

EXCLUSIVE

How to The Wor

Sexy, ambitious & passionate Tia Mowry shows us that being a great mom means taking care of yourself too

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Rule id



From *Sister, Sister* to *The Game* to reality show, *Tia & Tamera*—these days Tia Mowry is traversing new territory in television—the culinary world with Cooking Channel’s *Tia Mowry at Home*. How did the beautiful actress wind up hosting a cooking show? By combining equal parts of passion and purpose. As a card-carrying member of the mommy community, Tia would constantly hear from fellow moms about their desire to give their children the best to eat, except that time constraints prevented them from preparing their family a “great, healthy meal.” So, Tia set out to lead the way and show them that quick, healthy meals *are* possible. “I wanted to inspire other women. Whatever I do has to be a passion of mine. I’m a working mom and cooking is important for me because I had endometriosis and I changed my diet because of it. I saw how food can be medicine and can benefit you from some type of health standpoint. Cooking and making fresh meals, it’s important for me. So I wanted to show moms: I am a busy mom, I’m a working mom, and if I can do it, you can do it, too,” Tia says enthusiastically.

Tia, Jerome (her cousin), and I are seated in the back of Serafina in Dream New York. The row of doors sliced into the front of the Italian restaurant are wide open, allowing July’s balmy breeze to waft through the space and give the interior an alfresco feel. With her sleek, black bob framing her flawless face and bright-red lips, a loose, white button-up and black pants accessorized with a chunky gold necklace and oversized gold hoops, Tia exudes an Uma-Thurman-in-*Pulp Fiction*-vibe. Today’s ensemble denotes power, elegance and style, all of which the savvy multi-hyphenate knows how to wear.

Earlier today, Tia donned her authentic chef’s coat in the Cooking Channel test kitchen while trying out recipes for *Tia Mowry at Home* (Saturdays at 3 pm). “We just did this meal that he (Jerome) fell in love with, salad with tomatoes, basil, feta cheese and a really cool Kalamata olive dressing with olives we put in a Vitamix with olive oil, water, salt and pepper. It’s bursting in flavor,” she says excitedly. “I’m all about making hearty, healthy, delicious meals, where you don’t sacrifice the flavor.” Exposed to the joy of cooking and grilling by her family (mother, father, aunts and uncles) at a young age, Tia naturally jumped at the chance to be her mother’s sous chef. She would happily prep the food for cooking, chop greens, dredge chicken, season whatever needed it, until she was about 12-years-old, and her mother let her take over. “My mom was like, ‘Ok, Tia, you got this. I’m going to start putting you to work,’” she says of her promotion from sous chef to chef. “It first started off like a little bit of a chore, ‘cause here I am, this 12-, 13-, 14-, 15-, 16-year-old coming home from school, having homework, but then making a meal for my brothers and sister. It was like, ‘Oh my God, I would kinda rather be outside playing,’” she says with a laugh. Gradually, this chore evolved into a passion, and is now her version of yoga or gardening—a comparable way for her to Zen out.

Having amassed a wealth of culinary knowledge over the years,

I ask Tia for her best piece of cooking advice? “Always taste. Never be afraid to taste your food. I think that some people kinda go through the whole cooking process or go through the whole recipe without even tasting each step... When you taste your food you know automatically what to put less of, more of.” She also recommends using fresh ingredients. “It adds so much quality to whatever you’re cooking... You can make a simple meal go a long way by just adding fresh herbs, or make any meal so much more inviting or prettier. If you want to impress your guests, always use a fresh herb to cook with or as a garnish.”

Seasoned chefs always have more than one dish bubbling on the Viking kitchen range, and Tia is no different. In addition to the cooking show, she is starring in TV Land’s *Instant Mom*, as Stephanie—stepmom to her new husband’s three children—(the third season returned September 19) and is the show’s producer. “I just love the whole process. I was a part of the casting, the development process. To see it all come alive and be something

What do you often hear from fans when they meet you?

“Which one are you?” she laughs. “I hear this a lot, ‘Tia-mera?’ Which is Tia and Tamera in one? Or ‘Where’s your sister?’ And I’m like, ‘Well, she’s hanging out in my back pocket ‘cause we’re glued to the hip.’” She bursts out laughing. “People automatically assume just because we’re twins we’re attached at the hip. My sister has a family, she has a husband. I have a family, I have a husband. We have lives, people—outside of each other. Like everything I do, Tamera has to do? C’mon guys.”

