

**Mairlyn Smith:** I'm happy about all the recipes, but some of them I just go, "Oh, my gosh. This is really like I'm going to win a Nobel Peace Prize for this."

**Marion Kane:** I would award you the Nobel Peace Prize for *Peace, Love, and Fibre*. It's even got peace in the title.

**Mairlyn Smith:** I hope I get nominated, at least.

## **Introduction:**

**Marion Kane:** Some topics are so taboo that we only discuss them with our closest confidantes. Today we're going there. I'm Marion Kane, Food Sleuth®, and welcome to "Sittin' In The Kitchen®".

Mairlyn Smith is a celebrated cookbook author and TV personality. She's also a dear friend. Her eighth cookbook is called *Peace, Love, and Fibre*. We discuss the book's health benefits and share a giggle over their unmentionable aftereffects. We spoke in Mairlyn's Toronto home which is also home to hundreds of her late mother's teacups.

**Marion Kane:** When and where did we meet Mairlyn?

**Mairlyn Smith:** Oh, Marion. I will never forget it because I was a huge fan of yours, but you terrified me. You scared the heck out of me and I met you at the Good Food Festival so that had to be 20 some odd years, 25 years ago, maybe. I was doing a segment on a cooking stage and you were backstage and you spoke to me. I don't know what you said, because I probably wet my pants. I'm serious. You scared the hell out of me. But I thought, "Oh, my gosh. She's so funny, and so maybe she's not as scary as I thought." The next time I met you, we talked. I actually had enough courage to talk, and now, ta da, you're sitting in my front room with me having tepid water and a cookie.

**Marion Kane:** In your home.

**Mairlyn Smith:** In my home. You're a very, very special woman. I admired you. You're a wonderful writer but I was scared of you. I just want you to know that. But I'm not scared anymore.

**Marion Kane:** I remember 10-plus years ago when I came to your house and you fed me. I was having a breakdown, an emotional breakdown. I was at a low point and you were nurturing to me.

**Mairlyn Smith:** Marion, I knew you came over and I knew that was going on but I didn't know that it meant that. Yeah. I didn't know that. I'm kind of welling up. You're going to try to make me cry the whole time.

**Marion Kane:** It's a mission of interviewers to make people cry.

**Mairlyn Smith:** Oh, really?

**Marion Kane:** Yes.

**Mairlyn Smith:** Oh, well, you're going to ... Yeah. You're well on your way.

**Marion Kane:** Easy bait. We did a podcast on underdog vegetables. What's your favorite underdog vegetable?

**Mairlyn Smith:** We talked about my favorite BS word, which is Brussels sprouts. That's one of my underdog vegetables that people just really need to embrace.

**Marion Kane:** I like them, too.

**Mairlyn Smith:** Well, that's what we share. We have a lot in common but that's one. We love parsnips too.

**Marion Kane:** We're short.

**Mairlyn Smith:** We're short. We have great laughs.

**Marion Kane:** And funny.

**Mairlyn Smith:** And funny. One of us snorts.

**Marion Kane:** I don't.

**Mairlyn Smith:** No, I don't. Well, I know. It's me.

**Marion Kane:** Fill me in on your resume. You've been many things.

**Mairlyn Smith:** One thing I've never been is tall. When I was little, I wanted to be an actor. My mom and dad put me in dancing lessons. You would have called me a busy child.

**Marion Kane:** Hyper?

**Mairlyn Smith:** No. I think more like ADHD. Honestly, I think back then, had I been born now, my mother probably would have put me on drugs. But anyway, she put me into dancing school instead. So I was a dancer and then, when I was nine, I was in a show and I realized that I wanted to be an actor. So I told my mom and dad, "I want to be an actor," and their mommy and daddy ears heard hooker. They lost their mind because, "No, you can't be an actor." They went out of their way to find me a career and that was to be a home economist. My grade 8 Home Ec teacher said I would be a really good home economist and it was eating, so I'm in. Anyway, no one wanted to hire me. So I went back to university and I got a year of education and I got a job as a half-time drama teacher and a half-time Home Ec teacher. My acting is what got me the job. I taught school for three years in North Vancouver and then I went, "I don't want to die never knowing I could be an actress." I moved to Toronto

and my agent sent me for an audition to Second City. I didn't know who they were, and I got in. What the heck!

