

Lake Forest author, Food Network competitor talks new cookbooks

By Samantha Nelson, Contact Reporter - Pioneer Press | July 28, 2017



Lake Forest resident Addie Gundry spent eight months keeping a big secret. Last November, she was asked to be one of 13 contestants on “Food Network Star” vying for a chance to host her own cooking show.

“It seemed like the most far-fetched idea because they have thousands of people they go through,” she said. “It’s like the biggest job interview you have.”

Gundry — winner of a 2015 episode of “Cutthroat Kitchen” — had to stay quiet during the month “Food Network Star” was filming, and then she couldn’t let anyone know she’d been eliminated until her final episode aired on July 9.

Gundry may have lost this competition, but she said she still finds competitive cooking to be “a confidence boost.”

“I’m good at this,” she said. “It’s an adrenaline rush. They look at you and say ‘You have 30 minutes to do x, y and z’ and you just have to go. You’re cooking before you know what you’re making. You’re just dicing an onion. When you succeed at it, you think ‘I know how to do this. I went to school for this.’ I like being on camera. I don’t get uncomfortable. It was just a blast.”

Gundry also released two cookbooks in June, *No-Bake Desserts: 103 Easy Recipes for No-Bake Cookies, Bars and Treats* and *Family Favorite Casserole Recipes: 103 Comforting Breakfast Casseroles, Dinner Ideas and Desserts Everyone Will Love*. Gundry will discuss her cookbooks, and share samples from favorite recipes, at an Aug. 9 event at the Lake Forest Bookstore.

Two more cookbooks covering everyday dinners and easy cookie recipes will be released in October as part of a collaboration between Northbrook-based Prime Publishing, where Gundry is executive producer, and St. Martin’s Griffin. The subjects for the cookbooks were chosen based on feedback from Prime Publishing’s 6 million subscribers and data on the top performing recipes on the company’s RecipeLion website. Gundry has already completed six other books in the series.

“We know exactly what people are looking for when they’re going to make cookies, casseroles, you name it,” she said. “If people really love something, you don’t want to change too much. Other times we really play around with it. We change flavors or we make it healthier. You take something that people love and make it more modern.”

Cooking has been a bit more challenging for Gundry recently as she’s pregnant with her first baby, who is due in September.

“I hate to admit that but I change shoes during the day because one pair gets uncomfortable,” she said. “I just feel bigger in the kitchen, slower and larger.”

The pregnancy has served as inspiration for her blog, “Easy Elegant Entertaining,” where she has offered ideas for hosting a baby shower and provided recipes for mocktails, desserts to satisfy cravings and healthy breakfasts.

“I don’t want to be a baby blogger, but it’s fun for me,” she said. “I’m pregnant and excited. It’s fun to talk about it. I think part of having a blog and having cookbooks and being on a show is people want to know who you are. I’m actually a real human with a life.”