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Aviva Goldfarb - solving your daily dinner dilemmas

When Aviva Goldfarb's children were still quite small, she had a lightbulb moment. She realized that if she compiled a weekly menu and a complete shopping list to go with it, she would be buying herself a more stress-free life that would give her extra free time with her son and daughter. "It didn't feel natural to me. But I decided I would start planning ahead before I went to the grocery store. I couldn't believe how much easier it made everything!"

She told her friends, sharing her planning details with them. Then one day in 2003 Goldfarb thought, Hey, wait a minute. I'm a self-published author. The internet is taking off. Maybe I can turn this into a business. And The Six O'Clock Scramble was born.

Aimed at busy mothers just like her, The Scramble is a web site providing weekly menu plans and associated grocery lists. Subscribe to it, pay up through Pay Pal, and you won't have to think about what to feed the family ever again. Across seven days, you'll most likely get one meat dish, one fish dish and three vegetarian, with links to side dish recipes. But you also have access to a growing archive of back recipes so you could devise your own plan if you prefer.

Recipes don't take long to cook - that's the point of the title. As the site has developed, so has its scope. Most diners are catered for. There are recipes for vegetarians, and gluten-free and nut-free recipes. Only desserts are ignored. "They're not my specialty. People can grab an ice cream bar," Goldfarb says.

She was born in the Chicago area but upped sticks with her family to Santa Barbara, CA, when she was 11. She moved east to Philadelphia for college then after for work and has stayed ever since. Her parents are part of the reason for her success. Her mother, she says, is "an amazing cook. One thing also impacted me about her was that was a really organized cook. She planned meals ahead one week, she grocery shopped once a week only." Her father is a doctor and his influence is clear in Goldfarb's recipes. "He was the original health nut in California. He's always advocated lower fat." She'd always enjoyed cooking herself but only began cooking regularly once her children were born. And discovered she needed some kind of structure to the process. "There was so much chaos around cooking, it was so stressful!"



When it came to launching her web site, Goldfarb, an ex-PR for non profits, could use the relationships she had established with the media to boost publicity. "My first big break was a story in the Washington Post news section." Then 'O' Magazine, Oprah Winfrey's glossy, ran an article and The Six O'Clock Scramble rocketed to a whole new level. The site became more sophisticated, enabling people to search for meals by different categories in response to people wanting the freedom to customize their weekly plans. She took on an assistant. She has a nutritionist who goes through each recipe.

"When I was trying to everything, I was going crazy. I was spending 25 hours a week working, not including time spent cooking. One thing I've done is to delegate as much as possible. Each part of my business I don't like to do or don't know how I give to consultants or assistants."

Her children among them. She has a son, Solomon, of 12 and a daughter, Celia, of 10. "She's a wonderful baker. They've both become good editors and tasters of recipes. They've even come to like brussel sprouts and beets." Her daughter recently turned vegetarian. "But most of the meals I make are vegetarian - dishes you'd find in a Mediterranean diet."

In 2006, she published an associated cookbook and is working on another for 2010. "I'm moving recipes towards being even more seasonal and local. That's the way forward."

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