



These women's
BLOGS
CHANGE LIVES

At first, they were private passions. Then these women's tiny online ideas exploded—helping inspire millions of people in the process.

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THE INTERNET CHEF

➤ THEINTERNETCHEF.BIZ

Bridget Davis, 39, has been passionate about cooking forever. But when a shock diagnosis rocked her family, it sparked her brand-new healthy eating crusade.

I've always been in love with food. I can still recall being four years old, not wanting to leave the kitchen, getting underfoot and being shooed out by my mother because I was too short to help. I could barely reach the bench!

I left school early to take my first job. By the age of 14 I was working as a hostess at a family-run restaurant. It wasn't a very successful venture but it was great because being front of house helped me realise I wanted to cook more than anything else. I've worked in kitchens for close to 25 years now [including as head chef at Bill Granger's restaurant Bill's], which is pretty amazing.

I love the idea of sharing knowledge. When I became a senior chef I took great interest in teaching the apprentices and empowering them to go further in their careers. I enjoyed it so much I did a course on adult teaching, and that's when the blogging started. At first I approached magazines hoping to contribute to their food pages, but after being knocked back a few times I thought, stuff it—I'm going to do it anyway. The great thing about blogging is that anyone can have a voice. So in 2009 I wrote my first ever blog post about the health benefits of chocolate, and it all just grew from there.

My blog wasn't strictly healthy at first. In the beginning, it was a place I shared my traditional apprenticeship style of cooking: how to do a really good hollandaise or creme caramel. Then six months ago, my focus shifted as a few of my family members back home in New Zealand became critically ill.

First, my cousin was diagnosed with cancer.

As a result, she was motivated to change her diet and her attitude. It was truly inspiring. She actually began to coach me on the benefits of healthy eating. Then my brother-in-law, Anton, was diagnosed with leukaemia. He's only 43 and the father of three boys. He had a round of chemo, which didn't work, and after a while, the medical fraternity gave up on him. They sent him home to die. So I looked at his diet and my cousin and

I started coaching him to eat healthily. Last week, he went for a bone marrow scan and, incredibly, his cancer is now less than 1%.

I truly believe that food is medicine.

It's one of the reasons I first started video blogging; not only can people read my recipes, they can see me prepare the food and hear the story behind it. It's a powerful medium. I was always passionate about cooking. Now, I'm passionate about healthy cooking. By teaching people to eat well, we're showing good food really can save lives.

I've just turned 39 and can't wait for 40.

I feel healthier now than I ever have in my life. I've cut caffeine out of my diet: my skin feels amazing and I have more energy than ever. I used to get unnatural highs from caffeine and energy drinks. Now I get all my energy from the great food I'm fuelling my body with. Good food is exciting—it can even increase your serotonin levels.

The blog's bigger than I ever dreamed.

I now have more than a million followers across all my blogging platforms—and it increases by 1000 to 2000 people each day. I'm looking at producing a TV show, *Bridget's Healthy Kitchen*, and also do free, live cooking classes via the Google Hangout On Air feature, that interactively links up to 10 people at a time, anywhere in the world. My blog has become like an ever-evolving cookbook. It takes a lot of work—but you've got to put energy into something to be successful. The fact I'm passing on knowledge, engaging with people and inspiring them to live healthier lives is the reason I keep coming back for more. ►

BRIDGET'S AMAZING Amaze Balls

These natural, sweet treats are gluten-free, dairy-free and fat-free.

The mix of fruit, nuts and seeds are a powerhouse of health-giving goodness.

INGREDIENTS:

1 cup dried figs
1 cup raw almonds
1½ cups dried prunes
1 cup dried apples
1½ cup walnuts
1 tbs flaxseed oil
¼ cup white chia seeds

HOW-TO:

Put all ingredients (except for the chia seeds) in a food processor and blend until well combined. Take some of the mixture in the palm of your hand and roll into balls (about 50g per ball). Roll Amaze Balls in the white chia seeds and store in the fridge (one batch will last about a week).

BRIDGET WEARS FRENCH CONNECTION TOP, WITCHERY JACKET, ZARA JEANS AND HEELS



THE HEALTH ADVOCATE

➔ SARAHWILSON.COM.AU

Sarah Wilson, 40, quit sugar for a week for a magazine column, never imagining it would take on a life of its own and inspire thousands to kick their sweet tooth habit.

outside the mainstream—everybody from scientists to nutritionists to bloggers to people who've had an illness: people speaking from experience. We need to go back to the way our grandparents and great-grandparents ate, before we got all these complicated metabolic diseases.