That changed my life and I did Second City for a long time and then did TV and commercials and movies and theatre. Then I turned 40 and nobody wanted to hire me anymore. Then I got a job as the chef/cook on Harrowsmith Country Living on TV and that changed the trajectory of my career again. I started writing cookbooks, started doing TV cooking and here I am now on Cityline Breakfast Television. I do keynote. I write books, and I talk about healthy.

**Marion Kane:** How many cookbooks have you done?

**Mairlyn Smith:** This is my eighth. My very first one, I self-published, so that was when I was married to my first ex-husband (laughs). I didn't mean to laugh. That was so rude. I made enough money to come to Toronto. That's how I did that. This is my eighth book. It's the most personal one I've ever written and it really comes from my heart. I literally did write a love letter to your colon but it turned out I kind of wrote a love letter to my parents. I just really wanted to share what my philosophy on eating is. People are so hung up about don't eat this, don't eat that. I just think if we just add more fibre and forget about all those other rules that don't necessarily work, then we'd all be a lot healthier.

**Marion Kane:** It's called *Peace, Love, and Fibre*, and it's changed my life.

**Mairlyn Smith:** That is ... Oh, my gosh. Marion.

**Marion Kane:** I believe it's the most important thing about our diet.

**Mairlyn Smith:** I agree with you a thousand percent. That's what I mean. I think if we just focused on the big umbrella of fibre that everybody's health would get better. You would feel better. You're going to keep your blood sugars from ricocheting all over and being crappy. You're going to lower your cholesterol. You're going to reduce your chance of developing breast cancer. That to me alone, if that's not a big enough reason to start eating fibre, I don't know what is.

**Marion Kane:** What is 30 grams in tangible terms in food?

**Mairlyn Smith:** That's a great question. Okay. If we looked at what I eat in a normal day and I eat seasonally, so right now I'm into zero percent fat Greek yogurt. Always looking for a Greek yogurt that has active bacterial cultures. That's the one you want to look for. So I have that. There's no fibre in that. But then I add two to three tablespoons of ground flaxseed and that's between four and six grams of fibre. Then I add probably a cup of seasonal berries. I'm using frozen Canadian berries right now that I thaw out.

**Marion Kane:** I use frozen berries.

**Mairlyn Smith:** You know what? It's like we're supporting Canadian farmers. We're getting fresh picked, flash frozen, delicious tasting. It's like to me a no-brainer.

**Marion Kane:** Frozen food has a bad name for no reason.

**Mairlyn Smith:** I totally agree. I think maybe 20 years ago it might not have been this good, but they have this thing. They flash freeze. It's amazing. My breakfast probably has almost 10 grams of fibre. I'm already a third of the way, and that's only in my morning.

Then for lunch, very often I'll have either a bean salad or hummus and vegetables but always vegetable-heavy with something else. I could have meat, chicken or fish, but always looking for more vegetables. About half the plate. So I'll have cut up vegetables or a salad or something. So I'm adding probably another four to six, and if I have counting the beans, I'm at another 10. So I'm at 20.

Dinner is a gift. If you're half your plate is vegetables and a quarter is whole grain, you're in the zone. There you go. It's easy. It's honestly easy. Even if you just every day from this entire next month added one more fruit and one more vegetable, then you're heading towards the zone because you can't do this all at once or your colon will go, "Help me." Like it's too much, right? You've got to go slow, and every time you add fibre, you have to add a little bit more water into your diet, drinking so that you don't actually get constipated. Because if you don't have enough liquid and you have too much fibre, you make poo cement in your gut. You don't want to have that happen.

**Marion Kane:** I had that happen yesterday.

**Mairlyn Smith:** Oh, no. Oh, no. So you didn't get enough liquid, right?

**Marion Kane:** I ate too much fibre, and I was walking along the street and my stomach was rigid and bloated and filled with gas. I came home and, I'll say the taboo word, pooped. Poop is a taboo subject for what reason?

