



Constance Cooks Press Kit



No Ordinary Show

Constance Cooks is a single camera comedy crossed with a cooking show that loosely reflects the real life of actor and host, Constance Zaytoun, PhD. We follow the trials and tribulations of Constance Mansour as she seeks out what's hip and new on the food scene in NY for her web show. But is she too out of step with Millennials to find what she's looking for?

At the end of each narrative episode, Constance demonstrates - using time-lapse filming - an actual recipe that gives a surprise twist to her original plan. Her classic taste and old-school techniques provide an antidote to the humiliations she endures on her quest.



Synopsis:

Constance is a 40-year old professor with a cooking problem. Rather than use her PhD to pay off her crippling student loans, she slings cocktails and dreams of hosting a cooking show featuring New York artists in her tiny Chelsea apartment. Will Constance's culinary quest lead to a recipe for life, or will she fall flat on her face like a bad soufflé?

With actual recipes after each episode!

Cast:

Constance Zaytoun as Constance Mansour, our protagonist

Marc Stuart Weitz as Marc Stewart, her partner

Marylouise Burke (*The Mist*) as Constance's PhD dissertation advisor and mentor

Lynne Marie Rosenberg (*High Maintenance*) as Lisa Roberts, Constance's scholarly nemesis

Matthew Lawler (*Chappaquiddick*, ABC's *The Family*) as the arresting police officer

Isiah Whitlock, Jr. (*The Wire*, *BlackKkKlansman*) as himself

Crew:

Rosalie Tenseth, Director

Jamal Solomon, Director of Photography

Eliane Amherd, Original Music

Jason Whitaker, Production Design/Animation

Brent Katz, Editor

Richard Kim, Line Producer

David Domedion, Culinary Producer (Food Network's *The Pioneer Woman*)

ConstanceCooks.com

@constancecooks

For more information write:
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Festivals



Awards

Best Pilot – 2018 NYC Web Fest

Best Comedy - Third Place – 2019 NYWIFT/GoIndie TV Online Shorts Festival



Constance Zaytoun (co-creator, lead)

You may have seen Constance asking how she can “unfriend” her new best friends “stress, hot flashes, and mood swings” in the Menopause Monologues commercial for Estroven Stress, Mood & Memory, or you may have seen her as the drunk aunt in an IKEA commercial, or you may have heard her as the voice of Repatha. She was also last seen on the New York stage as the very pregnant Anna and her imaginary child-genius Cecil in the Off-Broadway production of Paula Vogel’s *And Baby Makes Seven* (“**Ms. Zaytoun indulges in a comic tour de force!**” –NYT). Her performance moved Paula to say, “**Constance’s ability to perform with intelligence and without restriction is remarkable to see on stage.**”

Constance adores teaming-up creatively with her partner in life and in crime, Marc Stuart Weitz. Together with their theatre company, Purpleman, they’ve presented new works by Carson Kreitzer, Jon Marans, Deb Margolin, and Moby Pomerance, and are currently in development to present the premiere production of Campion Decent’s *Ghost Dancing*, a play loosely based on visual artist Judy Chicago’s iconic feminist work *The Dinner Party* and the 1972 Womanhouse Nurturant Kitchen. Gertrude Stein breaks through the floor angry she was not invited to the party, and Lady Gaga is the *deus ex machina*. If it sounds like a wild ride, you’re right! And Constance looks forward to playing the dual role of Chicago/Stein.

Constance grew up in North Carolina, the youngest of nine. Her grandparents emigrated from Lebanon, and she is as comfortable making such Lebanese classics as labneh, babaganoush, and kibbeh, as she is frying chicken or green tomatoes.

A graduate of The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (BA), New York University (MA), and CUNY Graduate Center, where she earned her Ph.D., Dr. Zaytoun (!) taught acting and theatre at NYU, Marymount Manhattan, and Purchase College. She is a published author, and co-authored with Weitz the introductory essay, “What is a Good Play? Thoughts Across Centuries,” for *The Playwright’s Workout*, eds. Dixon and Engelman (Smith & Kraus, 2009). She is a certified associate teacher of Fitzmaurice Voicework® and is represented by Don Buchwald & Associates, Abrams Artists, and Ingrid French Management.



