

**Sally: Will you describe what your diet was like growing up on a farm?**

Kolybaba: We grew a wide variety of our own vegetables, fruit, berries, and herbs. We raised and processed our own chickens, turkeys, pheasants, and rabbits for meat. Another farming family supplied us with lamb, and we bought unpasteurized milk from a nearby dairy farm; a four gallon pail for two dollars. We would have to wait for the cream to separate so we could then skim it off the top of the pail and keep it in a mason jar. My father also hunted deer, hare, and partridge. We caught freshwater trout; a local fisherman provided seafood straight from his boat. Our hens gave us fresh eggs daily.



My grandfather kept bees for honey and sometimes he'd let us take some honeycomb from a hive. We would chew on it all afternoon; that was our candy, and then spit out a wad of wax and save that until we had enough to melt to make candles. We also kept goats, but they had names and were kept as pets and used for show animals in our 4-H club. When they had milk, my mother would use it to make fresh feta, straining it through an old cloth diaper hanging from the kitchen ceiling! She also cultured homemade yogurt, and baked bread, muffins, cookies, etc. from scratch ingredients. We tapped Maple trees on our property for syrup, we had an apple orchard and pressed our own cider; we froze or canned much of our produce to use over the Winter months, we dried herbs, and made pasta from eggs and flour; we would dry it over a broom handle resting across the backs of two kitchen chairs to store for later as needed. We also foraged for wild berries and mushrooms. Sometimes chanterelles grew under my tree house, how lucky was that?!



So, my diet growing up was largely home-grown and homemade, nothing processed, certainly no junk food, no fast food, and very little refined sugars and salt. Readers might imagine my home was in a remote location, when in fact, we were just twenty minutes from town. That being said, it was only really necessary to go shopping for the larger hauls of groceries just a handful of times each year. Looking back, I truly appreciate how much hard work went into maintaining our farm and living that healthy lifestyle, but growing up at the time, it all seemed so simple.

**Sally: You said your family bought groceries three or four times a year, what did they buy?**

Kolybaba: Really anything we couldn't produce ourselves or get from the neighbors: Citrus fruits, fresh and canned peaches, bananas, ginger root, bacon, peppercorns, spices, olive oil, vinegar, peanut butter, coffee and tea, Ovaltine, Canada Dry ginger ale which we got to drink only after it was flat as a remedy for an upset tummy; canned pineapple juice, lentils, couscous, bulgur & quinoa (I was eating that stuff long before it became so trendy) rolled and steel cut oats, corn meal, plain cornflakes and puffed rice or puffed millet cereal, popcorn kernels to be popped in a copper bottomed saucepan on the back of the wood stove! Almonds and cashews were a nice treat, carob chips for cookies, raisins, salted butter, molasses, flour, yeast, and all other necessities for baking.

We'd get bread from the Ben's bakery outlet and that was very exciting because it meant I'd have sandwiches with thin and uniformly cut bread slices just like everybody else at school, so the other kids wouldn't make fun of me for the next little while until the store-bought loaves ran out and I had to revert to taking wonky thick homemade bread sandwiches again, haha!

**Sally: How has your upbringing affected you as an adult and/or wife and mother in regards to diet?**



Kolybaba: I recognize that such a large variety of good food is now so accessible to everyone, and it can be fast and easy to prepare in the home, yet I believe too many parents are still reaching for the boxed noodles with the neon orange powder that's supposed to resemble cheese flavor, or the frozen chicken nuggets (is there really any chicken meat in the rubbery off-white part between the supposed "bread crumbs"? I wonder.) and they're making the excuses they are just too busy to eat healthy, or that they just don't know how to cook. I can't understand that. Everybody can learn, and everybody can find the time. It's all about priorities. A childhood of farm life set my priorities straight about proper food and diet, that's for sure!

I do my best to cook meals at home for my family

using real, unprocessed ingredients, just as my Mother and Grandmother did for their families, and I'm mindful about getting maximum usage out of everything since my upbringing taught me that food wastage is shamefully unacceptable. For example, I will roast a whole chicken for dinner tonight, chop up any leftover meat to prepare it for sandwiches for tomorrow, then I'll boil all the bones to make my own soup stock which can be frozen for later, or used in the next couple days to flavor rice or vegetables, or to make homemade chicken noodle soup. There are endless possibilities for stock! The dog gets any bits of chicken skin, and the bones are composted and eventually incorporated into my garden soil, adding nutrients for growing happy veggie plants. No waste!

