



# Justin's Hearty Recipes

*Recipes from a heart transplant recipient*





# Behind Every Recipe Lies A Story

Justin would like to dedicate this book to his mom, Yang Wei, and his grandparents, Ji Feng Wei, and Suzan Zhang. He admires his mom's moral code: "love, hope, and dreams are worth fighting for, and when you have them, never let them go." He is most inspired by his ninety-two-year-old grandma's faith and resilient spirit to fight for life, love for joy, and live for bettering oneself.

All these recipes are possible because of the donor and the donor's family. "There is no present more precious than this life-saving donation," Yang said. "While we celebrate the new life of Justin, we are mindful of the loss of another family, and our gratitude towards them is beyond words. Justin, you are carrying two peoples' lives. Live well, take care of the donor's heart, and have delicious and healthy food!"

Thank you for all your caring and support. Bon Appétit!





Caesar Salad was invented by an Italian man who operated a restaurant in Tijuana, Mexico to attract American tourists. The original recipe contained romaine lettuce, croutons, egg yolk, lemon, worcestershire sauce, garlic, dijon mustard, olive oil, parmesan cheese, black pepper. The original recipe did not have anchovies. However, anchovies are the main ingredient in the modern version. Justin's flavor profile is on the lighter side; therefore, we are skipping dijon mustard and worcestershire sauce.

# CAESAR SALAD

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## INGREDIENTS

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3 hearts of romaine lettuce  
Parmesan cheese (to taste)

### Dressing

2oz anchovies  
2 to 3 garlic cloves  
2 egg yolks  
1/4 cup olive oil  
1 lemon - zest and juice

### Croutons

Baguette - slice in cubes using  
a bread knife.  
1/4 cup olive oil  
1 teaspoon garlic powder  
1/2 teaspoon dill  
1/2 teaspoon dried parsley

## DIRECTIONS

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1. Preheat oven to 425 degrees.
2. Remove tough parts of the romaine and slice to bite size. Add Parmesan cheese. Set aside in another bowl.
3. Place all dressing ingredients in a high-speed blender until smooth.  
*Note: acid from the lemon in the dressing will cook the egg yolks.*

### Croutons

4. *Optional: lay aluminum foil or parchment paper on the baking pan.*  
Set all crouton ingredients on the pan and mix thoroughly.
5. Place the baking pan in the middle rack of the oven and bake for 18 to 20 minutes.  
If needed, stir the croutons from time-to-time during the baking process.

### Final

6. Mix croutons, dressing, and bowl containing lettuce.

### Suggestion

Feel free to cook with your children. The more you involve your child in the kitchen, the more they are exposed to food and willing to try a wider variety, even if he/she is a picky eater.

# CIDER BRAISED CHICKEN Serves 4

Fermented apple juice produces apple cider vinegar. Apple cider vinegar is excellent for marinades, salad dressings, food preservatives, pickling, or making chutney. It is also a great addition in the water for soaking fruits and vegetables.

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## INGREDIENTS

1½ lb chicken breast/roughly 2 chicken breasts\*  
3 tablespoons apple cider vinegar  
⅓ cup white wine  
1 medium size shallot - sliced into round pieces  
5 cloves of garlic - minced  
1 teaspoon dried thyme  
1 teaspoon dried dill  
½ lb green beans  
1 medium-size fennel bulb or 1 can artichokes\*  
green onions  
light olive oil  
garlic powder  
salt  
black pepper

## DIRECTIONS

1. Marinate chicken in apple cider vinegar, 3 shakes of garlic powder and black pepper for about 30 minutes to 1 hour.
2. Heat a large non-stick pan on a medium to high heat. Add 1 to 2 tablespoons of light olive oil.
3. Using a tong, gently shake liquid off of the chicken. Reserve marinade for later use.
4. Sear both sides of chicken to a beautiful golden-brown color, about 4-6 minutes. Lightly salt chicken to taste.
5. Add shallots, garlic, thyme, and dill to sauté for about a minute. Add white wine and enough of the reserved marinade (from step 3) to deglaze. The combined liquids should barely rise above the pan.
6. Add vegetables and cover. Simmer for 2 minutes. Finish with salt, garlic powder, and black pepper to taste.