Marc Stuart Weitz (co-creator, recurring)

Marc Stuart Weitz has been Producing Director for the Obie Award-winning New Ohio Theatre since 2011, having previously produced and directed theater independently in New York City for 13 years.

In addition to producing the New Ohio's many programs, Marc created the NY Indie Theatre Film Festival, a festival devoted to works created by theatre people branching out into film/TV. The festival has honored John Cameron Mitchell and Julie Taymor, and Marc conducted interviews with each of these artists.

As the Artistic Director of Purpleman Theater, his directing credits include the first NYC revival of *And Baby Makes Seven*, by Paula Vogel, and world premieres of *Population: 8*, by Nicholas Gray; *Time is the Mercy of Eternity*, by Deb Margolin (featuring Lisa Kron); *Broken Hands*, by Moby Pomerance (2006 FringeNYC Award

winner); and his own original composition *Days and Nights: Page 121, Lines 11 and 12*, which combined the stories of Chekhov's *The Seagull* and Anne Frank's diary.

Marc graduated from the University of Pennsylvania with a BSE in Mechanical Engineering, but decided he didn't want to drive over any bridge that he had built. So he lit out for San Francisco to get an MFA in Acting at the American Conservatory Theatre, where he figured the only trauma he was likely to inflict was in the minds of critics. He has taught workshops in voice, Suzuki Actor Training and the Viewpoints at NYU, Purchase College, Marymount Manhattan, the Old Globe, and others. With Constance Zaytoun, Marc co-authored, "What is a Good Play? Thoughts Across Centuries," for *The Playwright's Workout*, eds. Michael Bigelow Dixon and Liz Engelman (Smith & Kraus, 2009). He is a member of the Lincoln Center Directors Lab.



Crew

Rosalie Tenseth, Director

Rosalie directed the first season of *After* and is creating #ISITJUSTME for her new comedy channel Happy Martini TV. She produced the film *Self Portrait* with Lyric Films which just premiered at NY Intl Shorts Fest. Her short, *Failure Groupies*, won several Best Short and Jury Awards and is released on Amazon.

David Domedion, Culinary Producer

Emmy-Award winning producer, culinary producer, food stylist, and recipe writer. *Frontier Woman* (Food Network); *Sandra Lee's Taverns, Lounges and Clubs*; *Worst Cooks In America*

Jamal Solomon, Director of Photography

Flowers (HBO); 2014 Zeiss Precision Image Award

Richard Kim, Line Producer

Moko Jumbie (LA Film Festival, Winner - Film Independent Canon Filmmaker Award)

Eliane Amherd, Original Music

Singer, guitarist and songwriter Eliane was born in Switzerland and lives in NYC. Her unique sound is jazzy, groovy and rooted in African, Brazilian and Latin music. She has performed as a leader or a featured artist in New York's most famous clubs like SOB's, Subrosa, Blue Note, Nublu, BAM, Brooklyn Bowl, and BB Kings.



Press Coverage – GoIndieTV.com



CONSTANCE COOKS; Bitter Melons - episode 1- TIE 3RD PLACE

NYWIFT is proud to announce the selected projects for the 2nd Annual NYWIFT Online Shorts Festival, presented in partnership with GoIndieTV and they announce 'Constance Cooks' directed by NYWIFT member Rosalie Tenseth as the 3rd place winner in the Comedy category. Constance is a 40-year old professor with a cooking problem. Rather than use her PhD to pay off her student loans, she bartends and dreams of hosting a cooking show featuring New York artists in her tiny apt. Will she find a recipe for life or fall flat like a bad soufflé? Go Indie TV found this 19-minute pilot to be a joy to watch. Constance Cooks is a single-camera comedy hybrid crossed with a cooking show and reality talk show. The story follows Constance's quest to change her life and create a web show and introduces viewers to contemporary artists as well as time-lapse recipes to follow at the end of each episode. The concept behind this show works well and it will be popular with all ages. It has a bit of everything for everyone from recipe ideas, to a good laugh Go Indie TV feels Constance Cooks will find great success on any platform.



