed an onion, I grabbed my garlic, and you saw the coconut fell all over the ground, I didn't really need that anyway.

But Chef Blais was so concerned for me that I only had four ingredients. He was like, "You have such a minimal grab, Nicole, I'm really concerned about you." I'm like, "I'm not concerned, this is exactly what I wanted, because everything else I needed were my spices and things that I had available to me in the staple pantry, and I was already planning on making a homemade bread.

So I'd already started on my naan dough, and I was really excited about that, because I have more experience on the baking side of things, so this bread might save me. But when they tasted my curry and Gordon said that he loved it and it ended up being top dish in my group, that really gave me the boost I needed.

Annie: Did you ever tell Gordon that was his recipe?

Nicole: I didn't get a chance to, no.

Annie: Because I guess they kind of... the three of them, the three coaches and mentors, probably y'all don't like hang out.

Nicole: Oh, no, no, no, no. I mean, I'm pretty sure he would get on his private jet and go other places on the weekend and come back. He was not there.

Annie: That's why I thought he might be in Ireland, was he can just take a plane back to England to his family for the weekend.

Nicole: I think he did.

Annie: Wow. Okay.

Nicole: Crazy.

Annie: I feel like we are the luckiest right now because we're like insider information. Do you get to taste each other's food?

Nicole: Technically, no. There's about a one- to two-minute gap when the challenge ends before the producers come in and kind of kick you out of the kitchens, where if you've made extra, like, extra protein, extra sides, you could kind of shovel them in as quick as you could, and then we'd walk around to each other's stations and, like, try each other's sauces or try each other's proteins. But we don't get to touch the finished plates.

Annie: Got it.

Nicole: And they don't want us really trying other people's things. I don't know if that's just to keep things fair. I'm not sure, but...

Annie: When the plates are set in front of the judges, are they still warm?

Nicole: Well, it depends. There is a break between when they get to the platform and then we come in for tasting because they have to get all the close up shots.

Annie: Right. That's what I always imagine.

Nicole: So as soon as they get the close up shots, then they bring us in. They try to keep it quick, but it's usually like a 30 to 45 minute break that we have. So we are told these mentors are professionals. They've been working with food for years. They're not judging on temperature when they're taking into consideration your dish.

- Annie:** Yeah, totally, because they would have to go... we know if this was proper temp, that would be really smooth, and that would have... and so we will judge like that mentally.
- Nicole:** They're more looking at plating, aesthetics, texture, taste, creativity, how you use your ingredients, cooking technique, that kind of stuff.
- Annie:** How often have you gotten to be out of the basement?
- Nicole:** Several times.
- Annie:** Yeah, you have.
- Nicole:** Several times. There's lots more coming.
- Annie:** Yes. Yes, yes. I mean, it is so fun. It's on Fox.
- Nicole:** It is.
- Annie:** So can we watch online? Yeah.
- Nicole:** Yeah, streams next day on Hulu. It's also on YouTube TV. So lots of options.
- Annie:** What has been the negative feedback and the negative part of being on a nationwide television show?
- Nicole:** Right now not a lot-
- Annie:** Oh, great.
- Nicole:** Which I'm really thankful for. Because I was nervous that people might-
- Annie:** Because a lot of people watch.
- Nicole:** Yeah. I kind of thought maybe people would come at me as this girl doesn't know what she's doing, like get her off the show. But honestly, I'm just trying to stay in my lane. I'm not out here professing to be the best chef on the show because I know I'm not. But I'm using this-
- Annie:** You do a great job because you're not like, I'm terrible at this. You're just like, I'm not a professionally trained chef. You have a very balanced public view of yourself, so no one's going like, Oh, she's pitying herself. Nor are you making yourself seem like a pro chef.

Nicole: I'm just doing my best. And on my platforms right now, everyone's very much on the journey with me. We're learning how to cook. We're trying new recipes. We're learning different techniques, and we're leveling up, definitely.

I've never posted this many actual cooking videos versus baking and smoothie bowls. But now I feel like I have this open door to start sharing more of that content and bringing people along the journey of like, hey, let's figure this out together. I don't know how to cook this certain protein, so let's just do it.