\*Instructions for chicken breast: Remove the tender, white section of the chicken and discard. That portion is fat. Place your hand flat on the chicken and slice from the thickest part to the thinnest. You should receive at least 3 slices from 1 chicken breast.

\*Instructions for funnel: Separate the tough, white bottom of the fennel and slice in half. Continue slicing the bulb into moon shapes.





Pancit (pan-sit) is a traditional Filipino noodle dish that originated from China. Although similar to China's variation, Pancit has its distinct qualities. Special occasions, such as birthdays, Christmas, and New Years, commonly serve Pancit. An old wives' tale states that long noodles signify long life and good health. As such, avoid cutting noodles to preserve your blessings. This recipe was significantly modified to fit Justin's flavor profile. Vegetables should not be cooked longer than 5 minutes to retain as many nutrients as possible.



# PANCIT

Preparation 30 Minutes

Cook Time 12 Minutes

## INGREDIENTS

10 ounces rice noodles  
½ lb chicken breast  
½ lb shrimp - shelled & deveined  
1 clove + 1 clove + 3 cloves  
garlic - grated  
1 clove garlic = ½ teaspoon of garlic  
¼ cup onions - sliced in moon shapes  
½ teaspoon + ½ teaspoon ginger -  
grated  
1 cup green beans - julienne  
1 cup carrots - julienne  
1 cup cabbage - julienne  
4 tablespoons + 1 teaspoon + 1 teaspoon  
light soy sauce  
2½ teaspoons + 1 teaspoon + 1 teaspoon  
sesame oil  
1 tablespoon + 3 tablespoons light  
olive oil  
salt  
garlic powder  
green onions (to garnish)  
lemon slices (on side)

## DIRECTIONS

1. Soak noodles in warm water for 6 to 10 minutes or until soft. Be careful not to over soak. After soft, drain noodles in a colander and set aside.
2. Marinate thinly sliced chicken breast with 1 clove grated garlic, ½ teaspoon ginger, 1 teaspoon light soy sauce, and 1 teaspoon sesame oil.
3. In a separate bowl, marinate shrimp with 1 clove grated garlic, ½ teaspoon of ginger, 1 teaspoon light soy sauce, and 1 teaspoon sesame oil. Marinate for about 30 minutes.
4. Add 1 tablespoon light olive oil to a non-stick pan or wok. Heat non-stick pan or wok on medium to high heat.
5. Sauté chicken for about 1 minute, then add onions and 3 cloves grated garlic. Cook for another minute or until you smell the aroma of onions and garlic.
6. Add shrimp, 4 tablespoons light soy sauce, and 2½ teaspoons sesame oil. Cook for about 2 minutes.
7. Add carrots and green beans, stir well, and let cook for 5 minutes. Add black pepper and garlic powder to taste.
8. Transfer cooked ingredients in a clean bowl with tongs, leaving the juice in the pan. Turn heat down to low to prevent the juice from evaporating too fast. Add noodles, 3 tablespoons light olive oil, and cabbage in the pan and mix well. Let cook for 2 to 3 minutes.
9. Add salt, black pepper, and garlic powder to taste. Add all ingredients back into the heated pan and mix well. Drizzle with light olive oil and adjust seasoning as needed. Garnish with green onions and lemon slices.

Suggestion: Marinate chicken and shrimp first, soak noodles, and then prep vegetables to save time. Keep work station clean to prevent any contamination when handling raw meats.

For this recipe, I showed Yang how she could pair it in different ways, such as a quick pasta dish with her very own roasted chicken or even a sandwich Justin can enjoy on the go.



Pesto is a sauce that originated in Genoa, a city in Northern Italy. It is simple to make yet also delicious. Justin loves garlic, so we add more to cater to his taste.