Constance Zaytoun And Marc Stuart Weitz Serve-Up Laughs With CONSTANCE COOKS

W News Desk Nov.1, 2018

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Theater veterans turned co-creators Constance Zaytoun and Marc Stuart Weitz serve-up plenty of laughs with their new comedy-meets-cooking series, **CONSTANCE COOKS**, premiering as 'Best Pilot' award nominee at the 2018 NYC Web Fest on November 8th.

Loosely based on her real life, this single camera comedy crossed with a cooking show follows Constance (Zaytoun), a 40-year old professor with a problem. Rather than use her PhD to pay off

her crippling student loans, she slings cocktails and dreams of hosting a cooking show featuring New York artists in her tiny Chelsea apartment. Will Constance's culinary quest lead to a recipe for life, or will she fall flat on her face like a bad soufflé?

At the end of each narrative episode, Constance demonstrates - using time-lapse filming - an actual recipe that gives a surprise twist to her original plan. Her classic taste and old-school techniques provide an antidote to the humiliations she endures on her quest.

"The show is inspired by the women I know. The crazy choices we've made - the loans we've taken - to stay in New York City and make art. We're stuck in a generational place filled with anxiety, irony, passion, and lots and lots of laughter," shares Zaytoun.

To get CONSTANCE COOKS out of her head and onto the screen, Zaytoun teamed up with her real-life partner Weitz. "The character of Constance is a little out-of-step with what's hip and current, and it leads to some hilarious results," Weitz explains. "She wonders if she's too old to accomplish what she wants, but it's a hopeful story about perseverance and the power of staying true to yourself."

To sweeten the recipe, this creative duo brought in award-winning indie director **Rosalie Tenseth** (After; Failure Groupies), Emmy-winning producer and culinary producer David Domedion (Food Network's Frontier Woman), 2014 Zeiss Precision Image Award winning director of photography Jamal Solomon (HBO's Flowers), award-winning line producer Richard Kim (Moko Jumbie) and Swiss singer/songwriter Eliane Amherd to contribute her original music.

The on-screen flavor comes not only from Zaytoun and Weitz, but also thanks to a well-seasoned cast, including **Marylouise Burke** (The Mist), **Lynne Marie Rosenberg** (High Maintenance), **Matthew Lawler** (ABC's The Family) and veteran actor **Isiah Whitlock, Jr.** (The Wire, The Good Cop).

CONSTANCE COOKS is not the first outing for this creative couple. Together with their theatre company, Purpleman, Zaytoun and Weitz have presented new works by **Carson Kreitzer**, **Jon Marans**, Deb Margolin, Moby Pomerance and others.

Originally from North Carolina, Zaytoun is a graduate of UNC-Chapel Hill (BA), New York University (MA), and CUNY Graduate Center, where she earned her Ph.D. A powerhouse actress, the New York Times touted, "Ms. Zaytoun indulges in a comic tour de force!" for her recent performance in the Off-Broadway production of [Paula Vogel](#)'s *And Baby Makes Seven*.

Weitz is currently the Producing Director for the Obie Award-winning New Ohio Theatre and founder of the NY Indie Theatre Film Festival. He graduated from the University of Pennsylvania, before earning an MFA in Acting at the [American Conservatory Theater](#).

Creators Constance Zaytoun and Marc Stuart Weitz Cook Up a Refreshing Hybrid Comedy Series

Posted on January 20, 2019 by Samantha Blackwell in Featured, Filmmaking

Creative couple **Constance Zaytoun** and **Marc Stuart Weitz** are serving up a delectable new comedy-meets-cooking series, ***Constance Cooks***, with heaps of laughter and a side of reality.

Constance, originally from North Carolina, obtained her BA from UNC-Chapel Hill,

before going on to receive her MA from NYU, and PhD from CUNY Graduate Center. Recently, Constance has garnered rave reviews for her performance in the Off-Broadway production of Paula Vogel’s *And Baby Makes Seven*.

Marc, Constance’s counterpart both on screen and off, graduated from the University of Pennsylvania, before earning an MFA in Acting at the American Conservatory Theater. Those familiar with Marc will recognize him as the founder of the NY Indie Theatre Film Festival, and the Producing Director for the award-winning New Ohio Theatre.