Annie: And that's been fun. How has it increased your numbers being on a TV show? Have you seen a bump across your socials?

Nicole: Yeah, a little bit. We're still getting started now, so I don't know that I've really seen the full effect of that, but we'll see.

Annie: That is so fun. I was curious because you do have millions of followers. When you get negative pushback, is it about you, is it about the smoothie bowl flavor, is it about the technology you're using, or the equipment you're using? And how do you go forward even though armchair experts, not the actual, you know... but you know, people whose thumbs are very active on their phones, but do not know you at all have opinions? What's the pushback and how do you deal with it?

Nicole: Unfortunately, it usually is about me.

Annie: Really?

Nicole: And that's what's discouraging because I know that these people don't know me, they don't know my heart. And oftentimes they're not even following me. So I have to remember like, "Hey, if they don't know me personally, I can't take this personal because they don't know my heart.

Annie: That is the first thing I check if someone chirps at me. I'm like, do you even follow me? Nope.

Nicole: So they're usually making a quick comment because they're scrolling past something quickly and they're making a snap judgment on something they know nothing about just to be mean. And everybody has their own reasons. It does get to me because I'm a sensitive person who has feelings.

Annie: It gets to me too.

Nicole: So I, one, try to not look or I delete the comments or block the people because I don't have time for that. And I'm really thankful that my community for the most part is super positive.

Annie: Oh my gosh, they jump on people who are unkind to you too.

Nicole: Yeah, that too.

Annie: My people do that too. If they see someone come in that's chirping undeservedly, they're always like, "Uh, who, what are you doing here? Who are you?" And your people do that too.

Nicole: Yes.

Annie: And a lot of times too, it's just, they don't have the context. They don't know exactly what they're talking about. So they're seeing a clip of something that was, you know, edited quickly and put out, even if it's from next level chef and it's like, you don't know the full story. You don't know what went into that. You don't know what we were told. You don't know how they're editing things. So I just have to not look, honestly.

Annie: How do you have this maturity about this? I mean, is it from being in pageants and having people publicly talk about you before? How are you so good at this? How do you not let this ruin you?

Nicole: I feel like I'm not good at it all the time. But I do think just with my experience with so many things that have been public, whether it was Miss America or traveling or whatever, my experience even online, I think I've had to come to learn at the end of the day, that's not my identity. It doesn't define who I am. It's not where my worth or value comes from.

I've had to do that work with my personal relationship with Jesus and understand like, okay, I know who you say that I am. And I can always go back to the word and look at truth. And at the end of the day, these things don't change that. So there's no point in giving them power or giving them life because they're not truth. Which is hard. It's easier said than done.

Annie: It is the only way forward if you feel called to do online ministry in any way. To be a light and darkness in any way, you have to give yourself that balance and not read the DMs and just stay out of all the things. Where is your community louder and more active? On TikTok or on Instagram? Where do you hear the most from people?

Nicole: Yeah, honestly, probably Instagram because I've been there longer. TikTok is bigger, but I think it's just from people during the pandemic who were following my viral videos and sending me for smoothie bowls. So I get recognized in public, like, are you the smoothie girl? Are you the girl who makes smoothie bowls?

And I think all that's from TikTok. But I think I have a more loyal base on Instagram who have been there since, gosh, before I even competed at Miss America. They've been there from the beginning and watched my growth and seen me through all these different transitional seasons of life and getting married and meeting Chandler and going to do Next Level Chef. Like, it's been wild.

Annie: Anybody from Next Level Chef that as we're watching, you're like, "This person was such a cool hang. This person was fun to be." Like, tell us a little bit about the personality of the people that were around you.

Nicole: Yeah, everybody's so fun. I mean, we all did get really close when we were there I'm sure because there's literally no option. You're stuck in a little tent together.

Annie: On the weekend.

Nicole: Yeah, absolutely So I got really close with the people on my team. Zach is awesome. We had a great time. I learned so much from him because he's so smart. And it's so much culinary experience. Gabby on team Ramsey was one of my best friends while we were there. She's just so kind and we are very similar. So that was really awesome. But we're all friends now. I mean, we have a top 15 group chat and we talk every day.