# PESTO

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## INGREDIENTS

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2 cups fresh basil  
½ cup pine nuts  
4 cloves garlic  
⅓ cup Parmesan cheese  
½ cup olive oil - preferably light

## DIRECTIONS

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1. Wash basil thoroughly and place on a paper towel to dry. You could also pat basil with another paper towel to dry.
2. On a pan over medium-high heat, toast pine nuts until they turn golden brown. Take off heat and cool.
3. Place all ingredients in a high-speed blender until finely blended.

Suggestion: Making extra to freeze for later use is great! Perfect for busy families. Use salt sparingly as Parmesan cheese is already salty.



The color of this salad never fails to astound. The green of the broccoli, orange/yellow of the bell peppers, and purple of the grapes combine to make a beautiful arrangement. Justin is not a fan of fruits or anything sweet, but in this salad, we were able to create something he would eat. It all starts with vegetables he likes combined with something he is not a big fan of (grapes). The dressing gives a pleasant flavor that he thought would be very sweet, but to his surprise, the dressing gave a delicate balance of sweet and sour.

# RAW VEGGIE SALAD 4 Servings

## INGREDIENTS

half medium-size yellow bell pepper -  
diced  
half medium-size orange bell pepper -  
diced

Note: You can use one whole bell pepper  
instead of two halves. Also, the color of  
the bell pepper doesn't have to be yellow  
or orange, it can be any color.

1 medium size broccoli - cut into small  
florets

1 cup grapes

2 tablespoons sunflower seeds

### Dressing

$\frac{1}{4}$  cup apple cider vinegar

1 tablespoon red wine vinegar

$\frac{1}{2}$  lemon - zest and juice

1 clove garlic

4 to 5 pitted grapes

1 tablespoon maple syrup

1 tablespoon maple syrup

$\frac{1}{2}$  tablespoon Dijon mustard

pinch of dried dill

## DIRECTIONS

1. Bring a pot over medium-high heat. Add just enough water to cover the surface of the pot. When water is boiling, add broccoli florets and cover with a lid. Turn heat down to medium-low or low. Steam broccoli for about 3 to 4 minutes.

### Dressing

2. Place all dressing ingredients in a high-speed blender until smooth.

### Final

3. Mix all ingredients and dressing together. Garnish with sunflower seeds. Enjoy!





Singapore noodles originated from Hong Kong, and today the noodles are ubiquitous throughout Cantonese restaurants. They are seasoned with curry powder while soy sauce and sesame oil combine with Chinese wine to give the noodles richer taste. To finish, they add scrambled eggs. In this recipe, we will have scrambled eggs as an option.



# Singapore Rice Noodles 4 Servings

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## INGREDIENTS

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5 ounces rice noodles  
½ lb chicken breast  
½ lb shrimp - peeled and deveined  
5 cloves garlic - minced  
½ onion- julienne  
1 tablespoon curry powder  
1 tablespoon light soy sauce  
1 teaspoon sesame oil  
1 tablespoon Chinese cooking wine  
1 red bell pepper - sliced  
(optional) 2 eggs - scrambled  
1 medium tomato - sliced into wedges  
¼ cup scallions  
1 bag bean sprouts  
1 tablespoon + (optional) 1 tablespoon  
or more light olive oil  
garlic powder (to taste)

## DIRECTIONS

1. Soak noodles in warm water for 6 to 10 minutes or until soft. Be careful not to over soak. After soft, drain noodles in a colander and set aside.
2. Mix light soy sauce, sesame oil, and Chinese cooking wine into a small bowl and set aside.
3. Heat a large non-stick pan or wok over medium-high heat and add 1 tablespoon light olive oil and sauté onions until fragrant. Then add garlic and stir well.
4. Add thinly sliced chicken, curry powder, and half of the sauce mixture (from step 2). Cook for about 2 minutes, making sure that all ingredients are incorporated.
5. Add the shrimp, red bell pepper, and sliced tomatoes. Stir and let cook for at least 2 to 3 minutes.
6. Add rice noodles and the rest of sauce mixture (from step 2). Cook for another 2 to 3 minutes, then add bean sprouts and scallion. Mix well. Adjust flavor if needed by adding garlic powder and ½ teaspoon of light soy sauce. Adding 1 tablespoon or more of light olive oil will also add extra flavor.

