

## Getting Curious with Jonathan Van Ness and Nancy Birtwhistle

JVN [00:00:02] Welcome to "Getting Curious". I'm Jonathan Van Ness, and every week I sit down for a 40 minute conversation with a brilliant expert to learn all about something that makes me curious. On today's episode. Brace yourself. Get it together. I'm joined by Nancy Birtwhistle, winner of "Great British Bake Off", Series 5, where we discuss all things "Great British Bake Off". And essentially the question of this episode is, why are you such a badass, Nancy Birtwhistle? For like the first 10 months I was hallucinating and "H" that wasn't there. I kept wanting to see "Birthwistle" the first like, the first like, but that was like in 2014?

NANCY BIRTWHISTLE [00:00:50] 2000 and, yeah.

JVN [00:00:51] Welcome to "Getting Curious". This is Jonathan Van Ness. And I just I want you to brace yourselves. If you're in the car, if you're driving. Just prepare. This is of all 100 plus episodes I've ever done, honey, this is the one I've, I've literally been waiting for this episode since May of 2018, just like shallowly like from when I was supposed to come with "Queer Eye", but then I didn't get to come. And now it's finally happening, you're in front of my face. It's, welcome, Nancy Birtwhistle. Oh, I can't believe you're finally here. So, you know, first of all, just so that everyone understands, you obviously are one of the most iconic winners of "Bake Off" of all time. In America, we call her, well I call it "The Great British Baking Challenge". Turns out we don't even call that. It's not even that name in America. It's like the "Great British Baking Show".

NANCY BIRTWHISTLE [00:01:34] That's right. Yeah.

JVN [00:01:35] Yes. And then over here, it's "Bake Off".

NANCY BIRTWHISTLE [00:01:37] "Bake Off". Yeah.

JVN [00:01:38] So and you-. So why is it on Netflix that it seems like its Series 1, but it's, oh no, Series-, how does that work?

NANCY BIRTWHISTLE [00:01:46] Well, what happened, Jonathan, was, I was Series 5. The, the four Series before that, the first two were on what's known as BBC 2, which BBC 1 is the main channel. And, but "Bake Off" was on BBC 2. And for the first four Series.

JVN [00:02:07] Oh it wa-, all four?

NANCY BIRTWHISTLE [00:02:09] For the first four. And then for Series, was I Series 5? Yeah. And then for Series 5 they decided actually the viewing figures are-.

JVN [00:02:19] Because it was so huge.

NANCY BIRTWHISTLE [00:02:20] This needs to go into BBC 1. This needs to be-.

JVN [00:02:22] So you were the first season that was on BBC 1.

NANCY BIRTWHISTLE [00:02:25] Yes. So I think that's probably why, because it was the, the first Series that got big viewing figures. So I think probably Netflix saw it, well, we'll go with that one.

JVN [00:02:35] So I'm minding my own business.

NANCY BIRTWHISTLE [00:02:37] Yeah.

JVN [00:02:37] My friend Patti tells me about this baking show. I've never even really like, I mean, I love to eat baked goods. Never knew that I wanted to, like, watch, like I didn't know that, like, I was gonna be into a competitive show about it. I was immediately obsessed.

NANCY BIRTWHISTLE [00:02:51] Wow.

JVN [00:02:51] Like immediately obsessed with the concept of the show. Like, I couldn't turn it off. And the whole season was out by the time I started watching it and I instantly fell in love with you so much. I wanted you to win so much and you just like, so I mean, what happened? Like, you're just minding your own business and you see like a an, no, but it was already popular here for four seasons, so how did you get in there?

NANCY BIRTWHISTLE [00:03:12] I wasn't even a fan. I had never watched "Bake Off", for Series 1 or Series 2. And then my sister-in-law said to me, "Are you a 'Bake Off' fan"? So I said, "What is it"? Because I was, you know, I didn't watch it. And-.

JVN [00:03:28] Real nonchalant as we saw that you were.