This year is a busy one for me. I have a new online program that kicks off in February which is like a new year detox, and we've come up with a vegetarian version of the I Quit Sugar meal plan. A lot of vegetarians have a very high sugar-based diet, so we've put a lot of work into creating it. We've got a kids' sugar-free cookbook out mid-February offering healthy lunch box options, and my second book, *I Quit Sugar For Life*, about eating for whole wellness in a sustainable way, comes out at the end of February. I've said to my mum before, "I can't quite believe it! This wasn't meant to happen to me!"

Before I quit sugar, I thought my diet was great. I was eating all the so-called 'healthy' sugars—honey in my chai tea, porridge with plenty of dried fruit, dates and bananas. It looked like I was super-healthy but I just didn't know the full story—that sugar is sugar. In truth, I honestly didn't realise the effect it had on me.

Then I was diagnosed with Hashimoto's disease. My adrenal glands were in hyperdrive, my nails fell off, my hair was falling out in clumps and I was incredibly fatigued. I was told by my doctor not to eat sugar because, with an autoimmune disease, you have blood sugar problems at the best of times, and I was on a blood sugar roller-coaster. I was really resistant to the idea, but there's nothing like a magazine column deadline to get you to do something like that. I gave up sugar for one week [for *Sunday Life*] after which I got an overwhelming response from people wanting to know more. I started researching the answers to their health and nutrition questions and, as a result, began getting all this content for my blog. At the time I was hosting *MasterChef* and it was a good time to go online because one foot was still stuck in the door of mainstream media and the other was in new media. It all started with the column which grew into blog posts, then an *I Quit Sugar* ebook, an ebook cookbook, the print book and now an online program that employs 11 people!

MasterChef put food back on the agenda. And that's fantastic. I also think the bigger food movement is that people are no longer trusting the traditional food messages we all grew up with. It's becoming increasingly clear there's a vested interest behind a lot of them. In its place, there's a new movement of nutritional thinking being driven by people

WE NEED TO GO BACK TO THE WAY OUR GRANDPARENTS AND GREAT-GRANDPARENTS ATE, BEFORE WE GOT ALL THESE COMPLICATED METABOLIC DISEASES

I'm amazed by the juggernaut my blog is now. But partly because I'm 40 and because I've been a journalist for 20 years, I feel comfortable with the responsibility that goes with sharing the sort of information that I do. The wonderful thing about blogging is that I was able to explore going sugar-free in real time, so I had a following that grew with me as the topic heated up. Almost three years later, I feel confident that I'm authentic and that it all happened in a natural way.

My day on a plate looks a little like this: For breakfast, I make a green smoothie with heaps of vegetables, half a kiwifruit, some ginger and fresh turmeric. I always supplement that with a handful of nuts or a big scoop of nut butter. For lunch, it's what I call a mishmash meal: steamed vegetables, whatever's in my fridge with some kind of protein and fat stirred through it. Either a couple of eggs, a tin of tuna, a quarter of a chicken, some fetta cheese, homemade mayonnaise, olive or macadamia oil. For dinner, I'll have slow-cooked pulled pork or beef cheeks. I make a big quantity and freeze it into portions so I've always got a meal ready. I'll have it with broccolini, zucchini, parsnip or sweet potato mash. And I definitely have a glass of red wine.

I've just turned 40. I was really excited about it—I feel like I've arrived. It feels like I've climbed the mountain and now I'm at the top. Finally, I can enjoy the view. ▶

SARAH WILSON in 60 seconds

ON MINDFULNESS:

I meditate every morning and afternoon for 20 minutes. I find that meditation fixes everything. It's the act of meditation that matters—the struggle, the tug of war, that's the most rewarding part of the process.

ON HAVING A ROUTINE:

Every successful wellness expert I've spoken to, from the Dalai Lama to Oprah's life coach, all say to have a morning routine. Every morning I incorporate exercise, breakfast and some grounding time.

ON HAVING IT ALL:

I don't believe you ever find balance; what you do is become OK with not being in balance and that's the difference. It's a matter of perspective. It's really all about modulating: a process that is, in many ways, the best part of life.

SARAH WEARS FRENCH CONNECTION SHIRT, ZARA SHORTS, WITCHERY HEELS



THE STRAIGHT TALKER

➤ WOOGSWORLD.COM

When mother-of-two Kayte Murphy, 40, started tapping away in her lounge room five years ago, she had no idea her creative outlet would turn into a thriving online community

per day) and two years ago my husband came home and asked, "Is there any way you could change the name of your blog?" And I said, "No, there is not!" He's cool with it now but it was funny at the time.

