

# THE KITCHEN HEALER

the journey to becoming you



jules blaine davis

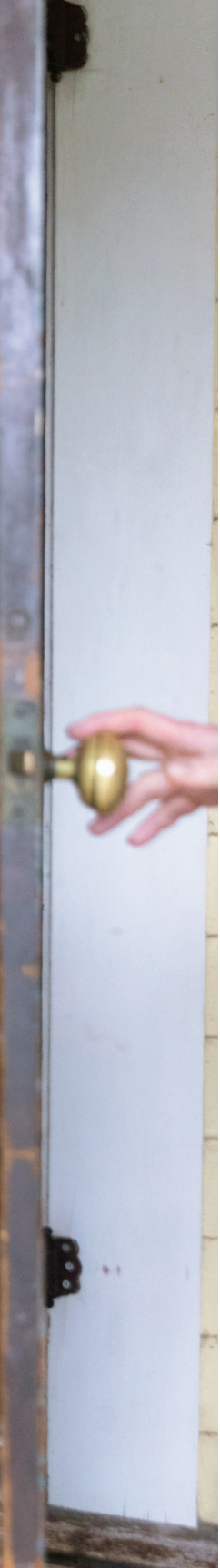
 **sounds true**  
BOULDER, COLORADO

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## introduction

### permission everywhere

**T**he door is open, and you are right on time. As you walk up to the front porch, you see a pair of biggish black Vans, smallish rainbow boots, high-top garden galoshes, and fuchsia sneakers near a tattered doormat that says “You are gorgeous.” As you lift your gaze to the windowsill, you see rocks and shells, a few ceramic hearts, and the word “**LOVE**” painted in hot pink on a piece of driftwood. You can take your shoes off here, drop your bags, and let go of anything that might be in the way of you being here. As you look through the screen door, you see a lit beeswax candle on the dining room table with a heart-shaped wood board next to it. You hear music—Rising Appalachia, Alicia Keys, or Chaka Khan, depending on the mood. As you make your way inside, you feel a warmth of goodness and love that brings you closer to the kitchen. On your way, you see the heart-shaped wood board with sliced Gala apples, white nectarines, some goat gouda, rice crackers, and a small bowl of Castelvetro olives.

#### **This is for you.**

Everywhere you look, you see a kind of *messy beauty* inside day-to-day things, like a wide wood bowl holding a soft mountain of unfolded linen and cotton napkins, or a cracked cake plate offering the season’s bounty. Fuyu persimmons, Gold Nugget tangerines, and a heart-shaped rock with the word “courage” painted on it. These are daily moments made sacred by the way they are offered inside the flow of a freely creative aesthetic. There is nothing to hide here. This is permission



everywhere. Permission to feel all your senses, to take everything in and receive the ease and freedom that is here. The aroma of a cake, light and rising, guides you gently into the kitchen. This is where you will find me, steeping our love tea, opening a wide vat of golden sage honey to stir inside our time together.

**I see you, and I am so happy you are here.**

The cabinet is open for you to choose from a variety of porcelain teacups, ceramic mugs, and handmade clay vessels. They are close together, a few nestled one inside the other, yet each one has its own feeling. Choose a vessel that feels like home in the palms of your hands. You can take your time here. As you turn around, you will see a wall of wood boards, open salt bowls, a block of butter on a round blue plate next to three eggs nuzzled together in a little pink pinch pot by the stove. There is a freedom that comes with placing the ingredients you use daily out in the open. When you can see, feel, and be with what you love, you become more connected to yourself. This is not clutter. It is intentional and has the essence of YOU embodied everywhere. This daily invitation to acknowledge, honor, and remember what you love awakens everything. Permission everywhere not only supports your healing, it makes space for you to embody possibilities you couldn't see—until now.







There is nothing to do.

There is nothing to fix.

There is no rush.

This is for YOU.









This book, like my kitchen, is a soft place to land.

It is also base camp for the journey ahead. We will return to the kitchen again and again as you make your way toward yourself. In the warmth of the kitchen, you might feel an opening or an unraveling toward a spaciousness within you. This might bring up a longing or a yearning for something you can't yet name. With the tinctures of permission, freedom, and beauty, you might begin to feel a hunger not only for a piece of olive oil cake, but for this deeper sense of yourself. You might not even know that you are hungry. That's okay—many of us have no idea how hungry we truly are. We run in circles around our lives and call it

a living. We book our days over-full, with the right thing to do or what needs to get done. This is how we have been conditioned to live. You have no time for yourself, so you go miss-

ing inside your own life. You keep giving, going, and doing, trying to stay safe and save others from their pain. You repeat the words "I know" when someone tells you that you need to take a break, but your actions say, "I will get to me later." You are so busy carrying these old stories from your childhood, your lineage, and your culture that you forgot you have a self, a body, a story to write, a life to live, and a legacy to become.