I don't wish to be labeled as a food snob, but I can't bring myself to eat items from the processed foods section of the freezer aisle at the grocery store. That's just not food to me simply because I was not raised with it, and now I don't feel comfortable feeding it to my children. I also encourage my children to ignore the kids' menu if we eat out in a restaurant. Kids' food should be what the adults are eating, just in smaller portions, not the crap that is marketed toward them in order to brain-wash both the parents and the kids into thinking that's just what kids eat. In a nutshell, my family's diet is basically a mission to avoid anything fake, such as margarine. It's my opinion that stuff will slowly kill you! I prefer to use real butter and sometimes bacon fat because that's what I was brought up on. When used in moderation, they have to be healthier than those heavily processed chemical alternatives marketed as being better for you. I now tend my own small garden plot and strive to grow as much fresh produce as possible.



Friends often tease me for various hippy projects I have on the go: I sprout alfalfa seeds on my kitchen counter for sandwiches and salads, and mung beans for stir frys. I make a delicious firm chocolate pudding that's thickened with seaweed collected from the beach instead of using corn starch or gelatin. I currently have two potted pineapple crowns that I keep as house plants. I sprouted them from store bought pineapples, and with a little

patience and luck, I should be harvesting fruit from them in two or three years' time! I believe all these silly hippy things I do, along with the home cooking and baking and the vegetable gardening, it all plays a key role in instilling healthy eating habits in my children. I do my best to encourage them to be hands-on with what's happening in the kitchen and garden, and in doing so, I believe this helps them to develop a solid foundation of habits surrounding proper diet.

One other thing I'd like to mention without getting too preachy is the subject of meal portion size: If you're dining out in the typical chain-type family restaurant, then you must always remember there is the option to take some of the meal home for later. Having never eaten in these restaurants growing up, it was interesting to note the portion size difference of the dinnertime meal in these places when I did start dining out, compared to the amount of food we'd eat for dinner at home. I'd been taught as a child that you must "clean your plate", and felt obligated to do so at these places, though it seemed overly ambitious. I feel the portion sizes you're served at these types of North American restaurants nowadays are becoming more and more unrealistic and are setting the standard for meal amounts served in the home. This is no doubt an effort to ensure customers feel they're getting good value for the money spent on a meal out, but it's too much food, my gosh! Unless you're hosting a sizable tapeworm, there's no need to consume that much in one sitting!

We have now made a conscious effort to eat out as a family only occasionally, so that when we do, we'll have enough in the budget to be able to choose the restaurants with the chefs who carefully prepare and serve a wonderful fresh and local menu. I find it kind of ironic that these restaurants are considered high-end now. The very ones that offer the same meals I grew up eating at the farm, only served with a fancier presentation and garnishes.

**Sally: How can people who don't have a large piece of property grow their own food? Is it really expensive?**

Kolybaba: It's not expensive, but depending on what you're growing it can take some time to properly care for your plants. You don't need a lot of space either if you plan vertically. Cucumbers, beans, peas, some tomato varieties, and a whole assortment of other veggies can be trained to climb up support cages and poles instead of sprawling out as ground cover. Vegetables can thrive in containers, or tiers of planter boxes attached to a fence. You can grow forty pounds of potatoes in a modified rain barrel if you have to! The internet is full of useful hacks for the wannabe urban gardener short on space, just do a bit of research and begin experimenting with the area available to you!

If you're unable to compost, bags of reasonably priced manure can be purchased from most home building supply garden centers, and you don't need very much to amend your growing soil. You can boost tomato plants by simply sprinkling some Epsom salts around them; my artichokes seem to love coffee grounds; vegetable vines such as buttercup squash will thrive with a decomposing mulch of lawn clippings, and don't weed out all the clover, it actually fixes nitrogen to the



soil and provides additional cover for helpful critters whose presence you'll want to encourage, such as spiders, garden beetles, snakes and toads.