**Suggestion:** Adding colorful vegetables to food is not only good for you but also is appealing to the eyes. Other vegetables you can use are carrots, bok choy, sweet peas, and cabbage.



Soba is a Japanese buckwheat noodle traditionally served cold with dipping sauce or hot with broth. It is excellent for both summer and winter seasons. In this recipe, it is stir-fried. Tofu, also known as bean curd, is a traditional component in both East and Southeast Asian cuisine. It is a soybean product made from coagulated soy milk. It comes in different textures: from soft, firm, to extra firm. The flavor is subtle; therefore, it can be utilized in many ways.



# SOBA NOODLES WITH TOFU 4 Servings

## INGREDIENTS

2 bundles soba noodles  
14 ounces firm tofu - cut into 1 inch cubes  
knob of ginger - grated  
3 cloves garlic- minced  
1 tablespoon + 1 tablespoon sesame oil  
1 tablespoon + 2 tablespoons light soy sauce  
(optional) 1 tablespoon sriracha  
2 tablespoons rice vinegar  
8 ounces mushrooms - sliced  
1 tablespoon + 1 tablespoon or more + 1 tablespoon light olive oil  
garlic powder  
green onions

## DIRECTIONS

1. In a pot of boiling water, cook soba for 1½ minutes. Stir regularly. Caution to not leave soba alone as it cooks very fast. After soba is cooked, drain in a colander and rinse with cold running water to stop the cooking process. Drizzle with 1 tablespoon light olive oil. Set aside.
2. Heat a large non-stick pan, and add 1 tablespoon or more light olive oil. Pan fry tofu to a nice golden-brown color on all sides. Make sure tofu does not stick to the pan. Set aside.
3. Using the same non-stick pan on medium heat, add 1 tablespoon light olive oil. Sauté garlic until you can smell the aroma. Be careful not to burn the garlic, and turn the heat down to low if needed. Add sliced mushrooms, grated ginger, 1 tablespoon light soy sauce, and 1 tablespoon sesame oil. Stir well. Cook for about 5 minutes.
4. Add soba noodles and incorporate with mushrooms. Then add tofu, 2 tablespoons light soy sauce, 1 tablespoon sesame oil, 2 tablespoons rice vinegar, 3 shakes garlic powder, and (optional) 1 tablespoon sriracha. Roughly mix. Garnish with scallions and serve.

### Suggestions

Soba and tofu are jam-packed with protein, yet very light. They are perfect to pair with seared or steamed fish of your choice or keep it vegetarian. Add broccoli and cilantro for more vegetables and extra flavor. Cannot find Soba noodles? You can substitute it with whole wheat spaghetti noodles.

## INGREDIENTS

Spaghetti Squash - smallest size possible  
1 lb Brussels sprouts  
1 lb ground turkey  
3 cloves garlic - minced  
½ medium size onion - minced  
1 jar store bought marinara  
2 tablespoons + 2 tablespoons + 1 tablespoon light olive oil  
½ teaspoon + ½ teaspoon dill  
½ teaspoon + ½ teaspoon thyme  
½ teaspoon + ½ teaspoon garlic powder

# SPAGHETTI SQUASH 4-6 Servings

## DIRECTIONS

### Spaghetti Squash

1. Preheat oven to 385 degrees Fahrenheit.
2. Cut spaghetti squash in half, and remove seeds and excess strands.
3. Spread 2 tablespoons light olive oil, ½ teaspoon dill, ½ teaspoon thyme, ½ teaspoon garlic powder, salt, and pepper onto spaghetti squash.