**You ask others what they are hungry for, maybe you forgot to ask yourself: What are YOU hungry for?**







you've always  
had the power  
my dear,  
you just had  
to learn it  
for yourself.  
-the wizard of oz

there  
is  
nothing  
to  
fix.  
rulesxxxxx



FREEDOM



### You are not alone.

You are hungry for the love inside permission and beauty and freedom. You are hungry for the lightness inside ease, flow, and authentic connection. You are hungry for Mother Earth and the intimate relationship waiting for you inside a wood board love and a carrot-ginger soup simmering on the back burner. Even if you don't like ginger, all of a sudden, you are hungry for it. You are hungry to be seen and heard and felt. You are hungry to know who you are, beneath the errands and the busyness and all the doing.

### You are hungry to become YOU.

As you feel the unconditional love flowing through the kitchen, a new way of *doing and being* will emerge. Curiosity and willingness lead the way to the creativity and truth of your living. We are going to find permission everywhere as we move through this journey together. We will find it in the pantry, in the cabinets, and on the kitchen counters. We will feel it in the rhythm, cadence, and flow of your days and nights. We will discover your values and leave behind the stories that are in the way to you claiming the life you long to live. We will go at your pace with a love nudge

from me. I will meet you where you are. I will offer recipes from *the loving you trade*. You can start right now. Ask yourself: *Am I loving my day?* You can check in to see if what you are *doing* is an act of loving for you and your body. I can hear you . . . the bills, the marriage, the work, what will they think, what will I think, and so on. I got you. We are here together. And this is your journey to embark on.

This journey is a devotion quest. You are your beloved. And when permission and beauty surround you, they offer the limitless gift of becoming you. You begin to embody your becoming. This is custom, intimate, and powerful. Your healing is not superficial, nor is it something topical to float on the surface of your life.

You will wake up, turn on the fire, find your body, cook up a feast with ease—becoming who you are, again and again. Who knew that the aroma of a cake permeating through the house, a circle of women around a fire, and the feeling of your feet rooted to the ground at the kitchen island could feed you in such deep ways. And this is just the beginning to meeting your hunger and nourishing your becoming.

## nourishing my life

My path to nourishing—myself and the world around me—broke ground on many Wednesdays around 5:30 a.m. We had one car, a black VW Jetta station wagon. I would take the car seats out, put the seats down, and throw the stroller in along with three or four baskets; a few canvas bags; empty berry, cherry, tomato, and egg cartons; cardboard flats; and one big, black crate. I would drive across the city, from the east to the west as the sun rose to light my way. No matter how tired I was, I didn't miss a market.

As I got closer to 4<sup>th</sup> Street, I would feel a familiar excitement inside me. What would I find? What had grown since last week? What farms would be there? With breastfeeding pads in my bra, an apron tied around my waist, and money for overdue bills in my pocket, I was ready.

I was usually one of the first to arrive. It was me and my grayish silver Graco stroller waiting for the barricades to move aside. The only other people who arrived this early were the chefs in their white coats and black clogs, mostly, if not all, male, hauling their crate-filled

dollies from vendor to vendor. They seemed to have an incredibly important purpose. I was ravenous and a bit of a mystery. We were the early birds, like crows wandering the streets at dawn, scanning tables for whatever was ripe and ready.

They were curious about me—who did I work for and what was I going to do with *all that food*? I was curious about me, too. Most of the women with strollers showed up with actual kids in them, at a time that made sense, with a balloon tied to the stroller handle and a French baguette protruding from the bottom basket. My stroller carried my kids most days, but on Wednesday mornings, she was my *dolly*. She wasn't one of the fancy ones, but she was relentless in how she carried me and all that I was gathering inside this time.