**Mairlyn Smith:** I don't know where it happened. It was never a taboo word in my house. Now, it was in my mom and dad's house. You didn't talk about bodily functions. But I brought up my son to say, "Have you had a poo today?" I think it's like talking about things that we're not supposed to talk about, like grief or things that aren't happy, happy, happy, but they're real. We need to talk about those things. You should have a BM, which is what my husband's mother called them, because she was a nurse.

**Marion Kane:** Bowel movement.

**Mairlyn Smith:** He said, "Have you had a BM?" I was like, "What the heck does that mean?" I didn't even know what it meant. You should have at least

one BM a day. I have probably three, but that ratio. When you eat fibre and you don't have enough liquid, that's when you're sort of ... Everybody is different, too. Just make sure that for every serving extra of fibre you're having, you're having another glass of water.

**Marion Kane:** I've upped my fibre by testing six recipes out of your book. The snack bars. What do you think of them? They're based on dates with various grains in it and chocolate chips. They're palatable but they go right through you in a good way.

**Mairlyn Smith:** They're loaded with soluble fibre. Soluble fiber bulks up your stool. When you eat something like that, they make you filled up because it makes this goo in your gut. You don't feel hungry after you've had one. Then when you have enough liquid, then what's happening is that you have a wonderful BM.

**Marion Kane:** Chicken and chickpea curry is also delicious. It's high in fibre because of the chickpeas.

**Mairlyn Smith:** And the sweet potatoes and the peas. If you serve it on barley, holy moly. That serving without the barley is 10 grams of fibre for dinner. I'd like everybody to aim for five to 10 every single meal and then include snacks. But that dinner, without the barley, if you add the barley then you've probably got another four, maybe six grams.

**Marion Kane:** I wouldn't add barley. I have gas from barley.

**Mairlyn Smith:** Do you? Okay. Your body maybe is not used to it yet. Your GI is unique to what you eat. If you start eating these foods on a regular basis, yeah, sure, you might have a scary couple of weeks where you're tooting, but you know what? I say fart at will. Just don't do it in an elevator.

**Marion Kane:** I made the wheat berry salad. That's high in fibre. The one with the lentils.

**Mairlyn Smith:** And the strawberries. That's a big high fibre one. That was a happenstance how I created that recipe. I was in the kitchen and I don't like to throw anything away. I hate food waste. We waste about 50 per cent of our food. I had some lentils. I had some strawberries. I had all the elements of that salad. I thought, "I wonder what that would taste like?" It was so good. Then I had to recreate it, and it took me forever to get the right combo. That's a winning salad. I really like that one.

**Marion Kane:** That's very tasty. I made the rhubarb crumble the other night. It was sensational. I gave some of it to my daughter, and it was good with ice cream.

**Mairlyn Smith:** It's got this sort of tart/sweet and then the ginger, because it's not a lot of sugar per serving. It works out to be around a tablespoon of sugar per serving, which is really not much for a crumble or a crisp.

**Marion Kane:** In conclusion, what are your favorite high-fibre foods?

**Mairlyn Smith:** The ones that I have on a regular basis. For sure flaxseed. It's kind of like one of my fibre heroes because not only does it have soluble fibre, which is good for reducing heart disease and cholesterol, maintaining your blood sugar ...

**Marion Kane:** What is soluble fibre?

**Mairlyn Smith:** There's two kinds of fibre. Insoluble and soluble. Insoluble keeps things moving, like let's get out there and get your going out the door, where the soluble fibre is the one that actually is grabbing hold of cholesterols or making sure your blood sugars are even. It's almost like a worker bee and it bulks up in your gut. It makes you feel fuller and it also helps making soft stools. So flaxseed because it has soluble and insoluble is one of my favorite go-tos. It's Canadian as well but it also has omega 3 fatty acids in it, which is good for your brain and your heart.

**Marion Kane:** If a person is getting started on eating more fibre, what foods would you recommend?

**Mairlyn Smith:** The easiest thing to do is to have one serving more of fruit a day and one more serving of vegetables. Start off there. That's easy. I'm not asking you to rush out to the store and buy anything crazy. If you like broccoli, have an extra serving of broccoli tonight. If you love apples, have another apple. Have an orange. Have a banana. Those kinds of things. Another easy thing to do is to pack a handful of seeds or nuts in your purse. I always say, "Yes, I've got my nuts in my purse, because..."