### Brussel Sprouts

1. For each Brussels sprout, cut off the stem and cut in halves. If the Brussels sprout is large, cut in quarters.
2. Spread 2 tablespoons light olive oil, ½ teaspoon dill, ½ teaspoon thyme, ½ teaspoon garlic powder, salt, and pepper onto Brussels sprouts.

### Oven

1. Cover two pans with aluminum foil or parchment paper, and lay spaghetti squash flesh side down on one pan, and Brussels sprouts on the other pan.
2. In the oven, place spaghetti squash on the top rack, and Brussels sprouts on the lower rack. Roast in preheated oven (385°F) for 25 minutes.

### Sauce

1. On medium to high heat, add 1 tablespoon light olive oil to a pan. Sauté onions until translucent and coated with oil, about 2 minutes.
2. Add garlic and sauté for about 30 seconds to 1 minute. Then add the ground turkey.
3. Let turkey cook until opaque, about 5 minutes.
4. Stir in marinara sauce and mix with turkey. Season with salt and pepper to taste. Bring sauce to boil or until thoroughly heated.

### Finishing Touches

1. Let spaghetti squash cool. After cooled, scrape the flesh out of the squash. The scraped squash should come out as spaghetti strands.
2. Serve spaghetti squash with sauce and Brussels sprouts.



Spaghetti Squash comes in a variety of shapes, sizes, and colors. The most common example we see it is yellow. When raw, it has the flesh of a regular squash, but when cooked it has strings similar to spaghetti.



# THAI BASIL FRIED RICE

2-4 Servings

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## INGREDIENTS

1 cup leftover brown or white rice  
(preferably brown)  
¼ cup Thai basil  
½ lb chicken - thinly sliced  
2 scrambled cooked eggs (optional)  
4 cloves minced garlic  
½ teaspoon fish sauce  
1 Thai chili - round slices  
1 tablespoon light soy sauce  
2 tablespoons + (optional) 1  
tablespoon light olive oil  
garlic powder (to taste)  
scallions (to garnish)

## DIRECTIONS

1. Heat a large non-stick pan or wok on medium to high heat. Add 2 tablespoons light olive oil and sauté garlic until it is light brown. Add chicken, fish sauce, and Thai chili. Cook for about 3-5 minutes or until chicken is fully cooked.
2. Add rice and light soy sauce. Stir well. Add 1 tablespoon light olive oil if needed. Let cook for another 5 minutes.
3. Add in scrambled eggs and stir well. Add garlic powder to taste. If needed, you can add more light soy sauce.
4. Take pan or wok off the heat and add Thai basil. Mix Thai basil and fried rice thoroughly. Garnish with scallions.

### Suggestions

Leftover rice is best for fried rice, but if there is no rice ready, cook ahead of time and fluff it up. (Optional) For that day-old texture lay rice on a greased baking sheet pan and let cool for at least an hour.

Add diced carrots and peas to make it a whole meal.



Thai Basil Fried Rice is a hearty comfort food that will please even the most difficult to satisfy taste buds!



Chow Mein is a dish associated with Chinese American cuisine. It is commonly served among popular fast-food chains or Chinese restaurants inside the United States. In Chow Mein, noodles are stir-fried with vegetables and sauce for a tasty meal. There are many versions of Chow Mein, and every chef has a special recipe.

In Justin's Hearty Recipes, we tried to simplify Chow Mein as simple as possible. Additionally, we made it "heart-healthy" by lowering the amount of oil and sodium and increasing the amount of vegetables.

Chow Mein is a flexible recipe. If you don't have egg noodles, you can use fettuccine or spaghetti instead. To make the recipe healthier, you can also substitute the noodles with whole wheat spaghetti or soba and add more vegetables.

