

= Nigella Lawson =

Nigella Lucy Lawson ( born 6 January 1960 ) is an English journalist , broadcaster , television personality , gourmet , and food writer . She is the daughter of Nigel Lawson , a former Chancellor of the Exchequer , and Vanessa ( née Salmon ) Lawson , whose family owned the J. Lyons and Co. food and catering business . After graduating from Lady Margaret Hall , Oxford University , Lawson started work as a book reviewer and restaurant critic , later becoming the deputy literary editor of The Sunday Times in 1986 . She then embarked upon a career as a freelance journalist , writing for a number of newspapers and magazines . In 1998 , she brought out her first cookery book , How to Eat , which sold 300 @, @ 000 copies and became a best @-@ seller . She wrote her second book in 2000 , How to Be a Domestic Goddess , which won her the British Book Award for Author of the Year .

In 1999 , she hosted her own cooking show series , Nigella Bites , on Channel 4 , accompanied by another best @-@ selling cookbook . Nigella Bites won Lawson a Guild of Food Writers Award ; her 2005 ITV daytime chat show Nigella was met with a negative critical reaction and was cancelled after attracting low ratings . She hosted the Food Network 's Nigella Feasts in the United States in 2006 , followed by a three @-@ part BBC Two series , Nigella 's Christmas Kitchen , in the UK , which led to the commissioning of Nigella Express on BBC Two in 2007 . Her own cookware range , Living Kitchen , has a value of £ 7 million , and she has sold more than 3 million cookery books worldwide to date .

= = Early life and education = =

Lawson was born in Wandsworth , London , one of the daughters of Nigel Lawson , Baron Lawson of Blaby , a former Conservative MP , and a former Chancellor of the Exchequer in Margaret Thatcher 's government , and his first wife , Vanessa ( née Salmon ; 1936 ? 1985 ) , a socialite , " celebrated beauty " and heiress to the J. Lyons and Co. fortune . Her parents both came from Jewish families . Her given name was originally suggested by her grandmother . Her family kept homes in Kensington and Chelsea .

Nigel and Vanessa Lawson divorced in 1980 . They both remarried : her father in 1980 to a House of Commons researcher , Therese Maclear ( to whom he was married until 2008 ) , and her mother , in the early 1980s , to philosopher A. J. Ayer ( they remained married until her mother 's death ) . As her father , Nigel , is a prominent political figure , some of the things she found frustrating were the judgements and pre @-@ conceptions about her . She has attributed her unhappiness as a child , in part , to the problematic relationship she had with her mother .

Lawson 's mother died of liver cancer in Westminster , London at the age of 48 . Lawson 's full @-@ blood siblings are her brother , Dominic , former editor of The Sunday Telegraph , sister Horatia , and sister Thomasina , who died of breast cancer in 1993 during her early thirties ; She has a half @-@ brother , Tom , and a half @-@ sister , Emily , her father 's children by his second wife . Lawson is a cousin to both George Monbiot and Fiona Shackleton through the Salmon family .

= = = Ancestry = = =

Taking part in the third series of the BBC family @-@ history documentary series , Who Do You Think You Are ? , Lawson sought to uncover some of her family 's ancestry . She traced her ancestors to Ashkenazi Jews who originate from eastern Europe and Germany , leaving Lawson surprised not to have Iberian @-@ Sephardi ancestry in the family as she had believed . She also uncovered that her maternal great @-@ great @-@ great grandfather , Coenraad Sammes ( later Coleman Joseph ) , had fled to England from Amsterdam in 1830 to escape a prison sentence following a conviction for theft . It was his daughter , Hannah , who married Samuel Gluckstein , father @-@ in @-@ law and business partner of Barnett Salmon and father of Isidore and Montague Gluckstein , who together with Barnett founded J. Lyons and Co. in 1887 .

