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# BEAUTY BATTALION

MAY 2017

## Kristina Kuzmic

YouTube's  
Truth Bomb Mom  
shares her story of  
her rise to fame.

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KRISTINA KUZMIC



**TRUE BEAUTY AWARD WINNER  
MAY 2017**

Self-Proclaimed Recovering Pessimist and Truth Bomb  
Mom: Meet Kristina Kuzmic

By Jennifer Weaver

**A**fter the thirtieth person left her tiny, one-bedroom apartment where she'd prepared and hosted a free pasta dinner, Kristina Kuzmic collapsed to the floor and wept the most joyous tears she'd ever experienced in her life. In an instant, the single mother of two toddlers realized she could make a positive difference in people's lives.

"I realized how obsessed I'd become with myself and my own misery. I breathe, and eat, and drink, and make-out with self-pity. That's literally how I felt," Kristina said as tears welled up in her eyes. "All of sudden, I believed I had something to give ... I had been sobbing for so long of hopelessness and despair, but in that moment, it was a glimmer of hope. I never again felt defeated, or worthless, or useless."

Being an internet sensation with more than 300 million video views is a far cry from the destitute divorcee who once was struggling to make ends meet with a government-issued food assistance card a decade ago. Today, Kristina is living in Southern California, happily married and the mother of three children who keep her creative juices flowing on parenting topics that viewers can't stop watching.

"It is just so refreshing to see a community rally around a real person and a real mom," said Kuzmic fan, Elizabeth Peace, mother of two from Arlington, Va. "She's somebody who makes you feel better for being human instead of trying to be this fake version of what everyone wants you to be."

***"You know, we pretty much have everything we need to pursue our dreams. We have it; it's within us."***

From her emotionally charged montage of eating ice cream while spouting off rationale why she isn't her kids' friend to a sarcastic, humorous rant of four reasons why women shouldn't breastfeed in public (which, by the way, Kristina advocates), the petite, brunette takes nothing for granted and is the first to admit she has come a long way.

"I consider myself a recovering pessimist," Kristina declared. "You know, we pretty much have everything we need to pursue our dreams. We have it; it's within us. We're just scared. And we focus more on what we don't have and what we don't do instead of what we can do and what we do have, because a lot of times those things feel smaller, but when we are true to ourselves, that authenticity is what sets us free."

#### **Kristina's Influence: Her Mom**

"Fun, strict parenting" is a work-in-progress of Kristina's self-described parenting style. She loves the current phase in her life embracing her toddler's mischievous antics and being amused by her two charismatic teenagers, and credits her devotion to motherhood from the major influence of her own mother.

In a Mother's Quest podcast, the Croatia-born native said fleeing the country that broke out in war when she was 12 years old gave her a distinct appreciation

for the strength and character of her mother. She describes her as bold and someone who speaks her mind, but doesn't draw attention to herself though she is poised with grace and class.

"My mom is very different from me. If you met her, she literally would never, ever be on camera and barely talk, like very few words, and I have lots of words," Kuzmic gushed. "It's interesting because even though we are so different, a lot of my parenting decisions come from my mom. A lot! I would say I'm more creative and she was more patient, for sure. We both have our own strengths and weaknesses, but just trying to raise kids who are really kind adults, and self-sufficient, and not turning them into entitled brats pretty much comes from my mom."

Moving to America from a poor, war-torn country came with feelings of guilt, culture shock, and a language barrier, but Kristina points out that her mom was steadfast and told her to be who she was and to be grateful. Those words have carried her through her own journey of becoming a United States citizen and pursuing her personal goals.

"My mom was loving and strict with rules, and she followed through with fairness," Kuzmic beamed. "I really appreciate her and I hear her voice in my head sometimes when I'm parenting."



Photography by Karen Erekson of Ashtyn Jade Photography

YOU NEEDED  
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"I just knew if she had the opportunity to cultivate it that she'd do something great."

*"I knew Kristina was creative, funny, passionate and had so much drive and energy that she would be successful at whatever she chose to do." Phillip Crocco*

#### Instant fame? Felt Fake

Keeping her children's welfare at the forefront motivated Kristina to work hard at both her part-time jobs. She worked as a waitress, and in time, fell in love and married Philip Crocco. In fact, it was two days after their wedding that he advised Kristina to go for a drive in the couple's vehicle to figure out what she wanted to do with her life.

"I knew Kristina was creative, funny, passionate and had so much drive and energy that she would be successful at whatever she chose to do," Crocco said in a phone interview. "I didn't know at the time how she would do it, and it surprised me how it all came about, but it didn't surprise me in the slightest how she achieved success. I just knew if she had the opportunity to cultivate it that she'd do something great."

"Just three years ago I was sleeping on the floor next to my two children in bunk beds in a dumpy, little apartment and here I was being interviewed by Oprah."



After driving around for five hours, Kristina made her choice to make cooking videos. A friend helped Kristina shoot, edit and post her cooking videos on YouTube. After two weeks of a slowly growing audience, she was approached by a stranger on her Facebook page to enter a reality television competition sponsored by Oprah Winfrey. After submitting an audition tape, Kristina found herself in an interview with Mark Burnett, the producer of the show and well-known for producing the NBC series, *The Voice*. His approval sent her face-to-face with TV icon, Oprah.