# Heart-Healthy Chow Mein

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## INGREDIENTS

6 oz. (170 g) Chinese egg noodles  
4 cups vegetables  
3 cloves garlic - minced  
2 chicken breasts - cubed  
1 tablespoon oyster sauce  
1 tablespoon + 1 tablespoon less sodium soy sauce  
1 tablespoon + 1 tablespoon light olive oil

### Vegetable Ideas:

Cabbage  
Bok choy  
Celery  
Broccoli  
Cauliflower  
Onion  
Carrot  
Snow Peas  
Green Beans  
Peas

## DIRECTIONS

1. Dice chicken breasts into bite sized cubes. Marinate with  $\frac{1}{2}$  of minced garlic and 1 tablespoon less sodium soy sauce.
2. Cut up vegetables. 4 cups is just a suggestion, your amount of vegetables can be larger.
3. Boil egg noodles in water for 3-4 minutes. Remove and rinse under cold water. Set aside for later.
4. Make sauce. In a small bowl, combine 1 tablespoon oyster sauce with 1 tablespoon less sodium soy sauce.
5. Heat up a wok (or pan) on medium-high heat and add 1 tablespoon light olive oil. When heated, add chicken.
6. Cook chicken until opaque, about 4-5 minutes. While chicken is cooking, it will leak juices. When the chicken is fully cooked, remove chicken while leaving juices in the wok.
7. Add noodles into the wok. Heat noodles until they fully absorbed the chicken juice, about 2 minutes. Remove noodles and set aside.
8. Add 1 tablespoon light olive oil to the wok. When heated, add the vegetables. Sauté until they're wilted, reduced, and covered with oil, about 2 minutes.
9. Add in noodles and sauce. Thoroughly incorporate all ingredients. Turn off heat, and add chicken.

# BIOGRAPHIES



I want to dedicate this book to my mom, Yang Wei, and my grandparents, Ji Feng Wei, and Suzan Zhang. I would also like to honor Victoria as the brains behind the recipes.

# JUSTIN WANG

Justin Wang is a sixteen-year-old High School student and heart transplant recipient. At age two, he was rushed to the local Kaiser Permanente hospital with a swollen face and lasting fever. He was transferred to UCSF Benioff Children's Hospital's Intensive Care Unit, and it took the doctors nearly a month to diagnose him with hypereosinophilic syndrome.



Hypereosinophilic syndrome (also called Loeffler's syndrome), is an extremely rare blood disorder categorized with an excess of eosinophils, a specific white blood cell. The doctors eventually controlled his hypereosinophilic syndrome with the then newly developed wonder chemotherapy drug, Gleevec. Despite that, his organs were damaged by the time his hypereosinophilic syndrome was controlled. The right ventricle of Justin's heart was attacked by his excessive eosinophils and was severely damaged with scar tissue.

When he was six-years-old, Justin underwent his first open heart surgery at Lucile Packard Children's Hospital at Stanford by cardiothoracic surgeon Frank Hanley, MD. A Glenn procedure was carried out to remove scar tissue from his right ventricle, and to reroute blood flow to his lungs to help relieve stress on his heart. Justin's parents were told that when he becomes a teenager, additional surgery would likely be required, and most likely, he would eventually need a heart transplant. His mom, Yang Wei, knew about this and decided "a life in ignorance is better than a life in fear." In other words, she never told Justin anything.

But in late 2017 at age fifteen, his health began declining rapidly, including heart arrhythmia, extreme fatigue, and loss of appetite. His mom gave in, and on a car ride home, she told him about his life-long journey of struggle. Following four stays in the ICU, Justin's care team at Lucile Packard determined he would need a heart transplant to survive and listed him as a Status 2 on the heart transplant waiting list on April 10, 2018. Status 2 means he was deemed healthy enough on oral medications to remain at home while waiting. Doctors told them it was common to wait months or years for a donor match. It has been four years since a Status 2 patient received a heart at Lucile Packard. He was merely on the list for a "taste of being on the list."