Annie: Oh my gosh. That's really sweet.

Nicole: It's overwhelming at times, but so fun.

Annie: When you think about Richard Blais, tell me what he's like in real life. I'm such a fan. And it's like, can you still reach out?

Nicole: He follows me on Instagram, which is kind of cool. He also makes me nervous.

Annie: Oh, congrats.

Nicole: Yeah. He came out with a cookbook with his wife right after the show. I was actually at my bachelorette party for our wedding, but Chandler was in town, so he went to the book signing here in Nashville and got to meet him and we got his cookbook. So I've done a couple of his recipes, but he's great. I learned a lot from him and I'm really grateful for his mentorship. It was a great team to be on.

- Annie:** What happens next? I mean, you can't tell us how Next Level Chef in-
- Nicole:** You got to stay tuned.
- Annie:** ...for you, but we're all... I mean, I cannot wait to see how everybody's like goes back and watches and catches up now.
- Nicole:** And if you want to meet the chefs, we're doing a big dinner party watch party on March 28th.
- Annie:** Here. In Nashville.
- Nicole:** In Nashville at a farm.
- Annie:** Yes, talk about it. And talk about Chef Steven because he is a friend of the show. We love his wife, Christine. She was on the show with Kindred Farms and the Kindred Life. So yeah, y'all are doing a watch party.
- Nicole:** Yes, we're doing a watch party for Episode 10, March 28th at Kindred Farms. Chef Steven was my mentor before Richard Blais was my mentor. He helped me get ready for the show. It was just so helpful and kind during that whole process.
- Annie:** What does that look like? Do you call and say, "Help me. I'm about to cook every day."
- Nicole:** Yeah. Yeah, pretty much. Honestly just the simplicity of like how to organize your station so that things don't get messy that saved me.
- Annie:** Really?
- Nicole:** Because just having like structure and a formality of like, okay, keep it basic. Because you only have 25 to 30 minutes. You can't really do anything crazy. He helped me simplify things and figure out like in a pinch, here's some go-tos. And that was just so helpful.
- Annie:** Nicole, that's so cool.
- Nicole:** So we're gonna do a big artisan pizza party night and we're gonna watch the episodes together. There's gonna be 10 other chefs from the show coming.
- Annie:** Oh my gosh.

Nicole: And it's open to the public. So if anyone wants to come-

Annie: Do we have to get tickets?

Nicole: Yeah. It's a ticketed event. We're gonna have a raffle. We're gonna do a Q&A. It's gonna be so fun.

Annie: I'm totally coming. I love Kindred Farm.

Nicole: Yay.

Annie: That place is so great. Are y'all going to do it outside?

Nicole: In the barn. They just built this whole new venue.

Annie: That's what I heard. I haven't seen it yet. They built it over the winter and I haven't been there since then.

Nicole: It's going to be great.

Annie: Okay. March 28th. Where can we look at that? Is that thekindredfarm.com?

Nicole: thekindredfarm.com.

Annie: Okay, we'll share the link.

[00:41:32] <music>

Sponsor: Hey friends, just interrupting this conversation one more time to tell you about one of our incredible partners, KiwiCo. A game night with the miniBFFs in your life is always fun because it's a chance to do something together. That's why I love KiwiCo too.

No matter how old the miniBFFs in my life are, KiwiCo delivers seriously fun learning for kids of all ages through hands-on projects and activities. And you can join in too. Each month, kids receive crates packed with activities designed to introduce them to exciting science and technology, and art concepts.

There's this super cute one where you build your own baking set. Oh my gosh, you guys. You get all the pieces to build a stand mixer and you even get a cake with candles on it. It is so cute.

Crates come with everything you need for kids to build, including materials and instructions. You'll be surprised at how high quality the materials are too. It can be hard to find creative ways to keep your kids engaged and challenged and off their screens. But each crate is designed by real experts and tested by kids to ensure that every experience is age-appropriate, engaging, and seriously fun.

There's always something new for kids to discover, like engineering robots or learning about the science of ice cream. With nine monthly programs to choose from, KiwiCo has something for kids of all ages, ranging from infants and preschoolers to teens and beyond.

