



Constance Cooks

co-created by
constance zaytoun
+ marc stuart weitz



1. women i know



The women I know are all of a certain age.

Studies show it's common for women of this age to hit the bottom of life's Happiness Curve, but my generation is stuck here longer than any other. **We're confused by Millennials and stifled by Baby Boomers.** And we can't figure out how to rise from the bottom despite our education and awareness.

This place is filled with anxiety, irony, passion, and lots of laughter.

There are women of this age on TV, but since Mary Tyler Moore went off the air in 1977 & Bob Newhart in 1978, these women are written as mothers or women with successful careers – who then adopt children & become mothers.

A lot of the women I know are neither.

We are wise yet in many areas still feel like a novice; we are uncertain of our choices and sure of our convictions; we are beautiful but still feel shock when we catch a glimpse at our dimpled backside in the dressing room mirror.

My women friends are all financially stable. Barely. Some are stuck in fallback careers. Some have no fallback, except the gig economy. Those of us who have life partners made a choice for love and support, not money.

None of us have experienced success.

It's about all the crazy choices we've made - and loans we've taken - to stay in New York City with the hope that we can still create art.

The women I know feel like they never tapped into the talent they own in the way they could have. They feel like they're sitting on something. And they're still waiting for the moment when they have more time to make it happen.

This show is for those women who stayed in New York and haven't fully taken the leap to make their dream real. It's also for women all over the country who feel like they're on the precipice of something great, but who are nervous about taking that first big step.

Maybe we'll inspire them to leap with us.

2. constance cooks

Constance has a BA, MA, and PhD and an offer to teach Feminist Art at the University of Saskatchewan at Regina. But she has a cooking problem. Rather than move to the Great White North to find stability (and universal healthcare), she slings cocktails and dreams of hosting a cooking show from her tiny New York City studio apartment featuring the local artists/writers/actors she enlists as guests/sous chefs. Will Constance's culinary quest lead to a recipe for a happy life, or will she fall flat on her face like a failed soufflé?

With actual recipes after each episode!



Constance Cooks

= No Ordinary Show

- part single-camera comedy
- part reality/talk show
- & part cooking show!

All following me, Constance, as I take a middle-aged leap of faith to pursue the life I really want here in New York City.

& with my partner-in-crime, Marc - !