A lot of opportunities have sprung up as a result. I have two columns, including for Wendy Harmer's thehoopla.com.au and a weekly slot on Channel 7's *The Daily Edition*. I trot into town with a full face of make-up on and think to myself, "Who does this bored housewife think she is?" I meet clients, brainstorm ideas and then trot home, put on my trackies, grind the mince and make a spag bol!

Blogging has definitely saved my sanity. It's like therapy—a place where I can go and just brain dump or question things. As my blog grew I realised it was a place where other people could also relate and come for a laugh. I don't try to pretend that my life is anything perfect. The great thing about blogging is that it's made me a nicer person. Sharing my stories and hearing other people's has helped me to become less judgemental and more empathetic. I've also got a lovely circle of blogging friends that I've met online who are extremely supportive.

I turned 40 this year and embraced it. I thought, "Bring it!" I'm in the best place now because I'm more sure of who I am, and learning about other people through my blog has helped me let go of some of my own insecurities. I still get anxious, but I used to be really mindful of what people thought of me. I understand now not everyone's going to like me and I don't need to seek approval for things I do both on the blog and across life.

Women 40+ are an unstoppable force. There's this massive surge of confidence that's come about recently. We don't put up with the bullshit we might've done 20 years ago. We're still majorly under-represented in many areas but I believe as women get older, they're becoming more powerful. The notion of women being invisible once they turn 40 is starting to fade. And as I've learnt, it's hard to be invisible with 12,000 Twitter followers!

MRS WOOG ON BLOGGING: My top three tips

DON'T THINK ABOUT IT—JUST DO IT

Be brave, consistent and real. Don't pretend to be someone you're not—people can see a bullshit artist a mile away.

HAVE FUN WITH IT

Blogging is as important to me as brushing my teeth. It can be great for your personal development. You don't have to share it with anyone. You can make your settings private and just blog for yourself until you're ready to share it online.

IT DOESN'T HAVE TO BE PERSONAL

If you have an expertise, go for it. There are blogs about everything. If you're interested in the mating habits of the Lithuanian bear fox, chances are there's a blog about it.

My son Jack was born with hearing loss.

I was working in the marketing department at a publishing company but quit my job to concentrate on him. It was a rough year, because at the same time my husband had quit his job to start his own business, so we had no income for a while. It was extremely stressful. One day a friend suggested I start a blog. I'd never read a blog, didn't even know what it was, but it was something to do for myself, as well as a way to remedy the fact I was going a bit nuts, as one does when they're stuck at home with a toddler (my eldest son Harry, now 9, and a newborn). In that first year, I published maybe one post and in the second year, about two.

After seeing the movie *Julie & Julia*, where [blogger Julie Powell] blogs her way through Julia Childs' cookbook, I set myself the task of blogging every day for a year. Sometimes it was just a picture and a caption. After I'd been blogging for a while I joined an online community for Aussie mum bloggers where we could talk about blogging—it wasn't really mainstream back then. But I didn't have a plan. I just kept plodding along because I really liked blogging—it became part of my routine.

When I started the blog I called it WoogsWorld because I wanted to be anonymous. Well, here's a heads up: you can't be anonymous online. My husband is a very private man and Woog is actually his surname. I used it because I didn't think anyone was going to read my blog; it was also a play on Wayne's World. Anyway, the blog grew (I now get 5000 readers



KAYTE WEARS SUSSAN TOP, JACKET AND SKIRT, ZU HEELS

Blogs WE LOVE

advancedstyle.blogspot.com

New York photographer Ari Seth Cohen roams the streets, snapping the sartorial style of the "silver-haired set". Want inspiration on how to get more fabulous with age? You'll definitely find it here.

lifeandothercrises.blogspot.com

Mother-of-three, author and *Prevention* columnist Kerri Sackville never fails to entertain with honest, beautifully observed anecdotes about life as she knows it. Raw, funny and heartwarming.

allisontait.com

Writer Allison Tait shares personal stories about life in a pink fibro after her family's sea change from inner-city Sydney to the NSW south coast. Her blog includes inspiration for writers, musings on motherhood and a book club.

theconversation.tv

This is definitely one to watch: British photographer and former TV presenter Amanda de Cadenet serves up thought-provoking video interviews with high-profile women. On her hit list of late: Arianna Huffington, Jane Fonda and Diane Von Furstenberg.

alexstuart.com

Recipe creator Alexx Stuart shares her enthusiasm for the wonders of whole food and the importance of low-toxic living. With the food philosophy "Keep it real. Keep it unrefined." she's a committed advocate for eating the way nature intended.



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