Only seventeen days after Justin was listed, his parents received a call in the middle of the night: there was a match. Justin had his heart transplant on April 27, 2018. At first, Justin experienced immense pain, but through hard work and physical therapy, he was

discharged from the hospital nineteen days after the surgery. Following Lucile Packard's well-designed post organ transplant protocol, Justin stayed at a housing facility near the hospital, the Ronald McDonald House, for three months. There he befriended many fellow patients. Two weeks before his High School restarted, Justin was discharged from the Ronald McDonald House and returned home (July 25, 2018).

During his stay in the Ronald McDonald House, Justin learned that many kids are suffering from heart failure. Justin wished to advocate for the lifesaving procedure. Justin decided to start a blog and publish his story online. My Heart Transplant Journal detailed his heart transplant from day one to the present. You can find it at: [myhearttransplantjournal.com](http://myhearttransplantjournal.com)

For much of his life, Justin lacked an appetite due to his weak heart. For many years, he has had a g-tube in his stomach to feed him nutrition in his sleep while he can only eat a little orally during the day. Although Justin didn't eat much orally, he still desired the taste of delicious food. He loved the sensations of flavor, and also enjoyed the culinary process of making meals. This desire was fueled by his old tutor teaching him after school every day how to cook tasty meals. Since he was a child, he found great joy playing Cooking Mama on Nintendo DS or making homemade noodles.

With his new heart, he has gained a tremendous appetite. With this new aspect of life, he has made a wish through Make-A-Wish Greater Bay Area to create a transplant-friendly heart-healthy cookbook. Determined to nourish his new heart, he made eating healthy a priority. Introduced by Elizabeth "Beth" Nolan, Director of Make-A-Wish Greater Bay Area, he collaborated with a local chef, Victoria Lacuesta, to create a transplant-friendly cookbook with heart-healthy recipes.

Follow His Journey: [myhearttransplantjournal.com](http://myhearttransplantjournal.com)



# YANG WEI

Yang Wei is an entrepreneur, real estate investor, and mother of two children, including Justin. She completed her Bachelor's degree in mechanical engineering and a Master's degree in electrical engineering at Tsinghua University. Sponsored by Cornell University, Yang came to the United States for a better life.

Her latest project is her company, QM Simulations. QM Simulations is a biomedical company aimed at creating an artificial intelligence capable of matching specific drugs at target receptors. Through artificial intelligence and machine learning, test trials are repeated continuously until her algorithm can be verified as accurate.

Yang says her happiest time is "when the family is together." She decided to keep her maiden name, as per tradition in China. Her schedule is always busy, trying to juggle her home, research, health, and personal life. When she has the opportunity, she loves to relax, unwind, and watch a movie at the movie theater.

According to Yang, health is the most crucial factor in life. Yang enjoys running in marathons and participating in triathlons. She also encourages Justin to take care of his health. Justin is pushed to exercise, eat healthily, and sleep well.

Yang's moral is this: "love, hope, and dreams are worth fighting for, and when you have them, never let them go."



# SUZAN ZHANG

Susan Zhang is the mother of Yang Wei, wife of Ji Feng Wei, and grandmother of Justin Wang. She also believes that health is the number one priority over everything else.

Suzan has accomplished many feats, overcame many stereotypes, and broke the glass ceiling as a woman in China. She was the first in her family to be sent to school and was one of the smartest students in her school. Originally promised to be a mayor, Suzan later took on the career as a teacher. She met her husband, Ji Feng Wei, at college where she studied Psychology.

Suzan had an undiagnosed blood condition (unrelated to Justin Wang) which severely affected her health. At age forty-five, she was bedridden and only expected to live for a few more weeks. Suzan proved her doctors wrong as she persevered through her health battles. For the rest of her life, health and exercise would be a large part of her life.

Suzan called her two children her "miracle children" because she was assumed infertile by her blood condition. When the communist revolution took place, she fled with her children to a distant city at the outskirts of China, and once almost lost her youngest child, Yang Wei, on a moving train.