I’m proud of, it’s so rewarding.” But what she truly loves about the sitcom is that it’s relatable and shows their younger audience a blended family that works, as opposed to being equated with dysfunction. “Of course there are challenges, because it’s new, and that’s what I like about Stephanie, she’s a fish out of water when it comes to helping raise her stepkids, but that doesn’t stop her from being the best mom she can possibly be.” In her real life, Tia is a natural at motherhood as seen in her daily social media posts with 3-year-old son Cree, with husband of 15 years Cory Hardrict.

Cory and Tia’s story piqued my interest—I read that she picked him up from a bus stop and was eager to hear the details. “I am so happy to set this straight. Half of that is true.” She launches into the story. It’s 1999 and Cory and Tia are introduced to each other on the movie set they are both working on. After leaving the set at the end of the day, Tia notices Cory waiting for the bus to take him home. “I thought he was just a really nice guy. I saw him waiting and was like, ‘Oh my God, that’s Cory from the movie



Discovered

While watching *Star Search* with her family as a child, Tia realized she wanted to be an actress. “I credit my mom, when you’re a mother it’s really your job to decipher what your kids are good at, what their gift/talent is naturally. And I think mine was entertaining, and just making people laugh and smile. I loved doing it. We auditioned for *Star Search*—we did a dance routine—and we didn’t even make the cut,” she recollects. Tia danced, sang, participated in pageants, then got into modeling and acting. “They called me the Barbie Commercial Queen. I did so many of those commercials,” she laughs, “kind of my road to fame.” Three years after moving to L.A. from Texas to pursue acting, Tia and Tamera were *discovered* by the woman who discovered their brother Tahj, who was working on *Full House* alongside the Olsen twins. The woman ran into Tia and Tamera while they were on the set and insisted that they needed their own show. “We met with several producers and this one producer came up with a concept and with that concept we went to different networks: ABC, NBC, FOX, CBS. Literally, my sister and I would talk how I’m talking right now in front of all these execs about why we should have our own television show at the age of 14. Sat down with Paramount Studios—almost every television show I’ve worked on is Paramount / VIACOM—and they fell in love with the concept and that’s how *Sister, Sister* started.”

we’re working on, let’s take him home!” She lets out a girlish giggle. “And I did, and the rest is history. It wasn’t like I first met him, ‘Hey dude, what’s up?’” Another hysterical laugh escapes her.

Sixteen years later, she still feels butterflies when they reunite after being apart for awhile. I prod her for more on their relationship and she happily shares how they got to this point. She paints me the picture. “When I was going to college, nobody would sit next to me. Like, they were so intimidated by *me*.” She stresses the last word as if such an emotion would be irrational. “I’m like, *Why? I’m just like you*. I felt like I needed to put a sign: *You can sit next to me, I won’t bite*. But Cory,”

she coos adoringly, “he’s such a cool, confident man, but he’s not confident in an arrogant way. He just saw me as Tia. He didn’t see me as the girl from *Sister, Sister*, so he wasn’t afraid to approach me.” For the first year they were just friends. “He never pressured me into sex. God was number one and still is number one in his life, so I thought that was really refreshing.”

Impressed by his confidence and patience, feelings developed. She recalls what they were wearing the first time they kissed (Cory was in an Allen Iverson jersey, she was in an orange sweater, black capris, and Fubu sneakers) and when he first told her he loved her (she was wearing blue

overalls). “We were courting each other, so we fell in love as friends first. I fell in love with who he was as a person and I think he fell in love with me as a person. It wasn’t just this sexual connection, which of course is important, but that wasn’t the drive. He had patience. And c’mon, guys don’t really do that and he did...” Like all couples, they have their ups and downs, she tells me, but they’ve endured because they both realize how special what they have is. “Our relationship was not built on sex or money, our relationship was truly built on love.”

The smile doesn’t leave her glowing face during her recollection and it’s in these moments that her loving nature is wholly palpable. But I soon find out that this side of her may not be all that evident to many. When I ask Tia what fans would be surprised to find out about her, Jerome interjects. (Her answer is in the Tia Dishes section.) “Tia is so loving, not that they think she’s mean, I just don’t think they get to see it all the time,” Jerome explains. Tia nods. “I think where you’re coming from is—and it’s a good point—that was one of the downfalls to doing the reality show. When I did the reality show, they so desperately wanted to show our differences and to kind of create drama, because what’s a show without drama? And because I’m a go-getter and really aggressive and I know what I want—a lot of people see my sister as the sweet, kind of like a princess. And here I am in the red lipstick and wearing black,” she snaps her fingers. “...I didn’t like that they didn’t show that side of me that a lot of people don’t know. I am so sensitive. I think a lot of people may not know that I’m so passionate, and I love love. I am obsessed with falling in love, with why we fall in love, with how love can make you happy...” I’d like to vouch that I find her loving nature very obvious after speaking with her for an hour, and might I add perky and refreshingly open.