## gathering beauty

I filled her to the brim with thick-stemmed artichokes, bunches of watermelon radishes, Japanese turnips, red kuri squashes, Nantes carrots, Salanova lettuces, chocolate







Hayicha persimmons, red walnuts, Persian mulberries, and all the seasonal goodness I could find. All the variety and abundance was a miracle! The colors of the season stopped me in my tracks. The taste of tended soil inside the first spring asparagus, or a bunch of green garlic with that skinny violet stripe rounding the peel, was a radical kind of intimacy. I didn't know how to cook most of what I gathered; I just knew I needed to bring it all home. Beauty was writing me a love note, inviting me closer to myself. It felt like freedom was undoing me in the best way. I was learning a new language inside those bright fuchsia figs from Italy with the celadon striped skin. They looked like a haute couture silk circus tent made for an Hermès spring collection in the 80s.

I was falling in love.

I had entered a beautiful world where I could nourish my family, heal my body, feed the community, and so much more! This world of beauty was doing more than feeding me: it was restoring, resuscitating, and recovering parts of me that had been suppressed by the old stories I was carrying. Stories written by a

cultureless culture, a hungry lineage, and a family of origin that modeled separating from our true selves in order to survive and belong. I was forever in a rush and very late to a life *I should be living*. The *I can do it all* mindset kept me from myself for many years. I was tired, stressed, and scared. I was also joyous, grateful, and deeply rooted to mothering my family. I had a fire inside me to change the patterns from which I came. All I “needed” (old story) was to find “success” (particularly with money) and prove to “everyone” (whoever that was) that I was capable of something amazing.

In other words: I would *do things*, be seen and praised for *doing things*, and get to the deep stuff later. I was the deep stuff. Borrrring story alert: this is one of many borrrring stories so many of us carry around in our bodies until we let go (which can feel scary) and let something deeper in (which might feel scarier), allowing us to live lighter inside our lives, which is the most phenomenal feeling ever.

Walking, gathering, being at the market became my healing. It carried me across thresholds of early



motherhood, marriage, and a recession, just to name a few. The beauty I found there reminded me that I am everything. I am the crows, I am the stroller, I am the farmer, I am the figs, I am the earth, I am possibility. Discovering this was the awakening that brought me closer to myself and nourished the artist in me. To gather beauty and create food to feed me and my family became foundational to who I am. *Wait, who am I again?* That was the question! I had forgotten that I was a performer, a dancer, a singer, a painter, a poet. While I was loving my babies and doing what I needed to do as a wife and mother, I had forgotten all the other parts of me that I loved.

We forget ourselves when we go hungry inside our lives. Often, we don't even know we are hungry. We don't even know we have a self. Yet, what I didn't see—in the culture or in my lineage or at the preschool parking lot—was a mother nourishing herself as she nourished her family. I had not seen this . . . YET.



## finding myself in the kitchen

Bringing this beauty home felt like a party without the “it’s an event” stress. When I laid everything out on the kitchen table, it was like a scene in *Mary Poppins*—a few blue jays with their little beaks opening the cabinets, and monarch butterflies sliding drawers open with their wings, fluttering with joy. You could find me whistling as more little yellow, orange, and navy-blue birdies gathered wood bowls, cake plates, and a few heirloom dishes, holding them in the air next to my pink hair. We would look at each other lovingly, with sparkly glitter in our eyes.

I filled bowls with Seascape strawberries, Hass avocados, Kishu tangerines, mango nectarines, Red Delicious apples, and all that the season had to offer that week. I created sacred spaces on the table, in the corners, and on the counters. I was creating altars with food—even in the fridge. I turned on Patty Griffin, India Arie, or Angélique Kidjo, depending on the mood. I felt my feet on the floor as I grabbed a wood board and a bread knife. I cut figs in half,

sliced a ripe Bartlett pear, poured out some blueberries, and added a few thin slices of smoked salmon. My two-year-old son, Ocean, would look up at me, holding onto my calf and smiling, as I set our wood board love on his little table. We would dance and eat and laugh as I cooked up what I had gathered at the market. (We are still doing this today! Now he cooks too!) I found myself steaming golden beets with the peel on, discovering that the hard, protective skin slides off when it’s warm and softened. I was becoming warm and softened as I steeped milky love tea and found my way inside a Tuscan bean soup simmering on low, creating an aroma that made our house a home. I was getting closer to myself, my family, and the earth. I was learning how to nourish myself as I nourished them.

## a deeper hunger

It would be a minute—or fifteen years—before I began to write down what was cooking up inside of me. At the time, I started a blog as evidence that I was alive and doing *something*. This was the