But the best part is watching their creative confidence grow as they tackle different challenges. That moment of pride and accomplishment at the end of a KiwiCo project sparks creative confidence for lots more tinkering and experimentation.

Redefine learning with play. Explore projects that build confidence and problem-solving skills with KiwiCo. Get 50% off your first month on any crate line at kiwico.com with the promo code, THATSOUNDSFUN. That's 50% off your first month at kiwico.com, promo code, THATSOUNDSFUN.

Sponsor: And I have another incredible partner to tell you about, [MOSH bars](#). I love when I find a snack that has protein in it and is easy to keep with me on the go. And that is MOSH bars. But get this. They also exist to support brain health.

MOSH is a company founded by Maria Shriver and her son, Patrick Schwarzenegger, with a simple mission to create conversation about brain health through food, education, and research.

They have six delicious flavors. Each MOSH bar has 12 grams of protein, and it's made with ingredients that support brain health. Plus, MOSH donates a portion of all proceeds from your order to fund gender-based brain health research through the Women's Alzheimer's Movement.

If you want to find a way to give back to others and fuel your body and your brain, MOSH Bars are the perfect choice. Head to moshlife.com/TSF to save 20% off plus free shipping on either the best sellers' trial pack or the new plant-based trial pack. That's 20% off plus free shipping on either the best sellers or plant-based trial pack at moshlife.com/TSF. Thank you, moshlife.com/TSF, for sponsoring this episode.

Sponsor: Okay, let's talk about candles for a minute. Do you know that almost two billion candles are sold globally each year and almost all of them are likely to end up in landfills for the next one million years? It's insane.

That's why I think it's really cool that [NOTES Candles](#) exist. They're working to eliminate single-use candle vessels and give home fragrance lovers a more earth-friendly option. NOTES has created a refillable candle system that allows you to use your candle vessel over and over again. It is super easy.

The candles are made with fragranced wax beads. So all you do is place the wick in your reusable NOTES jar and fill it up with the wax beads and enjoy your fragrance for up to 36 hours. The Santel and Atlas Cedar scent is like this woody, calming smell. It's so nice. They have oat milk and balsam berry, vanilla and pepperwood, pistachio and rosewater, and a total of 13 really great options to choose from.

Be a responsible consumer while not giving up high-quality home fragrance by making the switch to NOTES. You can build your custom starter kit right now at notescandle.com/thatoundsfun. Right now NOTES has given our friends 15% off and free shipping when you buy a NOTES starter kit using the code, `thatoundsfun`. Just use that code, `thatoundsfun`, when you're placing your order. That's `thatoundsfun` at notescandle.com/thatoundsfun.

And now back to finish up our conversation with Nicole.

[00:45:51] <music>

Annie: So that comes out March 28th. What is your rest of your year look like? Can you tell us? Are there things you can't tell us? I hope there's things you can't tell us.

Nicole: A few things I can't tell you. Lots of travel coming up. I am working on publishing a cookbook. So stay tuned for that.

Annie: Yay. Good.

Nicole: I've been trying for so long to get all my recipes in one place. So we're in the process of-

Annie: Will it mostly be smoothies and smoothie bowls?

Nicole: Yeah, snacks, baked goods, different healthy snacks, lots of different stuff that I'm already posting, but all of it in one place in a book. I have new smoothie products coming out. I'm already selling my Nomad Bowls, which are so great.

Annie: I love it. Please explain the, I don't know, witchcraft, magic, whatever you want to call it, of your Nomad Bowls, keeping the smoothie bowls cold. How is that possible?

Nicole: So the Nomad Bowls are 100% real organic coconut shells. They are real coconuts that have been harvested of their water and meat, and then they're polished into these beautiful bowls that keep your smoothie bowl frozen longer than porcelain bowls. It's incredible. And they're cute.

Annie: They're so cute.

Nicole: It makes you feel like you're in Hawaii. I have these cute little brass palm spoons coming soon, and I'm hoping to expand the smoothie line.

Annie: I mean, I love my Nomad Bowls. So I am very glad. I'm always like, how is it still frozen? This is weird.

Nicole: Isn't that crazy?

Annie: It is really crazy.