"I definitely felt like the underdog," Kristina mused. "Just three years ago I was sleeping on the floor next to my two children in bunk beds in a dumpy, little apartment and here I was being interviewed by Oprah."

*Kristina won the competition and was awarded her own TV show on the OWN network.*

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What came next is what most people would define as a dream come true; Kristina won the competition and was awarded her own TV show on the OWN network. Being thrust into the spotlight with a half-hour reality show called, *The Ambush Cook*, was nothing short of miraculous to Kristina and she was overcome with thankfulness. She was so caught up in gratitude, that she forgot herself.

The show's premise, her hair, makeup and clothing - and even the recipes she was teaching unsuspecting bystanders to cook - felt foreign. She thought she was portraying a character and it was uncomfortable, but she did as producers and her business manager

instructed even though she felt like a complete fraud. "I was so grateful, coming from where I was, that I felt like standing up for myself was complaining," she said. "Now, I use that experience in my everyday life because I know now that I can be grateful, gracious and respectful and say, 'No, I can't do that. That's not me.'"

Kristina's cooking show lasted only one season, but gave her a firm foundation of self that she swears she'll never compromise again. When she finds herself waffling, she remembers the words Oprah said to her that are ingrained in her memory, "You just need to be you!"





## BEING AUTHENTIC = REAL SUCCESS

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"When I decided to stop waiting for this or that to happen before I was going to do what I wanted to do, and that's the thing we all do, I'm just going to do me like the Frank Sinatra song, 'I Did It My Way,' that's when success came."

Photographer: Karen Ereksen of  
AshtynJadePhoto.com  
Makeup: Missy Lovett  
Hair: Becca Turner  
Wardrobe: Nihee Miller

*Credits*



### Being Authentic = Real Success

After her TV show was cancelled in 2011, Kristina started a website called stickycook.com that eventually morphed into her site now, KristinaKuzmic.com. She blogged about recipes and her love for cooking but began to gravitate to a small section she started on her site called Parenting Tantrums.

"What I found was that little part was my favorite thing on the whole site," Kristina said with a sparkle in her eye. "The thing I get really excited about, and want to learn more (about), and you know the feeling you get inside that just yells, YES, was definitely the parenting thing."

Making recipes the sidebar while featuring parenting tips as the feature of her site didn't catch the public's attention right away. Her business manager was

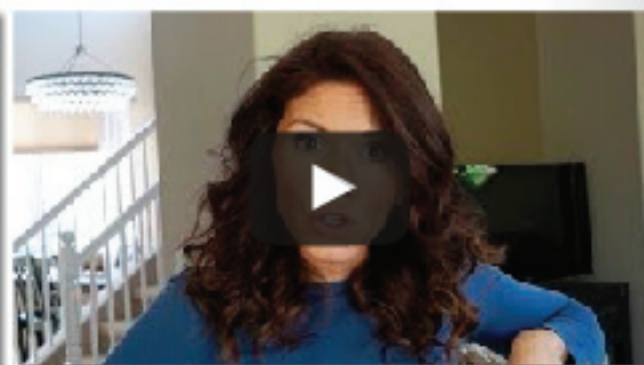
continuing to pitch her to the Food Network and offer her opportunities to develop a new cooking show, but nothing was panning out. Kristina had another baby and decided that if she could make cooking videos, she could also make parenting videos.

Her friend that helped her before with videos was no longer available so she took matters into her own hands. While breastfeeding her baby, Kristina searched Googled for what equipment to buy, how to edit, and how to record videos without using a smart phone. Her first video on YouTube was just over two minutes and titled, "4 Reasons Stretch Marks are Sexy."

In her authentic comedic flair, she even showed her abdominal stretch marks and likened them to tiger stripes and lightning strikes.



42 THEBEAUTYBATTALION.COM



4 REASONS STRETCH MARKS ARE SEXY



4 SIGNS YOU'RE READY TO BE A PARENT

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"It just blew up into this thing. Weirdly, it became bigger than the Oprah thing," Kristina said. "Let's put it this way, when I won the Oprah thing and I was doing the cooking show, I had 3,000 followers on Facebook, and now I have over three-quarter of a million followers."

Actually, Kristina just celebrated her 38th birthday in April and a milestone of reaching more than 860,000 followers on Facebook. Her newest video spotlights her 2-year-old son, and she not only tells how fun toddlers can be but shows it with finger painting on the sidewalk to cleaning the shower together like it's a game.

"When I decided to stop waiting for this or that to happen before I was going to do what I wanted to do, and that's the thing we all do, I'm just going to do me like the Frank Sinatra song, 'I Did It My Way,' that's when success came," she said.

Kristina is a contributor to LittleThings.com and has no qualms with being labeled the Truth Bomb Mom. She's doing what she loves and encourages others to do the same.

"Stay authentic to who you are and just keep going" Kristina said. "Stop being who you think others need you to be, and just be you."



Written by Jennifer Weaver  
Jennifer is an award-winning journalist and freelance writer from Orem, Utah.

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— The Beauty Battalion