**Marion Kane:** You would say that.

**Mairlyn Smith:** It's one of my go-to snacks. I have pumpkin seeds and walnuts in a little container in my purse all the time. Another easy, easy thing to do is start adding that flaxseed to your morning cereal or to some part in your day to add and start off slow. Always start off slow. You don't want to shock the heck out of your gut. You just don't want to do that.

**Marion Kane:** Now we get to the emotional part where I make you cry.

**Mairlyn Smith:** Okay.

**Marion Kane:** We're done with fibre.

**Mairlyn Smith:** You know what? There's only so much you can talk about fibre although I could go on for another couple of hours.

**Marion Kane:** You've had a difficult year.

**Mairlyn Smith:** Yeah. It's been actually a really awful three years because my dad died. I guess it's almost a year and a half ago. Then my mom died six months ago, seven months ago. I was just getting used to my dad not being here, and I was... Because when I started writing this book ... Yeah, you are going to make me cry. When I started writing the book, my mom and dad were both alive and when I finished the book, both of them were dead. It was bittersweet, because it's the very first time in my life that I wanted to celebrate something really wonderful, and they haven't been here to celebrate with me. Because it ended up being a love letter to my parents. I was so proud because I did my mom's matrimonial squares but I put a healthier twist on them. Her recipe is handwritten as a photograph in the book and I was so happy to show her that. I knew she'd be showing all her friends. "Look, I'm in her book."

**Marion Kane:** Did she know they were going into the book?

**Mairlyn Smith:** I had told her, but she hadn't been well for a bit. It's a long, complicated story, but when I finally got to her I had broken my ankle or I chipped a bone off my foot.

**Marion Kane:** You had physical challenges.

**Mairlyn Smith:** It was awful. Then they gave my mom six months to live and then they gave her two to three months, and then they gave her two to three weeks. I still had my cast on, and they would not let me go until I got my cast off because of complications. So I got my cast off, and I flew up two days later to see mom. I was with her for the last 12 days. But what they did at Appetite, my publisher, Zoe, my editor, bound up the book, it was a rough version, so that mom could see all her teacups in the book. Because I wanted to honour my mom. She had like 300 teacups but she never used them. She just looked at them. I always just thought that was kind of sad, so whenever I'd go to Vancouver I'd start to use them, and she'd go, "Mairlyn, what are you using my cups for? I go, "Mom, they're so beautiful and they make me feel close to you." I came up with a hashtag on Instagram called #UseYourGoodStuff, because I figured that I honour my mom. I just really wanted her to see those teacups and see like her dinner sets in there and her recipes. Yeah. It's bittersweet. It's bittersweet.

**Marion Kane:** That's the word. My mom died last year. I'm going to cry. I made a meal of her favourite dishes for my daughter and friends and my daughter's wife and my boyfriend two weeks ago. It was to honour my mom. It was a lovely meal, and it was bittersweet.

**Mairlyn Smith:** That's important that we honour them and we remember their recipes because, when they're gone and their recipes are gone, then we lose connection to our roots. At least that's what I believe. So, we honour

them. We need to honour them always. I honour my mom every day when I have one of her teacups. Yeah. Anyway, it's bittersweet.

**Marion Kane:** We've got two of her teacups in front of us. Thank you, Mairlyn.

**Mairlyn Smith:** Thank you, Marion. This was really very, very special, and so glad that you're my friend. Thank you.

**Marion Kane:** You're not scared of me.

**Mairlyn Smith:** I'm not scared of you anymore. Aww, that was good, Marion. I was fighting it. I didn't want to stop.

**Marion Kane:** That was my conversation with Mairlyn Smith. Her new book has a catchy, endearing title, *Peace, Love, and Fibre*. I'm Marion Kane, Food Sleuth®. You can find more stories like this one at [marionkane.com](http://marionkane.com) and in Apple podcasts. Thank you for listening.