Nicole: You can do the Dairy Queen flip test on them. Like you can hold it upside down and it will stay.

Annie: Okay. Talk smoothie bowls to us for a minute. What is the trick to making them so thick?

Nicole: I think a few different things. The ingredients you're using, how much liquid you use, and the blender you have. High-speed blenders are gonna work better than a low-powered blender because you're gonna be able to have that power and force to get it processed and texturized faster. I always recommend as little liquid as possible, like only as much as you need, because you can always add more, but you can't take it away. So start with a little bit, and if you need more, just add little bits at a time, because once you've added too much, it's already too runny.

And then always use frozen fruit because that's gonna give you that thick consistency. When you start using fresh items and too much liquid, that's when it becomes watery and runny.

Annie: What I accidentally do when it becomes runny is I just add more fruit and then suddenly I have a massive amount.

Nicole: Yes. And people usually put ice in their smoothies and smoothie bowls. But the thing with that is that ice melts and it becomes water. So if you don't want it to be watery, don't put water in it.

Annie: Quote that. If you don't want it to be watery, don't put water in it. Okay, what have we not talked about that you want to make sure we talk about?

Nicole: Oh my gosh, I'm so excited about this. This kind of has to do with my Nomad Bowls. I have a smoothie bowl on the menu at Ian Rose here in Nashville.

Annie: I had it.

Nicole: We're putting the Nomad Bowls in the stores this week.

Annie: Oh yes!

Nicole: So people are going to actually be able to purchase the coconut bowls from all of their stores across Nashville.

Annie: I think I may have sent you a picture when I had it because me and my friend Franny went and I was like, "Wait, this is the Nicole the Nomad bowl." I was like, "This is delicious". So is that... excuse me, I don't know this. Is Ian Rose a national brand or is that a Nashville brand?

Nicole: They are only in Nashville right now. There's five stores, but they're opening one in Atlanta soon.

Annie: Okay. And you're just a part of the brand.

Nicole: Yes. I'm so excited.

Annie: Tell me the dream in five years. If everything went without a hitch, what do we see Nicole doing in five years?

Nicole: Honestly, my dream from the start when I heard that vision when I was 17 is to host and produce a travel and cooking show around the world where I'm using different foods and bringing different cultures and people together around a table and having there be some kind of missional giving back aspect of that where I'm feeding people around the world with that food.

I would love to educate people on different cultures and what makes us different but special and how food is such a central part of that. Because at the end of the day, although we're different, we come from different walks of life and have different cultures and beliefs, the one thing we all have in common is that we get hungry and we need to eat. And that can unify us. So something like that would just be the dream.

- Annie:** Oh man, I thought about you when I was in Rwanda because we did a lot. I mean, so much of what we did was around the table.
- Nicole:** I love that.
- Annie:** I hope you get to do that show.
- Nicole:** I love it.
- Annie:** So as our friends are watching Next Level Chef or watching you on social media, or both, which is what I do, what do you want people to pray for you when they see you and think of you?
- Nicole:** Oh, that I would keep Jesus at the center. That that would always be the motivation behind the content I create and what I'm doing that I wouldn't just be creating to stay busy and to stay relevant, but I would be doing it on purpose. And not just like "on purpose", but on purpose, if that makes sense.
- Annie:** What does it look like to share the gospel through your work?
- Nicole:** It looks so different with everything I create because I'm not just a faith-based Christian blogger. I do food. A lot of people follow me and find me through recipes and so I have to get creative. One thing I feel like is a really common comment or DM I get is the joy that people see. And so even if I'm not talking about Jesus specifically, just like even finding other ways for the fruit of the spirit to be evident in what I'm creating. So that people can feel that.

And letting Jesus work and the Holy Spirit work through how they're gonna work. Because I remember when Smoothie Bowls started taking off, I kind of laughed and was like, really, God? Smoothie bowls? I thought you were calling me to a more faith, Christian-type missional work. But a smoothie bowl?

And I just felt Him so gently whisper, "Don't limit what I can use. If I've asked you to make a smoothie bowl, will you say yes? Because I can work through anything." And I can't think of anybody else doing that. So it's so unique. And I think that can be applied to so many different people's lives and stories because everybody has something unique that they're gifted and that God's called them to. And it's like, nobody else can do that but you. So are you going to say no?