NANCY BIRTWHISTLE [00:03:30] And and I said, "Oh, I'll start watching it". So I started watching Series 3, quite like it, but I wasn't, like, mad. And I thought, but then I thought quite arrogantly I could easily do what they doin'.

JVN [00:03:43] Guess you weren't too arrogant though, honey.

NANCY BIRTWHISTLE [00:03:46] I thought I could easily do what they're doing. So I watched probably from the middle of Series 3 through until the end and got, and I started to embrace it because you get to know the characters.

JVN [00:03:57] You're rooting for someone, yes.

NANCY BIRTWHISTLE [00:03:58] And you start to get to know the characters and you're interested in the challenges. And so I decided because I had just recently retired. Absolutely hated it, by the way.

JVN [00:04:05] Because you are, before "Bake Off", you were?

NANCY BIRTWHISTLE [00:04:08] I worked in the health service.

JVN [00:04:09] Yes.

NANCY BIRTWHISTLE [00:04:10] And, and so anyway, I was watching this show and quite liked to. And then for Series 4, I thought, I'm going to apply.

JVN [00:04:19] And so you just thought online how to?

NANCY BIRTWHISTLE [00:04:20] I thought what do you do? So I went online, there's an application form, I filled it in. Long form. About 16 pages long.

JVN [00:04:28] Woo!

NANCY BIRTWHISTLE [00:04:29] Yeah. And-.

JVN [00:04:29] What were the questions? Just like do you bake? Are you good at-?

NANCY BIRTWHISTLE [00:04:32] Yeah. What, biscuits. What's your favorite biscuits to bake? And-.

JVN [00:04:35] Do you remember what you said?

NANCY BIRTWHISTLE [00:04:37] Oh, I think, because I thought I'm going to say something like that's really hard.

JVN [00:04:42] Oooh. Smart. That's smart, that's smart. That's smart.

NANCY BIRTWHISTLE [00:04:43] So I just put "tuile". Tuile biscuits.

JVN [00:04:45] Oh. Oh, those are so hard. Those little baby Pringle looking ones. Those are so hard. Oh my God. Those really stressed me out.

NANCY BIRTWHISTLE [00:04:51] I thought, oh, tuile. To you. I'll say, tuile.

JVN [00:04:51] Wait. Oh no, I don't want to jump the gun. Not going to jump the gun.

NANCY BIRTWHISTLE [00:04:55] So anyway, I filled this form in and and I remember sitting there and it was once off 5:00 pm one day, that night, it was wintertime. Phone rings. "It's the 'Great British Bake Off' here. And we want to ask you a few questions".

JVN [00:05:09] Was the number blocked? Was it private?

NANCY BIRTWHISTLE [00:05:12] "We want to ask you a few questions about your application". So I said, "Oh, yes, right. Yes". So they want to ask me a few questions. Didn't tell me whether I'd got them right or not. And then they said, "Right, we'll be back in touch with you". Then I got another phone call saying, "We want to audition you". So I said, "Right, fine". So I started telling everybody. I told everybody that I've got this audition. I went to Birmingham for the audition and came back. And I thought-.

JVN [00:05:44] What was the audition like?

NANCY BIRTWHISTLE [00:05:45] It, well-.

JVN [00:05:46] Was there a lot of other bakers?

NANCY BIRTWHISTLE [00:05:48] Unbeknown to me, Paul and Mary had never, ever been at an audition before, but they've gone to this one.

JVN [00:05:53] Oh.

NANCY BIRTWHISTLE [00:05:54] And, but they'd gone because they wanted to see what the process was all about. So Paul and Mary, I thought, must be at all the auditions. But they weren't, it was totally a one off. And they're sitting there and I have to go in with this, with these scones and this bread that I've made. And Paul Hollywood said to me, "So why have you underproofed your bread"?

JVN [00:06:16] I'm not surprised.

NANCY BIRTWHISTLE [00:06:19] So I said, "Well, I didn't know I had". But anyway, I sort of-.

JVN [00:06:24] So you, so you felt, did you agree, in hindsight, that it was underproofed?

NANCY BIRTWHISTLE [00:06:27] Yeah. Yeah.