3. no ordinary show

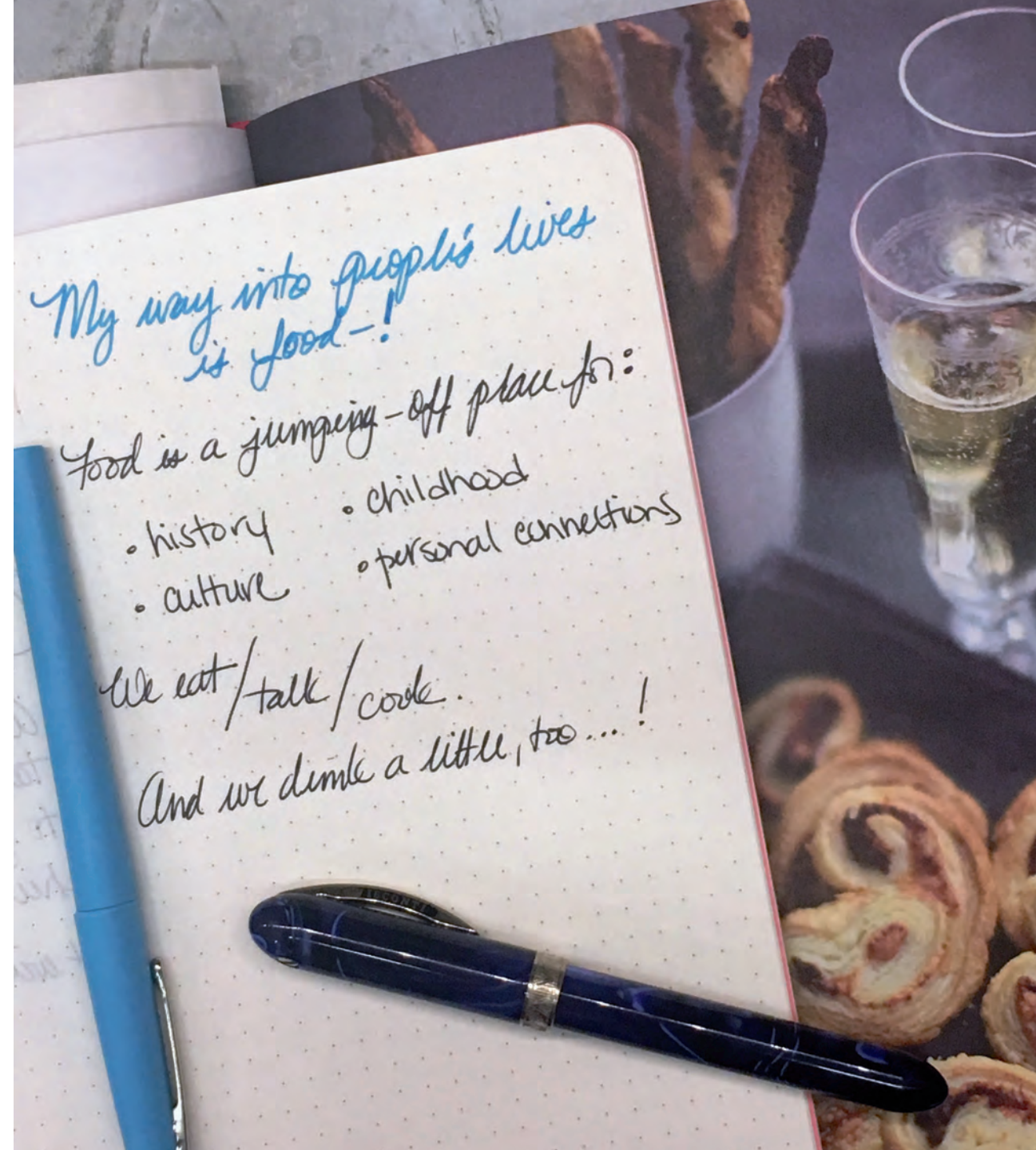
Constance Cooks is a single camera comedy crossed with a cooking show that loosely reflects the real life of actor and host, Constance Zaytoun, PhD. We follow the trials and tribulations of Constance Mansour as she seeks out what's hip and new on the food scene in NY for her web show. **But is she too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

3. no ordinary show (cont.)

Constance Cooks is also about **interviewing special people in Constance's life and making their favorite recipes**. We watch her track down possible guests, convince them to be on her web show, interview them briefly and engage with their favorite foods and recipes. Again, reflecting Constance Zaytoun's real life, she holds aperitivo after-work food gatherings with friends and artists, in a Gertrude Stein-esque salon.

The show becomes a living cookbook for navigating Constance's mid-life change in direction. It's one part *Sex And The City*, mixed with one part *Difficult People*, and a big dollop of *The Galloping Gourmet*.



4. who is constance?

I grew up in North Carolina, the youngest of nine children. All four of my grandparents emigrated from Lebanon, but the only cultural part of our heritage passed down to me was the cooking. With a 9 year gap between child #8 and me, my older brothers and sisters were too busy to deal with me. So I hung out in our kitchen watching my mother and our housekeeper cook.

So I am as comfortable making such Lebanese classics as labneh, babaganoush, and kibbeh, as I am frying chicken or green tomatoes.

From my mother, I also developed a love of entertaining and cooking for guests. **But let's get real! My mother's dining room table is bigger than my entire NYC apartment!**

So I shifted to after-work gatherings modeled on the Italian concept of *aperitivo*. At these parties people come, people go, and there's great food and conversation. This allowed me to experiment with smaller amounts of food, but also a wider variety. Country terrines made of duck and veal;

an ultra-simple tomato tarte, unless you make your own crust, which I taught myself to do; popcorn with black sesame seeds and pink peppercorns to fill up the stomach; a green pea and red wine risotto that's warm and serves many people; and, of

course, there's always a signature cocktail for each event!