Starting from quality seed is cheaper than buying transplants, and provides a lot more satisfaction in knowing you began the lifecycle and saw it through to harvest. Then comes the fun part that a lot of people don't think of: no need to buy seed every year, just allow a cucumber, for example, to grow a bit larger on the vine, and then dissect it. Tease out the thicker seeds with a spoon and dry them on parchment paper. Then, simply peel them from the paper when you want to start your seedlings indoors in early spring!

You can even skip buying the original seed packet and just save seeds from that gorgeous organic tomato you bought from the store! If you're growing rocambole garlic, plant only the thickest cloves from your late summer harvest again in fall before first frost. Save your largest potatoes over winter in a cool dry place, rub off any sprouted eyes just a couple days before planting, and hill them high with soil once the leaves begin to emerge in order to yield the most tasty tubers per plant. You may have noticed a pattern forming here: I always say: "Plant only the best, and eat the rest!" And each vegetable does have its own little tricks that aid in cultivation, but that shouldn't discourage anybody from trying to grow them; there's lots to learn, but you learn by actually doing it yourself, far more than just by incessantly researching it. Just like Jiu Jitsu!



**Sally: Can you provide a sample menu for busy parents who also work and/or train?**

Kolybaba: The time consuming factor in most home cooked meals is really the prep work. That being said, in every busy lifestyle, there are pockets of time where prep can be fit in,



you just need to recognize it and put it to good use! It will involve some extra forethought about what you wish to make for meals, but it's worth it in the long run, because you'll be far less likely to reach for the yucky box of questionable gluey pasta-stuff! Once the prep is done, most of my dinners come together nicely within twenty to thirty minutes before meal time.

Breakfast is so hectic, and sometimes I actually find myself prepping dinner at the same time, so smoothies are the way to go. Try and have everything you need all measured and lined up on

the counter and at the ready in the fridge door the night before: combine ripe bananas, strawberries, almond milk, plain Greek yogurt, a gob of honey and splash of pure vanilla extract, some ground flax and black chia seeds, just blend and serve! Have a piece of whole grain toast on the side, or a generous handful of granola, then grab your coffee in a travel mug, fill your water bottle and get on with the day!

Lunch away from home was prepared last evening and packed in LunchBlox; a series of handy containers that all snap together nicely onto an ice pack. I like them best because they're reusable, sturdy, and economical compared with other similar items on the market, making them perfect to send with the kids too! Egg salad is great for lunch: I mash boiled eggs with very finely chopped cucumber, red onion, fresh dill, and hummus instead of mayo; season with smoked paprika, and top with alfalfa sprouts, then roll it all up in a nice soft pita bread or tortilla (it's not as complicated as it may sound; this actually comes together very quickly with practice!). A handful of grape tomatoes and a stack of carrot sticks are great on the side. For the kids, because they're far too busy socializing at school lunch time to focus on devouring an entire wrap before the bell rings to go play outside; they get an assortment of raw veggies and a pita cut into wedges with a side of hummus for dipping, cubes cut from an actual block of real cheese, some grapes...just think healthy and unprocessed finger foods for the kiddos because they all eat like little squirrels when they're at school.

Snacks here and there throughout the day are important: Try unsalted pumpkin or sunflower seeds; I love raisins, dried apricots and unsweetened dried cranberries, or just grab an apple or banana! Don't reach for things that come already prepared in convenient, snack-sized packages with the nutritional values and percentage daily intake info plastered all over the wrapper to make you feel guilt-free about snacking and want to buy more of them! You must have snacks, your body needs them, so just reach for something real instead.

Summertime dinner means throwing something on the grill. Skewer medium-sized peeled and deveined shrimp when you have a bit of prep time and have them sitting in the fridge all ready to go. Then, it's as easy as boiling quinoa in broth for fifteen minutes while you quickly brush the shrimp with melted salted butter and place them on the grill for mere minutes until they just turn pink. Remove them from the heat and let them sit so they don't over-cook while you



toss baby romaine mix with some chunked fresh tomato and toasted pecans. Fluff your cooked quinoa with a fork, and serve it along with the salad (no dressing necessary. Really, trust me! But if you must have it, just mix EVOO with balsamic vinegar and use that instead of the brand name dressings full of fat, sugar, salt and preservatives), place a shrimp skewer on top of everything and BOOM!: You've got a solid week day meal on the table in no time!