Together, this talented duo has created the perfect recipe for comedy with *Constance Cooks*. The series combines a 5-star worthy cast, award-winning indie director Rosalie Tenseth, and Emmy-winning producer and culinary producer David Domedion, delivering a refreshing twist on the modern day sitcom.

The series has been gaining momentum on the festival circuit since debuting the pilot episode and winning ‘Best Pilot’ at the 2018 NYC Web Fest. It also earned 3rd place for ‘Best Comedy’ at the New York Women in Film & Television (NYWIFT) Online Shorts Festival, presented in partnership with GoIndieTV and is now airing on their website and Roku channel.

Up next, the pilot episode will screen at the New York Indie Theatre Film Festival (NYITFF) at the New Ohio Theatre, followed by the world premiere of the “Edible Arrangements” episode as part of the Winter Film Festival.

Q: How did you each get into the business and then come together as a team?

Constance: Both Marc and I have acted since college. I moved to NYC to be surrounded by theatre, but I didn’t think I could pursue the work full-time, so I took on a bunch of corporate jobs. I ran away from acting so much that I got a PhD in Theatre Studies so I could still be close to the theatre. Once I graduated (it took 10 years!), I realized it was now or never if I was going to commit to acting, and so I jumped in full-time and treated it like a business, as well as an art. And I couldn’t be happier.

Marc got his MFA in Acting from ACT and after working as an actor for several years after school, he started to direct and produce. We first came together when we produced Moby Pomerance’s new play for the NY Fringe Festival. Marc directed. I acted. We worked well as a team and the production did quite well, too.

Marc: And we haven't stopped working together.

Q: What made you want to create your own projects?

Constance: We'd been toying with this idea for many years, but the format we had been thinking of was too difficult to self-produce and get off the ground. And then we had one of those "ah-hah" moments when we realized the structure of the show was actually "meta." Instead of creating a cooking show in which I interview NY artists and cook their favorite foods, it's a show about a woman who wants to make that show, but she's not sure she knows how or if she's too late in her life to make it happen.

Marc: I also think Constance and I push each other to make work. She calls me out on my stuff, and I call her out on hers. Without each other, we'd be a couple of bums.

Constance: Or trying to grow carrots in Indiana.

Marc: Wait, what? Do they even grow carrots in Indiana??

Constance: We'd try.

Q: Briefly explain your new web series *Constance Cooks*.

Marc: *Constance Cooks* is kind of like a modern-day *Mary Tyler Moore Show* crossed with Julia Child, by way of *Sex and the City*! Our hero, Constance, is a 40 year-old professor with a cooking problem. Rather than stay in academia to pay off her loans, she slings cocktails and dreams of creating her own cooking show where she interviews New York artists.

Each episode starts with her describing a recipe she's going to make, but then you see all the trials she goes through to make it. She's just a little too old, or not hip enough, or out-of-step, or whatever. By the end of the episode, however, she's discovered a better recipe as a result of her age and experience. So she succeeds, but with a twist that surprises her and keeps her moving toward her goal. And then after the narrative portion of the episode, we actually include a time-lapse demonstration of the recipe so you can make it, too!

Q: Where did you find the inspiration for this idea?

Marc: This is very much inspired by Constance’s real life. While she was writing her dissertation, she used to interview artists in her home and cook them dinner. And she really does love to cook for friends and entertain them in our tiny apartment. Oh, and she really is un-hip to current pop culture! She’s the youngest of 9 kids, and there’s a big age gap between her and the next oldest sibling, so she’s more tied to the 70’s than she is to Gen X. And don’t get me started on how clueless she is about Millennials!

Constance: Hey!

Marc: I’m just kidding. Sort of. That moment in the pilot where she doesn’t know who Taylor Swift is really happened.

Constance: That’s true.

Q: What were the first steps you took to make it happen?

Constance: We did some preliminary toying around in the kitchen with a friend filming, but really, the first major step we took was Marc’s idea. He suggested we take one week off from our other jobs and literally pay ourselves to write for the week. We locked ourselves in our apartment and wrote the first drafts of the first three episodes. It was incredible. There was writing. There was yelling. There was cracking each other up.

Marc: There was drinking –

Constance: I do make a great cocktail!

Marc: She does.