### === Education ===

Lawson spent some of her childhood in the Welsh village of Higher Kinnerton . She had to move schools nine times between the ages of 9 and 18 , and consequently she described her school years as difficult . " I was just difficult , disruptive , good at school work , but rude , I suspect , and too highly @-@ strung " , Lawson reflected . She was educated at several independent schools , at among other places , Ibstock Place School , Queen 's Gate School and Godolphin and Latymer School . She worked for many department stores in London , and went on to graduate from the University of Oxford with a degree in medieval and modern languages . She lived in Florence , Italy for a period of time .

### === Career ===

#### === Early work ===

Lawson originally worked in publishing , first taking a job under publisher Naim Attallah . At 23 , she began her career in journalism after Charles Moore had invited her to write for The Spectator . Her initial work at the magazine consisted of writing book reviews , after which period she became a restaurant critic there in 1985 . She became the deputy literary editor of The Sunday Times in 1986 at the age of 26 .

She occasionally drifted into the public 's eye , attracting publicity in 1989 when she admitted voting for Labour in an election as opposed to her father 's Conservative Party , and then criticised Margaret Thatcher in print . Regarding her political relationship with her father , Lawson has stated , " My father would never expect me to agree with him about anything in particular and , to be honest , we never talk about politics much . "

After her stint at The Sunday Times , she embarked upon a freelance writing career , realising that " I was on the wrong ladder . I didn 't want to be an executive , being paid to worry rather than think " . In the United Kingdom , she wrote for The Daily Telegraph , the Evening Standard , The Observer and The Times Literary Supplement , and penned a food column for Vogue and a makeup column for The Times Magazine , as well as working with Gourmet and Bon Appétit in the United States . After two weeks working on Talk Radio in 1995 , Lawson was sacked after she had stated her shopping was done for her , which was deemed incompatible with the radio station 's desired " common touch " .

#### === 1998 ? 2002 : Cook book writing and Nigella Bites ===

Lawson had an established sense of cooking from her childhood , having had a mother who enjoyed cooking . She conceived the idea of writing a cookbook after she observed a dinner party host in tears because of an unset crème caramel . How to Eat ( 1998 ) , featuring culinary tips on preparation and saving time , sold 300 @, @ 000 copies in the UK . The Sunday Telegraph dubbed it " the most valuable culinary guide published this decade . "

Its successor , How to be a Domestic Goddess ( 2000 ) , focuses primarily on baking . Of this second bestseller , The Times wrote of Lawson 's book , that it " is defined by its intimate , companionable approach . She is not issuing matronly instructions like Delia ; she is merely making sisterly suggestions " . Lawson rejected feminist criticism of her book , adding that " [ s ] ome people did take the domestic goddess title literally rather than ironically . It was about the pleasures of feeling like one rather than actually being one . " The book sold 180 @, @ 000 copies in four months , and won Lawson the title of Author of the Year at the British Book Awards in 2001 , fending off competition from authors such as J. K. Rowling . How to Eat and How to be a Domestic Goddess were published in the U.S. in 2000 and 2001 . As a result of the book 's success , The Observer took her on as a social affairs columnist .

Lawson next hosted her own cooking show television series , Nigella Bites , which ran from 1999 to

2001 on Channel 4 , followed by a Christmas special in 2001 . Victor Lewis @-@ Smith , a critic usually known for his biting comments , praised Lawson for being " formidably charismatic " . The first series of Nigella Bites averaged 1 @.@ 9 million viewers , and won her the Television Broadcast of the Year at the Guild of Food Writers Awards and the Best Television Food Show at the World Food Media Awards in 2001 . The show yielded an accompanying best @-@ selling recipe book , also called Nigella Bites , for which Waterstone 's book stores reported UK sales of over 300 @,@ 000 . The book won a W H Smith Award for Lifestyle Book of the Year .