**Sally: What are your must-have kitchen tools?**

Kolybaba: I'm a kitchen tool nut! I have a [Facebook page](#) dedicated to my favorites and often post simple recipe photo stories and kitchen hacks to try and inspire people to get themselves cooking! I'm also a consultant for Pampered Chef, a respected brand of quality tools, so it's very difficult to narrow my favorites down, but here are my top five in random order:



[Stoneware](#), anything and everything that is Stoneware: Bar Pans and Large Round Stones have replaced my metal cookie sheets and pizza pan. No more burnt bottoms on my shortbread cookies since I made the switch, and homemade pizza crusts bake to absolute crispy perfection. There is no preheating required with the stones I use, and no transfer of flavor or odor between items baked on them. I'll bake haddock on my Bar Pan, scrape it off under warm water, and place the

cinnamon buns on it next, and you'd never know there was seafood on it before sweets. I advise everyone to toss the metal pans and get stones for their ovens!

High quality steel knives should be present at arm's-reach in every kitchen. They're so important. I've discovered many people go most of their adult lives struggling with crummy cheap flimsy-bladed dull knives with the black plastic handles that they keep buying over and over again from the large blue-roofed warehouse store because they just don't last. Then they get their hands on a beautiful forged steel product with a full tang and an ergonomic handle with such perfect balance that the knife feels like a natural extension of their own hand and slices through everything like butter and they're like: "Why, oh WHY, did I not invest in these sooner?" Quality sharp knives ensure a faster, more enjoyable, and much safer kitchen prep experience, no question.

The [Mix 'N Masher](#) is a tool with vast usefulness. It puzzled me when I first saw it, but I soon found myself using it regularly to whip potatoes, squash, and various batters into velvet by hand; stir stews and risottos, and then retrieve poached eggs from their bath like a boss, and so much more. Next thing I knew, I ended up getting rid of most of the other tools cluttering up my kitchen drawers, and I just keep two Mix 'N Mashers at the ready instead because they have me covered.



I also love my [Microplane Zester](#) to bits. It's wonderfully sharp and takes only the citrus zest while leaving the bitter pith part of the fruit behind. I make a lot of Mediterranean-inspired menu items, so many, many lemons gets naked in my kitchen. I also use it to finely grate ginger and garlic. It's constantly in my kitchen sink because I've always just finished using it.

My [Food Chopper](#) saves loads of prep time. I simply place all ingredients to be processed along a large cutting board and just work my way down the line, trapping and chopping everything as I go. Think about how many recipes begin with a chopped onion, and think about how often you feel like the onion is fighting back! The Food Chopper traps all those sneaky vapors that bite you in the face and make your eyes leak uncontrollably in front of the company you're trying to impress by quickly whipping together your own fresh salsa to serve to them. It's just so super fun to use, and a great outlet on days when I feel like putting a bit of a pounding on an inanimate object too. It actually performs better with a little abuse!

Sally's note: if you keep your mouth closed while chopping onions, there are no tears. I think Kolybaba talks a lot, though.

**Sally: What inspired you to try BJJ? What do you like about it?**

Kolybaba: The what that initially inspired me years ago is actually a who and the short and honest answer is: [Sean Patrick Flannery](#). Those who scoff will get a quick demo of the [crucifix choke](#): my new favorite.



Perhaps more seriously, I stumbled upon one of your articles online just at the right point in my life where I'd begun to gather the necessary courage to be able to attempt a few chosen things that were far beyond my normal comfort zone. Training has quickly become an important part of a self-directed effort to try and boost my confidence and develop a stronger, more outgoing personality. It's much more about that journey for me than the physical fitness aspect and self-defense skills, although those are certainly welcomed results too. So, I guess you could say it's exactly what I was looking for and then some!

At this point in my game, BJJ boosts my confidence one minute, and completely shatters it the next, yet I'm not feeling discouraged. I'm fascinated by how simultaneously fun and frustrating it can be! I've made such fast friends in the awesome partners I roll with at Titans; I'm just eager to train as often as I can in the hopes that I might one day feel like I've successfully wrapped at least a portion of my day-dreamy musical mind and long, uncoordinated body around this amazingly complex puzzle that is truly unlike absolutely anything I've ever done before. I recognize that jiu jitsu is life-changing and wish everyone would give it a good honest try to discover what it can do for them.