Constance: But every time I thought we hit a wall, we would shift our flow and do something else and then suddenly, the answer appeared. It was pretty amazing to me as a first-time writer collaborating in this genre.

Q: Anything you wish you could “do-over” on the project?

Constance: Honestly, not really. Are there shots I wish we had? Is there some clarification in the script I wish we gave? Are there some “getting everyone on the same page” moments I wish we had made happen? Of course! But there’s no way I could have anticipated any of the “do-over” moments, and I’m most grateful to have learned from the experience we had and the crew who joined us. I know it’s a cliché, but Marc and I really came to understand the shape of our show in post-production, and a lot of the “slips” from production are getting reconfigured into something that makes the show better!

Q: How do you balance both acting and creating?

Marc: Our life is really just one big balancing act. It’s about all the things we have to balance to do what we want to do and support ourselves. We are actors, we’re creators, we’re producers –

Constance: We’ve got thrival jobs –

Marc: Um, yeah – that’s what she calls survival jobs.

Constance: I learned that from an industry coach I admire, who’s a friend, and it’s more positive.

Marc: It takes a lot of balancing to be an artist in New York. And it takes being okay with times when you’re not creating, too. I try not to let the downtime make me think we’ll never work again.

Constance: In fact I learned how to rethink what “downtime” is and it isn’t really that at all. It’s perhaps quiet time or introspective. It’s the time I take for mindset work or planning. When I’m not auditioning or on a gig or creating our work, I’m doing some of the most important work for me as an artist. And what’s really important for us in this “balance” is finding time to take an entire day for ourselves to go out and enjoy the City.

Q: Any tips for other actors looking to create their own projects?

Marc: Just do it!

Constance: Yes. And...I think there's more, too. Finding a community in this business that has similar goals to your own is so important. It's a lot like actors graduating and then forming their own theatre company with their peeps—

Marc: Peeps? Really?

Constance: Yes. Peeps. It's what the kids say these days.

Marc: *groan*

Constance: Anyway, friends create work and learn the business together. The film/TV side of the business (for actors) may seem more isolating, but creating your own work, due to the accessible resources and platforms available now, is very much like what theatre artists have always done. Marc and I could not have done this without the community of fierce artists who consulted with us, advised us, and ultimately collaborated and worked with us. And I met many of them because of the peer groups of which I'm a member.

Marc: Totally. And then just do it!

indieactivity: What do you want to see change about the business?

Constance: I hope we continue to progress toward more women showrunners, directors, producers, and content-creators. And one day, parity isn't something for which we still need to fight. Also I hope we continue to pay artists a living wage instead of finding ways to get around valuing their work!

Q: Who are your creative idols and what do you love about their work?

Marc: Well, I'm starting to see my—

Constance: Peeps?

Marc: — *colleagues* I know who started at the bottom, and just kept working at it for

10 years or more, and are now coming into their own. I really admire their putting in the work with no promise it would lead to something.

Constance: For me, Larry Gelbart from *M*A*S*H* is a big idol of mine. As is Mary Tyler Moore. And Bob Newhart. And Marlo Thomas.

Marc: See! I told you she identified with the 70's!

Constance: Truth. What I love about these folks is how they were pioneers, particularly as it pertains to women. Marlo Thomas's *That Girl* preceded *The Mary Tyler Moore Show* as a single woman pursuing her career. Mary continued that trend, and her character aged to almost 40 before the show ended, and she still wasn't married. Bob and Emily Hartley worked through life and their careers with humor and without kids. And since Mary Richards and Emily Hartley were last seen in 1977 and '78, women on TV are written mostly as mothers or women with successful careers – who then adopt children & become mothers. And a lot of the women I know are neither. So I'm interested in exploring that situation again.

And back to Marc's point. It's true. Artists who keep plugging away and persevere in this business are my idols, too. Doing the work is everything.

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STORY

Cooking-Meets-Comedy in New Award-Winning Series ‘Constance Cooks’

By ChrisTVfan
Nov 20, 2018

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Cooking and comedy go hand-in-hand in the new series ***Constance Cooks*** from co-creators **Constance Zaytoun** and **Marc Stuart Weitz**.

Loosely based on her real life, the series tracks Constance on a quest to follow her passion for cooking, instead of paying off her PhD student loans.

