

My Foody Fun Story

I am Cincinnati born and raised.

I graduated from Walnut Hills and the University of Cincinnati and began my career here.

Then, I left.

My journey encompassed three states, six jobs, and two small businesses of my own.

My career has always followed two parallel tracks – communication and food.

These paths have led me back to Cincinnati, where I am marrying my two passions and skill sets.

So, what have I learned?

I learned that nothing tastes as luscious as a fresh tomato off the vine, hot from the sun.

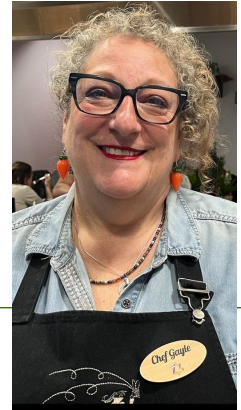
I learned to listen to onions frying behind me, so I don't have to watch them.

I learned to salt as I go.

I learned to edit, edit, edit, and write compelling stories that keep you reading.

And I learned that incremental improvement is better than postponed perfection.

I learned that it is never too late to follow your passion.



Me - Gayle Levine Schindler



My Parents - Dave & Ruth Levine

I Grew Up in Cincinnati

I grew up in an immigrant home. My Mom, as a young mother and new American, cooked the ethnic foods she knew. In fifth grade, I traded my homemade lunch for a hot school lunch that was my first experience with macaroni and cheese; I didn't taste peanut butter until I was in college. Of course, as I grew up and Mom grew more American, she learned to make more American dishes, including, of course, traditional Thanksgiving dinner.

While I was in college studying Communication and Business, I started learning how to cook. I joined a food co-op run out of a Clifton church basement and shopped at Cincinnati's historic

Findlay Market. I learned how to make vegetable lasagna and my mother's meatloaf. I bought a wok and learned how to stir fry "Chinese" food, which I had never eaten. I shared an apartment with my best friend who insisted we keep a kosher kitchen, a practice I continue to this day. In school, I learned how to write, speak in public, and tell stories. As an intern at the Chamber of Commerce, I learned how to ask questions and gather information.



Graduation led to a restaurant job. I waited tables and tended bar. I learned how a professional kitchen works and that better ingredients yield a better tasting dish. I hosted dinner parties and learned how to create a cohesive menu. The first thing I ever bought on credit was a set of pots and pans that I still use today.

At the same time, I was a reporter for community newspapers covering small-city council meetings. I created a bar manual for the restaurant, wrote letters to customers, and worked with friends at a start-up software company, writing product documentation.

When I discovered technical writing, I rebranded my experience as technical & managed to convince a local manufacturer that any company with an IT department as large as theirs needed a Technical Writer to manage their documentation & library. At the same time, I wrote restaurant reviews for [Ohio Magazine](#).

Then, I Left Town

I moved to Washington, DC and landed my dream job, at the time, with THE Document Design Center. My boss literally “wrote the book” about clear communication & Plain English. Under her mentorship, my writing and design skills grew stronger. At home, my cooking became more serious and adventurous. And here’s a secret. I learned a lot of what I know from TV. Julia Child and Jacques Pepin were my teachers. Gourmet Magazine and the Joy of Cooking were my textbooks. I kept learning.



Next move was to Milwaukee, where my pedigree from the Document Design Center and my portfolio landed me a consulting job. At the same time, I wrote restaurant reviews for the Outpost Exchange, a local food co-op. I started a monthly dinner club, where we prepared elaborate, multi-course meals.



When I moved to New Jersey, I was in the middle of a huge project for a client; they retained me for two more years to complete the project. When that ended, a friend hired me to lead communications for his team at PriceWaterhouse Coopers Consulting. While lucrative, the position was less honestly technical & more wishy-washy persuasive. It was unfulfilling & boring.

At the same time, I realized each move brought new food experiences, local specialties, and opportunities to host larger and more complex dinners and parties. I learned that I LOVE to see people enjoy my food.

My husband travelled a lot. When he was home, I threw elaborate dinner parties and holiday celebrations. When he was away, I cooked every day for my two children. My oldest has an adventurous palate and developed Crohn’s disease. The youngest has sensory processing issues, a poor sense of taste and smell, a penchant for hot sauce, and a strong dislike of vegetables.



In 2002, a well-timed layoff led me to start Zahava Foods, an online store that sold gourmet products from Israel. I designed and wrote all the content for my website. But I made mistakes, some out of ignorance and some out of arrogance. Eventually, the business failed, but I didn’t. I embraced my new career in food—I taught, offered cooking demonstrations, and spent 10 years working in the Kosher deli of a grocery store. I kept learning.

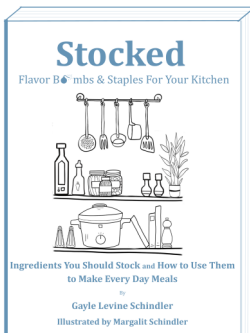
With my volunteer crew at synagogue, I learned how to cater large dinners. My customers at the deli and at synagogue asked me to cook for them, so I started another small business, Foody Fun, which was a meal delivery service.

In 2019, anticipating my return to Cincinnati, I became the Food Columnist for the American Israelite, producing two columns a month; each included at least one original recipe.

I Came Home

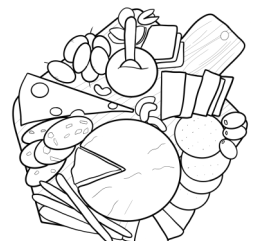
We moved back to Cincinnati at the beginning of March 2020 - three days before the governor shut down the state. I moved from a big house (with a huge tax bill), where I had three refrigerators and three freezers, to a downtown apartment. Even though the pandemic was the perfect time to bring Foody Fun to Cincinnati, I didn’t have the space to prepare and store dozens or hundreds of meals.

So I leaned into my writing. I added a blog to my website and I wrote a book—**Stocked: Flavor Bombs and Staples for Your Kitchen**.



In 2023, I started teaching cooking classes at The Learning Kitchen. I also started doing private board building classes—not making the boards themselves, but explaining and demonstrating how to put together charcuterie, cheese, and snack boards.

My cooking is always evolving. I follow food trends and I attend the Fancy Food Show in NY every year to look for new products. My husband and I are fortunate to be able to travel. Some folks buy coffee mugs and Christmas ornaments; I always bring home ingredients to play with.



I’ve learned so much over the years and I’m not done yet. I promise to share everything I learn in my kitchen to help you in yours.