My friend Daniel said something, and I might mess up this quote. But he said, you might not know the impact of your yes, but you also will never know the disappointment of your no. So it's like, are you gonna say yes? Because I've learned to say yes even when it doesn't make sense or I don't feel ready because every

single time God comes through and He provides and I look back at his track record and go, okay, I might not know why he's asking me, but in the past, It has worked out because He is good and he works all things together for good. So I'm going to say yes and just jump.

Annie: Yeah, yeah, you do that. I think one of the things I've learned from you, but I'm learning from you and the way you're saying it is trust God's track record, not mine. Like, you seem to really trust God's track record of coming through for people, and of when He calls you, He shows up. And when He opens a door, you don't even have to touch the doorknob, and he opens the door and sends you through.

My ability to acknowledge what I'm incapable of can make me say no before the Lord says no. So you modeled that really well of like, let's just do it and see what happens. Next Level Chef is such a great example of that because I finally, like there was this thing that clicked in my brain where I was like, Okay, I could go home today.

So again, what do I have to lose? I might as well go for it. I might as well go out swinging because also Lord, you put me here. So you better come through because I didn't ask for this. Like this is clearly you. So I'm just going to go for it and put everything I have out on the table. And He ended up doing so much with it.

Even that built my confidence and that built my trust in Him because I'm like, "Okay, wow, that was crazy. And I never thought I could do that. So like, but it happened, you know, because of God.

Annie: It's fun because as we get to continue following you and seeing what God does and the doors open, we're like, Yeah, of course, Nicole's cooking at the White House. Yeah, of course, Nicole is making smoothie bowls with Beyoncé. Yes, of course, Nicole has Reba on.

I mean, it just is very like, you don't say no on behalf of the Lord. You say yes until He closes the door. I think that is such an honorable thing and such a great... I want to live that way too. Well done you, my friend.

Nicole: Thank you.

Annie: I'm so thrilled. Thank you for making time to do this today.

Nicole: Thank you for having me.

Annie: Are you kidding?

Nicole: Oh my gosh.

Annie: I've been dying for some months to be able to tell and have you on and have you tell people about Next Level Chef, because it was really fun to walk with you through that and to see your faith expand, but also morph a little bit in that season. There were different things where you're like, pray for this or pray for that, I was like, oh, there's like massive personal growth happening too.

Nicole: Oh my gosh. Yes. I will never cook the same after that show. And just who I am on the inside, I feel like was so challenged and stretched that I grew even personally on the show.

Annie: And then you came back and got married and then it was like-

Nicole: Oh my gosh.

Annie: Do you have a vacation coming up?

Nicole: Yes, actually.

Annie: Okay, great.

Nicole: Praise God.

Annie: Okay, good. Well, I love you, friend. You're welcome back anytime.

Nicole: Thank you. This was amazing.

Annie: It was so fun.

[00:54:50] <music>

Outro: Oh my gosh, y'all love her so much or what? Isn't she the best? Oh my gosh. Y'all, you have got to tune in to next-level chef. If you have not caught up, like she said, you can watch it online. You can watch it on TV. It is such a fun show.

And now we get to watch our friend cook her way out of the basement. Maybe she gets to the top, maybe she's in the middle kitchen, but it is so fun to watch. And let's cheer her on. Make sure you're following her on social media, tell her thank you for being on the show and how you are for her.

If you have any questions from this episode, just drop them in the Q&A box in your Spotify app if that's where you're listening, or send them to us on Instagram @thatsoundsfunpodcast, and we'll try to answer them there.

If you need anything else from me, you know I'm embarrassingly easy to find. Annie F. Downs on Instagram, Twitter, Facebook. All the places you may need me, that is how you can find me.

I think that's it for me today, friends. Go out or stay home, do something that sounds fun to you and I will do the same. Today what sounds fun to me, I get to fly to Indiana for an event this weekend. So that sounds fun to me.

Y'all have a great weekend. We'll see you back here on Monday where we recap 2016 with our good buddy, Eddie Kaufholz.