The pilot episode recently premiered at NYC Web Fest, where it earned the award for ‘Best Pilot’ along with plenty of fans.

This single camera comedy refers to itself as a “hybrid” because it combines a scripted narrative along with a bonus time-lapse recipe demonstration segment at the end. So, we can laugh and then actually learn something – or not.

I recently caught up with Constance Zaytoun to learn more about the series.

What can you tell us about your new TV project *Constance Cooks*?

CONSTANCE ZAYTOUN: *Constance Cooks* is kind of like a modern-day *Mary Tyler Moore Show* crossed with Julia Child, by way of *Sex and the City*! Our protagonist, Constance, is a 40 year-old professor with a cooking problem. Rather than stay in academia to pay off her loans, she slings cocktails and dreams of creating her own cooking show where she

interviews New York artists.

Each episode starts with her describing a recipe she's going to make, but then you see all the trials she goes through in her daily life in her attempt to make this cooking show. She's just a little too old, or not hip enough, or out-of-step, or whatever. By the end of the episode, however, she's discovered a better recipe as a result of her age and experience. So she succeeds, but with a twist that surprises her and keeps her moving toward her goal. And then after the narrative portion of the episode, we actually include a time-lapse demonstration of the recipe so you can make it, too!



Where did you get the idea for this new hybrid comedy?

CZ: Well it's pretty much based on my life! While I was writing my dissertation, I used to interview artists at my apartment and cook them dinner. And I'd been toying with making an interview style show for many years, but the living journal format I was thinking of was too difficult to self-produce and get off the ground. And then I had one of those "ah-hah" moments where I realized the structure of the show was actually "meta." Instead of creating a cooking show in which I interview NY artists and cook their favorite foods, it's a show about a woman who wants to make that show, but she's not sure she knows how or if she's too late in her life to make it happen.

Any interesting stories from the set you can share with us?

CZ: I mean the biggest thing that stands out for me was just how crazy cold it was on set! Unknown to us at the time, we chose the coldest weekend of the year to start principal photography. I would see our crew shiver during set-ups. And I'm in a short skirt and boots in the middle of the night, and my coat is supposed to be unbuttoned to show off my blouse. I was freezing! Our fabulous costume designer and art director were literally holding coats and blankets to my legs in between shots! I also never realized how frequently planes fly overhead in Brooklyn. We had to make sure we got our takes in short bursts, because every three minutes, another plane flew overhead and ruined our sound! Now I know.



What do you want audiences to gain from watching it?

CZ: The show is a tribute to women who have stayed in New York to pursue their dreams, but for whatever reason haven't really been able to start their life to fully realize what they want. But New York really represents the sacrifice that anybody anywhere might have to make to be where they feel they can step into their power. So in the way that Constance takes a leap to jumpstart her life at 40, I hope we can inspire people, wherever they are, to realize it's never too late to start. That's a story that I feel is missing from the current TV landscape, where it can often be about starting over or starting something new, after you've already been successful at something. The women I know are still dreaming about that first success and continuing to plug along and do the work!

What's been the biggest lesson for you personally from creating this project?

CZ: So many lessons! For one, I feel like Marc and I gave ourselves a very quick, very intense education in filmmaking! We've learned so much in just a year's time. Also, much like my character, I've learned to value my voice more. At the end of the day, this project is Marc's and my vision, so we need to stand behind the creation of each moment and make sure those reveal what we believe to be true. Lastly, I am inspired every day working with creatives who have chosen to collaborate with us, and most especially, I'm inspired working with Marc. I marvel at our ability to work together, and I'm grateful, too. It's not that we don't butt heads sometimes, but we always come out on the other side and find a wonderful solution that supports our collaboration.



Where does *Constance Cooks* go from here?

CZ: The future is unknown, but bright! We've finished three episodes, and we'd like to find producing and distribution partners, so we can finish the first season and get the story out there. We just won the Best Pilot Award at NYC Web Fest, so we're very excited and hope that positive response propels us onwards and upwards!

Thanks, Constance – you're definitely cooking-up a winner!

For the latest news about *Constance Cooks* visit www.constancecooks.com



ChrisTVfan

Member Since --