JVN [00:06:29] That's big of you.

NANCY BIRTWHISTLE [00:06:30] But what happened, Jonathan, after that, because I was convinced, I was convinced I was gonna get on because then I got another audition for what is as near as damn it, it's a technical challenge. And what, we were in sort this college. 12 of us and we had to do this technical challenge. And I felt, well, I have done that all right. I know I've done that all right. And that was all with cameras and with-

JVN [00:06:55] Was any other people there, that ended up making the show?

NANCY BIRTWHISTLE [00:06:57] Yes.

JVN [00:06:58] Who?

NANCY BIRTWHISTLE [00:06:59] Howard.

JVN [00:07:00] Oh, my God. He was the one who went, didn't he go kind of soon?

NANCY BIRTWHISTLE [00:07:06] Well, I, see. And then I got home convinced I was going to be successful. And then I got a phone call saying, "I'm sorry, you're not on the show". So I said, "Oh". And I got myself totally convinced I was gonna be all right. And so they said, "No, I'm sorry. You're not, you've not been successful".

JVN [00:07:26] Oh.

NANCY BIRTWHISTLE [00:07:26] This was, this was in February. So I said, "Look, can I ask for some feedback? Is it because I'm too old"? And they said, "No, no, no. Basically, it's because your bread was crap". So I said, "Oh".

JVN [00:07:40] But not from the technical, from the initial one?

NANCY BIRTWHISTLE [00:07:43] Yeah. So I said, "Right. OK". So I thought, you know what? I am going to do bread for a year and then I'm going to apply again because people do apply again. And so that's what I did. And I, and so I had to go through the whole process again. Application form. Da, da, da, da, da, da. Only this time I thought I am telling nobody. Because if I don't get on again, you know, if you don't get on the first time it was like, well, it's like when you don't get a job. And you say, "Actually, I'm not bothered. I didn't really want the job anyway". And so I thought, alright. I'm not telling a soul. I'm not saying anything. And then I got on. And I couldn't believe it.

JVN [00:08:22] Nancy.

NANCY BIRTWHISTLE [00:08:22] But I knew, I knew. I've nailed bread and I realize, looking back, if I had, lots of things, if I got onto Series 4, if they'd been on BBC 2, and I wouldn't have got those big viewing figures. And looking, I probably wouldn't have won it. I didn't think I would win it anyway. But I probably-

JVN [00:08:41] But you needed that experience.

NANCY BIRTWISTLE [00:08:42] 'Cause I needed that extra time to, to perfect really what I knew.

JVN [00:08:49] But by the time you got on, you were like very much expert.

NANCY BIRTWISTLE [00:08:54] And-.

JVN [00:08:55] It felt expert, I mean, for me, watching it, like I, there was other people where I would, like you could kind of see it going off the rail, but I just, I remember that, I think really for me and I think I said this to indirect messages 18,000 times, but for me the first time when I really knew I was like head over heels in love with you is when you use the microwave to get yourself out of a pickle.

NANCY BIRTWISTLE [00:09:12] Yeah.

JVN [00:09:12] So what, what was that? That was like episode 4 or 2. When was that? What was it?

NANCY BIRTWISTLE [00:09:17] It was probably-.

JVN [00:09:18] It was for bread. It was episode 3.

NANCY BIRTWISTLE [00:09:20] Yeah. It was rushing the bread through because we were on, you know, and any of those bakers in that tent could do it. If you've got the time and what they do as the weeks go on, they squeeze the time so that you're under so much pressure. And of course, once somebody gets into a downward spiral and the nerves kick in, the cameras, the camera crew around because they want that. That's great tele.

JVN [00:09:45] I hate that. Yes. Oh, but that's so stressful. Like on "Queer Eye", like if I'm doing someone's haircut and like, I can feel like, if I'm like, oh, like I've had a few times on "Queer Eye" where I was like, like, "Oh excuse me, I'm just gonna go use the restroom". Or like, "Oh my microphone is like, I'll just be right back". And then I have to go to the back room and like, "Get these cameras away from me. I can't focus, I can't even hear myself think". Like I think I can tell it's not going well. But you can't do that on competition.