The Nigella Bites series , which was filmed in her home in west London , was later broadcast on American television channels E ! and Style Network . Lawson said of the US release , " In the UK , my viewers have responded to the fact I 'm trying to reduce , not add to , their burden and I 'm looking forward to making that connection with Style viewers across the US " . Overall , Lawson was well received in the United States . Those who did criticise her often suggested she was too flirtatious ; a commentator from The New York Times said , " Lawson 's sexy roundness mixed with her speed @-@ demon technique makes cooking dinner with Nigella look like a prelude to an orgy " . The book of Nigella Bites became the second bestselling cook book of Christmas 2002 in America . The series was followed by Forever Summer with Nigella in 2002 on Channel 4 , the concept being , " that you cook to make you still feel as though you 're on holiday " .

In 2002 she also began to write a fortnightly cooking articles for The New York Times , and brought out a profitable line of kitchenware , called the Living Kitchen range , which is sold by numerous retailers . Her range 's value has continued to grow , starting at an estimated £ 2 million in 2003 .

= = = 2003 ? 2006 : Nigella Feasts and BBC contract = = =

In November 2003 , Lawson oversaw the menu and preparations for a lunch hosted by Tony Blair at Downing Street for George W. Bush and his wife during their state visit to the UK . Laura Bush is said to be a fan of Lawson 's recipes and once included one of her soups as the starter for the 2002 presidential Christmas dinner . Lawson 's fifth book , Feast : Food that Celebrates Life , released in 2004 , made sales worth £ 3 million . London 's Evening Standard wrote that the book " works both as a practical manual and an engrossing read . ... Nobody else writes so openly about the emotional significance of food . " Lawson appeared frequently on American television in 2004 , conducting cookery slots on talk shows such as The Ellen DeGeneres Show .

In the UK in 2005 , Lawson started to host a daytime television chat show on ITV1 called Nigella , on which celebrity guests joined her in a studio kitchen . The first episode debuted with a disappointing 800 @,@ 000 viewers . The show was met with a largely negative critical reaction , and after losing 40 % of its viewers in the first week , the show was cancelled . She later commented to Radio Times that on her first show , she was almost too frightened to come out of her dressing room . Lawson added that having to pretend to be interested in the lives of the celebrities on her show became too much of an effort .

Her third food @-@ based television series , called Nigella Feasts , debuted on the USA 's Food Network in Autumn 2006 for a 13 @-@ week run . Time magazine wrote a favorable review of the show ; " the real appeal of Feasts ... is her unfussy , wry , practical approach to entertaining and quality comfort food . ... between the luscious camera shots and Lawson 's sensual enjoyment of eating , Feasts will leave you wishing for an invite " .

Lawson was next signed to BBC Two to host a three @-@ part cookery show entitled Nigella 's Christmas Kitchen , which began on 6 December 2006 and aired weekly . The first two episodes secured the second highest ratings of the week for BBC Two , with the first episode debuting with a strong 3 @.@ 5 million . The final episode went on to become the top show on BBC Two the week that it was aired . Nigella 's Christmas Kitchen won Lawson a second World Food Media Award in 2007 . Her influence as a food commentator was also demonstrated in late 2006 , when after she had lauded goose fat as being an essential ingredient for Christmas , sales percentages of the product increased significantly in the UK . Waitrose and Tesco both stated that goose fat sales had more than doubled , as well as Asda 's goose fat sales increasing by 65 % from the previous week . Similarly , after she advised using prunes in a recipe on Nigella 's Christmas Kitchen , Waitrose had

increased sales of 30 % year on year .

= = = 2007 ? 2009 : Nigella Express and Nigella 's Christmas = = =

Nigella 's Christmas Kitchen led to the commissioning of a 13 @-@ part cookery series entitled Nigella Express . She said " I wouldn 't describe them as junk " . The show became another ratings success and one of BBC Two 's top @-@ rated shows each week . The first episode debuted with 2 @.@ 85 million viewers , a high percentage above the channel 's slot average . The second episode 's viewing figures rose to 3 @.@ 3 million , and the series peaked at 3 @.@ 4 million on 22 October 2007 .