When I was in grad school, I interviewed artists over a homemade dinner. It put them at ease and gave us a point of connection. **Our show highlights New York and its amazing food purveyors, artists who began here and remember the struggle,** and the way that in the City all kinds of folks intersect by virtue of the fact that we don't isolate ourselves in cars.

In our apartment you'll find us hosting an intersection of both emerging and established artists with great conversation, and always, fabulous food and cocktails.

5. characters

Constance Zaytoun

as Constance Mansour, our enterprising heroine, slightly out-of-step with her generation, but when life hands her bitter melons, she makes bitter melon-ade (with booze)

Marc Stuart Weitz

as Marc Stewart, her supportive partner, who participates in her adventures, no matter how much bitter melon soup he eats or how many coffin factories he has to visit

Marylouise Burke (*The Mist*)

as Dr. Bettie Pogue, her mentor who disapproves of Constance's desire to leave academia

Lynne Marie Rosenberg (*High Maintenance*)

as Lisa Roberts, her former classmate-turned-scholarly-rival, who is very proud of her new book

Ivan Quintanilla (*Blue Bloods*)

as Jason, her other scholarly rival who isn't the smartest, but he's male

Nicole Golden

as Marsha, her very practical, plugged-in-to-pop-culture best friend

Eliane Amherd

as herself, the lead singer of a Brazilian jazz funk trio

Matthew Lawler (*The Family*)

as a police officer who knows his feminist art history

and

Isiah Whitlock, Jr. (*The Wire*, Sheeeeeeeeeee-it!)

as himself, a star of *The Wire*, *BlackKkKlansman*, *The Good Cop* - and several early episodes of *Law & Order*

5. characters (cont.)

I know artists who succeeded by some miracle, and I like to interview them. Some are visual artists, some have worked on Broadway, some are musicians, some are on TV, but not necessarily household names. I also love to collect regular New York City folks who have fascinating lives — farmers, cheesemongers, chefs, butchers — and who deserve a living journal to chronicle them before the economics of the city drives them out.