As we wrap up the interview, I ask if there’s anything else she’d like to address. She passionately tells me her philosophy. Unafraid of vocalizing some of her “feminist points of views,” she explains, “I learned this from my mom; I saw her fall into what I don’t want to do. My mom has four kids, and she completely lost herself in her kids. Now that all her kids are grown, it’s almost like she has to start all over again and find out who she is... I think it’s what a lot of moms do, and it’s ok if you do this. It’s very easy to lose yourself and forget about yourself, lose your ambitions, goals, style, stamina, libido. You want to be the best mom you can be, but you can still be that sexy, ambitious, amazing mother. I want to show my son that you work for what you obtain in this world... It’s ok to be strong. It’s ok to be a leader. It’s ok to express your sexuality—just ‘cause you’re a mom, doesn’t mean that all of those things have to go away... Women, we have so many different facets to our personality. We’re moms, we’re wives, we’re sisters, we’re best friends, we’re daughters. Life is short. Why not use all of those different qualities? Maybe this is why I love Beyoncé. Women, we can rule the world.” **ML**

Tia Dishes

What would fans be surprised to find out about you?

That I was really good at humanities in college—I love art. I love studying the history of art. I love history so much, that's why I think I love traveling so much. But I hate to fly, I'm still afraid to fly, but just deal with it. It's only 10-12 hours to get over to Italy, Paris, just deal with it, but once you're there, *Ahhh, this is amazing...*

What is your go-to dish when you're trying to impress somebody?

My turkey meatballs and spaghetti. I think it's a dish that everybody loves: children, men, women. It's a dish I made for my father-in-law and he basically fell in love with it. It's hearty and delicious. I use bread crumbs as a binding agent, and I soak the bread crumbs in the milk to give it moisture, 'cause turkey can get a little dry, and I'll add spinach to give nutritional value to the turkey meatballs, and I add a little wine in there—nice, earthy flavor to the tomato sauce—that's always just a homerun.

Favorite food to eat weekly?

I am obsessed with kale salads now—they're filling. The first time I had it was here in New York. I like to try all of these kale salads at restaurants. Never go wrong with a red velvet cupcake. I've always said if I wasn't married to Cory I'd be married to red velvet.

Who bakes the best red velvet cupcake?

That's a hard one. I'm going to say Sprinkles—it's delicious and just great!

What are you watching on TV?

I don't like to do what everyone else is doing. Just 'cause you're telling me to watch this show, that's why I'm not going to watch it. Everybody is like, 'Game of Thrones is amazing!' My mother was over, maybe two months ago, watching *Game of Thrones*, and we sat and watched three episodes in a row and I was like, 'Oh my God, this show is so incredibly good.' I was on hiatus from my show, locked myself in my room for 8 days, popcorn in hand, and watched the whole freakin' five seasons on Apple TV. I'm so obsessed with the show. I'm Googling everybody and Googling the characters, so I can get to know the people personally.

What did you watch growing up?

Family Matters, Step by Step—that whole Friday night TGIF. We would run home to watch TGIF. *Shirley Temple, Little Rascals, Dennis the Menace*—the black and white *Dennis the Menace*, do you remember that?

Who are you listening to?

I'm really ghetto when I work out at a gym. (Jerome: I don't think that's a good word.) Ratchet? (Jerome: She has a little rachicity.) I do have a ratchet side. (Jerome: Sophisticated ratchet. That's your new title!) I need loud music when I'm working out, I need to be motivated. I wouldn't say Nicki Minaj is ratchet but some of her stuff can get hardcore, so *The Pinkprint*. I'm obsessed with Beyoncé. Justin Bieber, yes, I love his new song "Where Are Ü Now." I love Selena Gomez. I will like the song first, then discover it's Selena Gomez or Justin Bieber. I love Sia, Tove Lo, 2 Chainz, Rick Ross, Lil Wayne, Bobby Johnson, Future—I'm loving trap music.