Her influence with the public was again demonstrated when sales of Riesling wine increased by 30 % in the UK after she had incorporated it into her Coq au Riesling recipe on Nigella Express . In December 2007 she appeared on BBC 's The Graham Norton Show and revealed that she had once eaten 30 pickled eggs for a £ 1 @,@ 000 bet , saying " How stupid to challenge me ! I made them all put their money on the table in front of me . The next day I had scrambled eggs for breakfast . "

Lawson came under criticism when viewers complained that she had gained weight since the debut episode of the series . The Guardian however , noted , " the food matches her appearance ? flawless , polished and sexy " . The rights to Nigella Express were sold to Discovery Asia . The series was nominated at the 35th Daytime Emmy Awards in the United States for Outstanding Lifestyle Program , and Lawson herself for the Outstanding Lifestyle Host .

The accompanying book to Nigella Express was released in the UK in September 2007 , US in November 2007 , and in Australia in 2008 . Sharing the same name as the television series , the book became another best @-@ seller in the UK , and was outselling television chef Jamie Oliver by 100 @,@ 000 copies , according to Waterstone 's . It was reported that over 490 @,@ 000 copies had been sold by mid @-@ December in the UK . Furthermore , the book was number one for a period on Amazon UK 's bestselling books , and was ninth on their overall list of Christmas bestsellers in any category . Paul Levy of The Guardian wrote that the tone of the recipes was " just right . One of the appealing things about Nigella 's brief introductions to each of them is that she thinks not just as cook , but as eater , and tells you whether they 're messy , sticky or fussy . " In January 2008 , Lawson was estimated to have sold more than 3 million books worldwide . Her Christmas book was released in October 2008 and the television show in December of the same year . An American edition of the book " Nigella Christmas " with a different cover photograph was released in November 2009 with an accompanying book tour of several US cities and a special on the USA 's Food Network .

= = = 2010 ? 2014 , Nigellissima and The Taste = = =

Lawson was featured as one of the three judges on a special battle of Iron Chef America , titled " The Super Chef Battle " , which pitted White House Executive Chef Cristeta Comerford and Iron Chef Bobby Flay against chef Emeril Lagasse and Iron Chef Mario Batali . This episode was originally broadcast on 3 January 2010 . Lawson 's cookbook Kitchen : Recipes from the Heart of the Home ( 2010 ) is a tie @-@ in with the TV series " Nigella Kitchen . " This was shown in the UK and on the Food Network in the United States .

Nigellissima : Instant Italian Inspiration was released in 2012 . The 8 part TV series entitled Nigellissima was broadcast by the BBC . Nigella Lawson obtained work experience in Italy during her gap year .

Lawson travelled to the United States in 2013 and starred alongside Anthony Bourdain in the reality cooking show The Taste . The UK version of the show began airing on 7 January 2014 on Channel 4 . Lawson was granted a visa to travel to the United States and traveled there for a continuation of the series . In 2014 Lawson was hired by a chocolate company to appear in an advertisement , the advertisement was filmed in New Zealand in May for a local confection manufacturer Whittaker 's .

= = = 2015- , Simply Nigella , Eurovision and MasterChef Australia = = =

The UK and US series of The Taste were both completed and in autumn 2015 Lawson began " Simply Nigella " , a BBC 2 show showing viewers how to cook a range of dishes that were simple to cook and similar to what viewers would make themselves . Lawson featured comfort food and dishes that were quick to prepare . She featured food that would make viewers feel better while they cooked it and also when they ate it .

On the 23rd May , Lawson was spokesperson for the United Kingdom revealing the voting results during the final of the Eurovision Song Contest 2015 . Lawson commented , " Yes , it 's true . Oui , c 'est vrai . Ja , das ist wahr . "

It was reported on 18 January 2016 , that Lawson would make a return to Australian television , joining series 8 of MasterChef Australia as a guest judge , alongside the returning judges .