Possible artists for future episodes

John Cameron Mitchell

Clark Johnson

Deb Kass

Patricia Cronin

Paula Vogel

Bridget Everett

Doug Wright

Cole Escola

Kathleen Chalfant

Theresa Rebeck

Anne Bogart

Tony Kushner

Julie Taymor

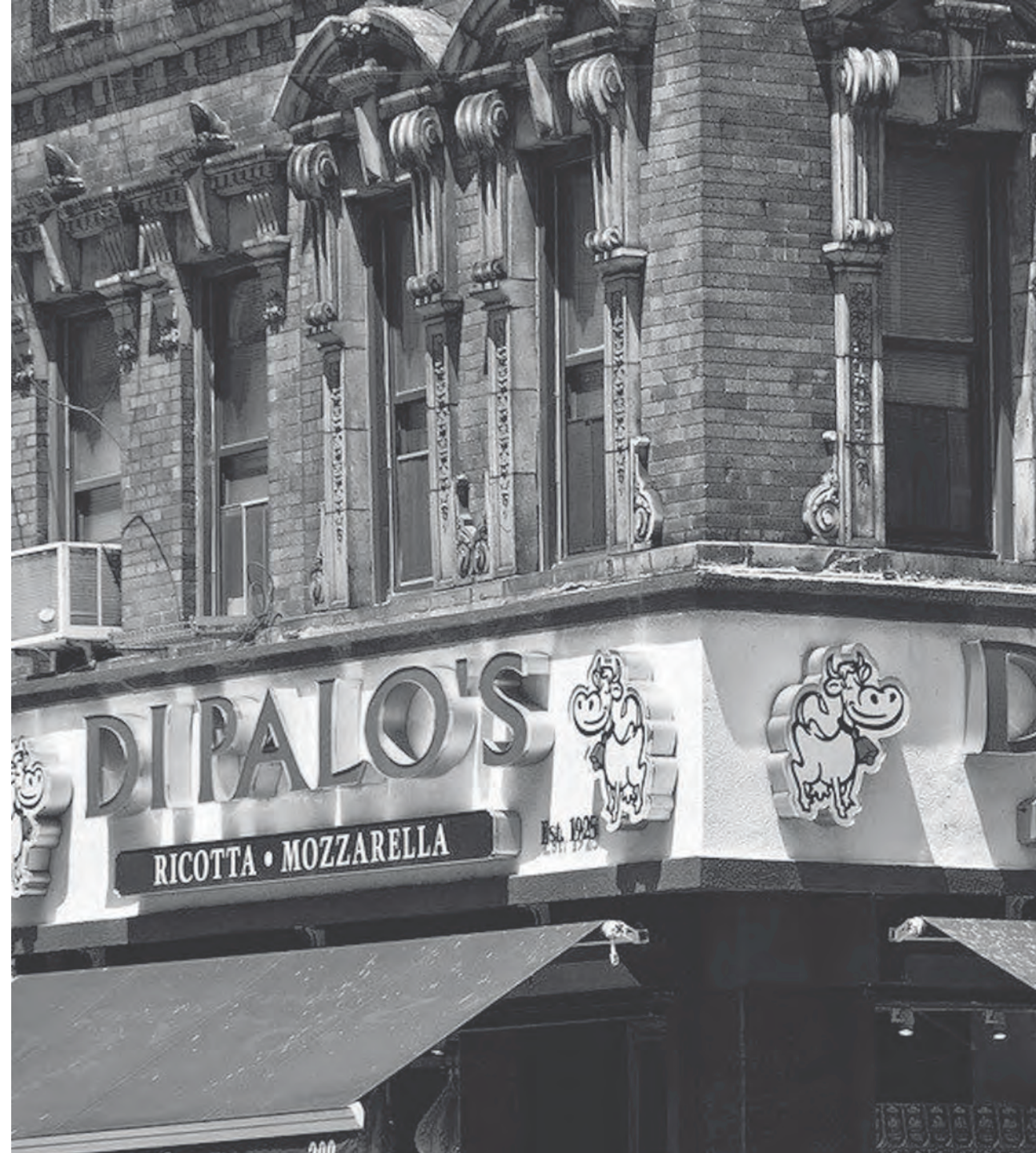
Chef George Mendes

Lou & Sal DiPalo

Peter Francis James

Olympia Dukakis

Mo Rocca





6. new york city

New York City is the backdrop to the show and functions as another character.

New York City is always changing, and it's hard to keep up! Just when I felt like I knew Manhattan, Brooklyn became the center of everyone's attention. Soon it will be Queens. (Let's hope it's not Staten Island any time soon!) The city is beautiful, and **I love to show people out of the way places that don't get talked about in mainstream channels.**

The Italian cheese shop that's been around since the turn of last century; **the Chinese dessert spot with the best sponge cake in the city**; the Malaysian restaurant that changes locations every 6 years because rents keep going up. And the people who own the shops are as unique as the food they make.

7. format

Constance Cooks is a single-camera comedy/reality/cooking show hybrid.

Each episode revolves around Constance taping a recipe for her web show. **By the end of the episode, the recipe has taken a twist**, inspired by her adventures in the city, or interactions with real-life NYC artists.

Examples: A quest for the hip uncovers the value of what's classic. A soup recipe gone wrong makes a cocktail so right. And brownies so good they're criminal lead to her surprising redemption.





8. second screen experience

A website component for interviews & recipes serves as the “reality” portion of the programming. Artists and recipes will be introduced in the narrative, and viewers will be encouraged to go online to explore more with the recipe, sponsored ingredients, and Constance's, or the artist's, connection to the recipe. Additionally, when an artist is featured, an interview will be posted to the website.