When Yang Wei settled down in Colorado, Suzan soon came after. In Colorado, she was determined to follow her exercise routine. She went out of her house, saw the tallest building, and walked towards it. Suzan became a missing person for five hours until Yang's friend spotted her in downtown.

Today Suzan Zhang is ninety-two years old. She not only proved her doctors wrong multiple times but also changed her life and her family's life for the better. Suzan's resilience regarded her as a true hero.



# JI FENG WEI

Ji Feng Wei is the father of Yang Wei, husband of Suzan Zhang, and grandfather of Justin Wang. In Chinese, his name translates to reach the highest, which already set high expectations for himself when he was born. As the second oldest son in a well off household, Ji Feng lived with his grandmother and mother in a large house.

Both his father and grandfather died in a Tsunami, which left his mother and grandmother in charge. As a result, his family was a matriarch. The Wei family became wealthy but with little power. During World War 2, Ji Feng almost signed up for the military. He was a teenager and arrived home to see his mother. However, his mother stopped him from signing up.

When Ji Feng graduated from High School, he went to the best University his province could offer, with a major in mathematics. Ji Feng went to marry Suzan Zhang, his classmate from college. During the communist takeover of China, the government took the Wei family wealth. Ji Feng and Suzan went on to rebuild a new life together.

They were separated for a while when Suzan fled to the outskirts of China with their two children but reunited after several years apart.

Ji Feng loved his two children. Yang Wei, his youngest daughter, attended Tsinghua University in China, and eventually Cornell in the United States. When Yang settled in Colorado, he soon came after.

Ji Feng also loved Justin, his grandson. Justin loved sleeping on Ji Feng's lap while Ji Feng read him children's books. He was heartbroken to see Justin at the hospital.

On August 1, 2010, Ji Feng passed away. Yang Wei will always remember Ji Feng as her loving dad, Suzan Zhang as her caring husband, and Justin Wang as his strong grandfather.



# VICTORIA LACUESTA

I remember it all very well. The first thing I ever learned to cook was rice. I even learned how to wash dishes standing up on a stool.

I was 6 years old when I got exposed to doing chores for the very first time. My younger brother and I lived with distant relatives in the Philippines for a year. The couple has three children, and each had their very own chores to do and it was only fair that my brother and I had to help. It was a good thing I was trained when we lived with our distant relatives.



When I came to the United States at age 10, I helped my grandmother a lot in the kitchen. She was very impressed with what I was able to do. When I look back now, I remember those days fondly even though it was a lot of work for a young girl like me.

She had me sliced vegetables a very specific way for her lumpia because she was very particular. We didn't have a food processor, so everything had to be done by hands. I would be in the kitchen for hours, and I hated every minute of it, but that experience proved invaluable as I grew into what would be my profession.

Prior to being in the food industry, I was in the dental field for over six years. Helping others and working with my hands was always something I wanted to do, but I could not quite put it together. I knew I did not want to be working in the hospital being around sick people and I was not particularly happy in the dental field.

I was thirty-years-old and at turning point of my career. But thinking back to my childhood, I remembered fondly how passionate my grandma was in feeding the family and making sure everyone was happy and well-fed.

Though I wasn't sure I wanted to be in the kitchen, I wanted to do something that she loved to do as a remembrance of her and my love of good healthy eating. I decided to join Le Cordon Bleu California Culinary Academy in San Francisco.

During my academic years in culinary school, nutrition was one of the requirements, and fit nicely in my ultimate goal of being a healthy chef. It took a year before I realized that working with my hands and pursuing the culinary arts were truly something I enjoyed passionately. Nutritional studies lead me to my first certification and I've never looked back.

My focus remains on providing healthy eating and nutrition through my East Bay Healthy Chef business. I continue to pursue my next goal of obtaining a degree in nutrition and becoming a registered dietician.

Visit Victoria: [eastbayhealthychef.com](http://eastbayhealthychef.com)





Thank you



for the incredible adventure!

“Food is our common ground, a universal experience.” - James Beard