= = Presenting style and image = =

Though Lawson has enjoyed a successful career in cookery , she is not a trained chef , and does not like being referred to as a " celebrity chef " . Furthermore , she does not see herself as a cook or an expert in her field . Throughout Lawson 's television programmes , she emphasises that she cooks for her own pleasure , for enjoyment , and that she finds cooking therapeutic . When deciding upon which recipes to feature in her books , she takes the view of the eater , stating , " If it 's something I don 't want to carry on eating once I 'm full , then I don 't want the recipe ... I have to feel that I want to cook the thing again " .

Lawson has adopted a casual approach to cooking , stating , " I think cooking should be about fun and family . ... I think part of my appeal is that my approach to cooking is really relaxed and not rigid . There are no rules in my kitchen . " One editor , highlighting the technical simplicity of Lawson 's recipes , noted that " her dishes require none of the elaborate preparation called for by most TV chefs " .

Lawson has become renowned for her flirtatious manner of presenting , although she argues " It 's not meant to be flirtatious . ... I don 't have the talent to adopt a different persona . It 's intimate , not flirtatious " . The perceived overt sexuality of her presentation style has led to Lawson 's being called the " queen of food porn " . Many commentators have alluded to Lawson 's attractiveness , and she was once named as one of the world 's most beautiful women . She has been referred to as " stunningly beautiful , warm , honest , likeable and amazingly normal " , as well as being described as having " flawless skin , perfect white teeth , a voluptuous body , ample height and lots of lush , brown hair " . Nigella Lawson has been voted , Sexiest Celebrity Chef . The media have also noted Lawson 's ability to engage with both male and female viewers ; The Guardian wrote , " Men love her because they want to be with her . Women love her because they want to be her " . The chef , Gary Rhodes , spoke out against Lawson by suggesting that her viewers are attracted to her smile rather than the cooking itself . Despite often being labelled as a domestic goddess , she insists that she exhibits very few of the qualities associated with the title .

One critic summarised , " her descriptions of food can be a tangle of adjectives " .

= = Personal life = =

= = = Relationships and children = = =

Lawson was in a relationship with human rights lawyer Geoffrey Robertson QC until 1988 , when he left her for novelist Kathy Lette .

Lawson met journalist John Diamond in 1986 , when they were both writing for The Sunday Times . They married in Venice in 1992 and have a daughter , Cosima and a son , Bruno . Diamond was diagnosed with throat cancer in 1997 and died in March 2001 , aged 47 . One of his last messages to Lawson was , " How proud I am of you and what you have become . The great thing about us is

that we have made us who we are . " His death occurred during the filming of Nigella Bites ; " I took a fortnight off . But I 'm not a great believer in breaks " , Lawson explained ; she suffered a bout of depression following the funeral . After Diamond 's death , Lawson kept all of the press clippings in what she called her " Morbidobox " .

= = = Charles Saatchi = = =

Lawson married art collector Charles Saatchi in September 2003 . Lawson was not always happy for unspecified reasons and admitted in 2012 that she sometimes said , " Please God , get me through the ordeal that is today . "

In June 2013 , photographs were published by The Sunday People of Lawson being grabbed around the neck by Saatchi , during an argument outside a London seafood restaurant . According to a witness , Lawson was very distressed by the incident . Saatchi later described the pictures as showing only a " playful tiff " and his trying to emphasise a point . After a police investigation of the incident , Saatchi was cautioned for assault , and it was reported that Lawson had left the family home . Lawson said in court Saatchi subjected her to " intimate terrorism " , that he threatened to finish her unless she cleared him in court . Subsequently while giving evidence Lawson claimed casual cruelty and controlling behaviour by Saatchi which made her unhappy and drove her to occasional drug use . She cited as examples that Saatchi prevented her entertaining at home and punished her for going to a birthday party of a woman friend . She was not beaten but was left emotionally scarred .