Stand-alone recipes are placed on YouTube as how-to cooking videos, with embedded click-to-purchase links, and a link to the full episode on Vimeo.

9. sample episodes

Episode 1: "Bitter Melons" – Constance works as an adjunct professor at a college in New York City, but moonlights as a bartender to help pay her student loans. The sight of her academic rival's first book in a store window on the same day that Constance is turned down for another full-time teaching position spurs Constance to finally attempt to succeed at her secret passion. Emboldened by lots of gin, she records herself as the star of her own cooking show, but her recipe for Bitter Melon Soup just comes out bitter. Meanwhile, her next bartending gig makes her gag when she discovers it's her rival's book launch party, and she is serving all her former classmates. When at last she's offered a full time position in far away Saskatchewan, Constance must choose between leaving all she loves to find stability (and universal health care), and staying in the city and leaping into the unknown to develop her show. But does she have the talent to turn bitter melons into Bitter Melonade?





9. sample episodes (cont.)

Episode 2: "Edible Arrangements" – Convinced no one will watch her cooking show because she's not a trained chef, Constance tells her best friend Marsha that her new concept is to interview New York City artists while cooking their favorite foods. Her first choice is the actor Isiah Whitlock, Jr., a foodie and wine connoisseur she's been stalking around the neighborhood. Having failed to meet him so far, Constance takes Marsha's advice and contacts his agent. Her plan to give the agent homemade brownies goes very wrong when she fails to understand contemporary drug slang. But all is not lost when a special package arrives in the mail.

9. sample episodes (cont.)

Episode 3: "Call of the Idlewild" – Determined to teach her viewers what's hip on the New York food scene, Constance pushes herself to leave Manhattan and find the hippest new cocktail in New York City – a healthy cauliflower concoction located at a speakeasy for under-30-somethings in the distant land of Bushwick. Borrowing her niece's identity, Constance signs up for the secret directions and prepares to drag her husband Marc on an outer-borough adventure worthy of Anthony Bourdain going to Libya. But the forces of gentrification make it impossible to locate the coffin factory that leads to the speakeasy, and all they find are tourists. When they discover a bootleg cocktail delivery app will produce the hip drink they seek, Constance and Marc's drink order almost kills their taste buds as well as the delivery boy. Is Constance doomed to be forever un-hip? Or can she make the classic hip once more?



10. creative team

Constance Zaytoun (co-creator, lead): Actor/Writer/Producer for theatre and film. You may have seen her asking how she can "unfriend" stress, mood swings, and hot flashes for Estroven. Or maybe as the drunk aunt in a national spot for IKEA. Or you might have heard her voice describing how Repatha gets you on the right path to lower your LDL. Off-Broadway: *And Baby Makes Seven*, by Paula Vogel ("Ms. Zaytoun indulges in a comic tour de force!" –*NY Times*).

Marc Stuart Weitz (co-creator, recurring): Marc is producer of the NY Indie Theatre Film Festival (NYITFF) and an award-winning Director/Writer/Producer for theatre. Off-Broadway: *Broken Hands*; *Days & Nights: page 121; lines 11 and 12*; *Time Is The Mercy of Eternity*; *And Baby Makes Seven*. Producing Director of New Ohio Theatre (Manhattan).

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 Lyricity Films which just

premiered at NY Intl Shorts Fest. Her short, *Failure Groupies*, won several Best Short and Jury Awards is released on Amazon.

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

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's unique sound is jazzy, groovy & rooted in African, Brazilian and Latin music. She has performed her work at SOB's, Subrosa, Blue Note, Nublu, BAM, Brooklyn Bowl, & BB King's.



11. awards / press

Best Pilot – 2018 NYC Web Fest

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

ITV Fest Network Notes 2018

Press Kit

ConstanceCooks.com/Industry.PressKit



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