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Gina Schade is out to show the world that eating healthy isn't limited to green smoothies and salads. It can be warm, hearty, and family-friendly too. It was with that mission in mind that Schade sat down in her kitchen in 2013, typing out the first post of her food blog. Her online space for advice and recipes grew—and this year she decided it was time to turn the online posts into a physical book. She called it “The 90/10 Life Cookbook,” a manifesto and how-to guide wrapped into one. The cookbook is a roadmap for nourishing bodies with 90 percent nutrition, and 10 percent indulgence.

“For years, I’ve worked with people on food and diet and nutrition,” Schade said. “I was inspired to create a resource for people that gave them not only easy-to-understand nutritional information but also recipes that are available for all skill levels.”

Schade began compiling the cookbook in June, though the recipes inside have long belonged in her family’s kitchen rotation. Schade grew up in an Italian family, who raised her to believe that food is how you show love, she said. Thus, it makes sense that her favorite recipe in the book is her Mom’s Italian meatballs. “It’s kind of two separate recipes,” she said, adding that the book outlines how to make the meatballs and the sauce, and suggests serving it over spaghetti squash rather than carb-heavy pasta. She recalled big family gatherings, where everyone would gather together to partake in big pots of pasta and simmering sauces. “Everyone has their own comfort food, and this is pure comfort. When I’m wanting to show love to family and friends, it’s one of the first recipes that I cook for people,” she said. The simple switch from spaghetti to spaghetti squash still allows those comforting flavors to shine, she added. It’s a small change to keep healthy nutrition in mind.

“The 90/10 Life Cookbook” includes 80 of Schade’s family recipes. And though she is adamant about keeping nutrition in mind, she recognized that indulgence is an important social and emotional component of eating too. “I want to show people that they can eat healthy 90 percent of the time, but also leave a little wiggle room for the treats that they love. I think it’s important that people have a balanced food lifestyle. ... There are some of my favorite desserts in the cookbook,” she said.

The recipes have been tested by more than Schade and her family, she assured. Since Schade spends most of her days working as a nutrition coach she has had plenty of taste-testers. Roxy Artusi, who has gone through one of Schade’s four-week health programs, drove to Elkhart from South Bend on Thursday to pick up a copy of the cookbook at Schade’s launch and book signing event at Bacon Hill Kitchen and Pub. Schade’s nutritional advice changed her family, Artusi said. She added that it made a huge difference to her personally, and then she started cooking differently for the rest of the family too. Artusi’s daughter, 7-year old Grace, clutched a cookbook to her chest and posed for a photo with Schade, who had just signed the family copy.

“Cooking and working with clients with health and nutrition is my passion. ... A lot of the recipes I’ve been sharing with clients for years,” Schade said. Since she has become a mother, Schade has shifted most of her business online. She leads groups through her website, and frequently shares new recipes and tidbits about daily life with her blog readers.

Committed to compiling a whole cookbook seemed like an uphill climb at times, but she said “always kept my eye on the prize.” As for future writing plans? “You know what people say about tattoos—once you get one you can’t stop,” she said, laughing. “I feel like that with the

cookbook. It's been the most fun, challenging, and fulfilling project I've ever worked on. But I'll probably give myself a year off."

Want to know more? Visit Gina's website at www.ginaschade.com.