Saatchi announced his divorce from Lawson in early July , stating that he had " clearly been a disappointment to Nigella during the last year or so " and the couple had " become estranged and drifted apart " . Lawson made no public comment in response ; however , court papers showed that it was Lawson who filed for divorce , citing ongoing unreasonable behaviour . On 31 July 2013 , seven weeks after the incident , the pair was granted a decree nisi , ending their ten @-@ year marriage . They reached a private financial settlement .

= = = Assistants ' fraud trial = = =

On 27 November 2013 , a trial of the former couple 's two personal assistants , Italian @-@ born sisters Elisabetta and Francesca Grillo , began in R v Grillo and Grillo . The Grillos were accused of fraudulently using the credit cards of Saatchi 's private company . During court proceedings in early December , the sisters claimed that Lawson had permitted their use of the credit cards in exchange for their silence regarding her drug use . Questions regarding Lawson 's drug use were allowed by the judge as part of the sisters ' " bad character " defence . Lawson admitted to taking cocaine and cannabis but denied she had been addicted , stating , " I found it made an intolerable situation tolerable . " On 20 December 2013 , the two sisters were acquitted . Scotland Yard confirmed that Lawson would not be the subject of an investigation based on claims made in court that she consumed cocaine . The decision will be reviewed if new evidence comes to light .

It has been alleged that Charles Saatchi started a smear campaign against Lawson in the British media , through PR man Richard Hillgrove , relating to her drug use that began even before the trial was over . Lawyers for Lawson have demanded that Hillgrove remove comments about her made in his blog . By contrast Nigella Lawson claimed in court that ending her marriage to Saatchi and creating tolerable conditions for herself and her family was the answer . Since she freed herself from , " a brilliant but brutal man . " Lawson maintains she is " totally cannabis , cocaine , any drug , free . "

= = = Interests and beliefs = = =

Saatchi was worth a reputed £ 100 million . It widely began circulating in the media in early 2008 that Lawson had been quoted as saying her two children should not inherit any of the fortune .

Although both of Lawson 's parents are Jewish , her upbringing was non observant and Lawson

herself identifies as an atheist . In one of her newspaper articles , she has shown a liberal attitude to sexuality ( " most [ women ] simply have , somewhere , a fantasy about having sex , in a non @-@ defining , non @-@ exclusive way , with other women . " )

Lawson is a supporter of the Lavender Trust which gives support to young women with breast cancer . She first became involved with the charity in 2002 when she baked some lavender cupcakes to be auctioned at a fundraising event , which sold for a significant amount of money . She subsequently featured the recipe in her book *Forever Summer* with Nigella .

In December 2008 , Lawson caused controversy and was featured in various newspapers for publicly advocating wearing fur . She also remarked that she would love to kill a bear and then wear it .

It was revealed by leaked Whitehall documents in 2003 that Lawson declined an OBE from Queen Elizabeth II in 2001 . As the daughter of a life peer , Lawson is entitled to the courtesy style of " The Honourable " , and is thus named The Hon. Nigella Lawson ; however , she does not use this courtesy style .

Lawson has stated that she believes cooking is " a metaphor for life " , in the sense that " When you cook , you need structure [ ... ] but just as importantly you need to be able to loosen up and go with the flow [ ... ] you must not strive for perfection but , rather , acknowledge your mistakes and work out how you can rectify them " . She has described cooking as " a way of strengthening oneself " , in the sense that " being able to sustain oneself is the skill of the survivor " .

= = Television credits = =

= = Awards = =

2000 : British Book Award ? Author of the Year for *How to be a Domestic Goddess*

2001 : WH Smith Book Award ? *How To Be A Domestic Goddess* shortlisted for Lifestyle Book of the Year

2001 : Guild of Food Writers ? Television Broadcast of the Year for *Nigella Bites*

2001 : World Food Media Award ? Gold Ladle Best Television Food Show for *Nigella Bites*

2002 : WH Smith Book Awards ? Lifestyle Book of the Year for *Nigella Bites*

2007 : World Food Media Award ? Gold Ladle Best Food And / Or Drink Television Show for *Nigella's Christmas Kitchen*