

# How Life as a Mom Inspired a Business that Brings Families Together

By Julie Burlison, founder and CEO of Young Chefs Academy | January 10, 2018 10:15 am EST

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Credit: Young Chefs Academy

"You do realize I want to own a business, right?" was the stipulation that came out of my mouth when my husband got down on one knee to propose.

Owning my own business was something I had always dreamt of; I just didn't know what the business would be. Growing up, my father encouraged my siblings and I to pursue our dreams; and I always had a passion for cooking. In college, I made and sold custom gingerbread houses for extra money. Later, I owned a culinary herb shop and made home cooked meals to deliver to busy moms. Still, I had yet to find a business that encompassed my true passions: family and cooking.

One day, while I was in the kitchen filling orders for my catering business, my five-year-old son begged to help. With a job to do and a beautiful family to spend time with, I felt torn.

I've always been an advocate for involving kids in the kitchen. My children would help me with every meal by fetching ingredients and mixing them together while enjoying the process of creating something. This led me to my idea for a cooking school for kids.

I immediately scoured the internet for franchisee opportunities, but couldn't find a franchisor that offered the business model I envisioned. I decided to take matters into my own hands and scheduled a cooking class for kids at a local restaurant. I called some friends and told them about the opportunity in our Waco, Texas community, and it sparked so much interest that I knew I had to build on it. From then on, I knew this would become my career and lifeblood.

The idea that I could build a business by bringing families together excited me, pushing me to succeed. I went from struggling to balance my career and home life, to blending the two into something that can benefit families everywhere.

I launched [Young Chefs Academy](#) in 2003, and we've grown to 30 locations in seven countries with no plans of slowing down. Each location provides an interactive experience for children of all ages in a homey setting. Kids can envision themselves at home while learning to cook; most can't wait to bring what they learned back to their families. We take the mystery and fear out of cooking and turn it into a lifelong love of the culinary arts.

We are the first-to-market children's cooking school franchise that encourages discovery and creativity while learning proper food preparation skills. We offer lessons like how to cut and prepare, etiquette, and cooking in group settings. We introduce kids to healthy eating, new foods and even cultural fusion cooking.

Today, I am proud of what Young Chefs Academy stands for. My passion for family has broadened to my family of franchise owners, a gift I have received as part of being a franchisor: to lead other equally passionate business owners to see their dreams come to fruition by sharing our mission in communities across the country and worldwide.

We stress the importance of bringing families together in the kitchen and around the table for dinner. It's a perfect setting to talk about each other's days, unwind and spend genuine time together. Young Chefs Academy is helping kids find their passion through cooking and create skills they can use for the rest of their lives.

**About the author:** Julie has served as [Young Chefs Academy](#) founder and CEO for 14 years. Julie owned and operated two culinary businesses prior to franchising the Young Chefs Academy model and set out on a mission to teach children the joy and value of cooking. Julie was the recipient of Best Feasibility Plan from Baylor University's John F. Baugh Center for Entrepreneurship and is a proud member of the IFA (International Franchise Association).

*Edited for brevity and clarity by Sammi Caramela.*