NANCY BIRTWISTLE [00:10:11] No. No. And, and you know, what would happen is if some things started to go terribly wrong. And it did for me actually in the semifinal because I'd melted some chocolate. And-.

JVN [00:10:21] Semifinal episode.

NANCY BIRTWISTLE [00:10:22] Semifinal was on entremets.

JVN [00:10:25] Yes.

NANCY BIRTWISTLE [00:10:25] And it was a nightmare. And I honestly thought, and the reason that was my worst week of all the weeks and the reason being because you have to take your own kit because obviously you've been practicing, this side of it. So you take your own tins and I, we had to make 12 entremets and I could only find ten tins.

JVN [00:10:45] Oh, yeah. 'Cause your husband made the cute little head cut off or the thing, the little guillotine.

NANCY BIRTWHISTLE [00:10:49] Yeah. And I was like in meltdown. And the crew was saying, "We'll see if we can find you some different tins". I said, "They'd be no good because-".

JVN [00:10:55] It won't match.

NANCY BIRTWHISTLE [00:10:56] They won't match. Everything's got to with these tins. And then, it just shows you well, when your head's gone, how things get silly-.

JVN [00:11:05] Because why? What would you have done?

NANCY BIRTWHISTLE [00:11:06] Because they were there. So why I couldn't find them? You know what I mean?

JVN [00:11:10] So they were there?

NANCY BIRTWHISTLE [00:11:11] Yeah. So I had more nerves when it was semifinal week than I ever did in the final-.

JVN [00:11:17] Because it was Chetna.

NANCY BIRTWHISTLE [00:11:18] Chetna.

JVN [00:11:19] You.

NANCY BIRTWHISTLE [00:11:19] Luis and Richard.

JVN [00:11:22] Luis and Richard. Richard was really good.

NANCY BIRTWHISTLE [00:11:25] Yeah.

JVN [00:11:25] I mean, everyone was really good.

NANCY BIRTWHISTLE [00:11:27] You see Richard-.

JVN [00:11:29] Because he was one who kept winning every time, he kept winning and winning.

NANCY BIRTWHISTLE [00:11:32] But he got nerves in the final. And Mel said, as we're walking in the tent, she said, "One of you will get nerves". She says, "One of you will get nerves". And, and it was Richard. It was a mess.

JVN [00:11:44] And he was so kind of cool, calm and collected. But you were too. You were very cool, calm and collected.

NANCY BIRTWHISTLE [00:11:50] And I mean, I don't know where that came from because I was just, and I mean, people have said to me, you know, you had five hours for that final showstopper, don't you want the toilet? Don't you want some food? And you, but just in the zone.

JVN [00:12:04] Because it was like 12 scones. 12 biscuits.

NANCY BIRTWHISTLE [00:12:06] Yeah.

JVN [00:12:07] It was like classic, the last showstopper.

NANCY BIRTWHISTLE [00:12:09] Yeah. And the, the signature was, the technical challenge was 12 scones, 12 mini-Victoria sandwich cakes, plus the jam. 12 Tartes au citron, in two hours.

JVN [00:12:22] And your Tartes au ctirons were the only ones that worked.

NANCY BIRTWHISTLE [00:12:24] Yeah.

JVN [00:12:25] Yeah.

NANCY BIRTWHISTLE [00:12:25] And no instructions.

JVN [00:12:26] So how does that work? So in the technical challenge. So the first one is your signature, you get to practice like you, like. So.

NANCY BIRTWHISTLE [00:12:33] Yeah. The first and last, you can practice. So that's up to you.

JVN [00:12:36] So do you only get that a week before? Or do you like before you know you're on the season, do they give you all 12?

NANCY BIRTWHISTLE [00:12:40] I thought this. As a viewer and I used to watch and think, oh, well, one's gone home. That means the others must all be given next week's challenge. But no, I found out I was on the show in the March, and filming starts at the very end of April. And from mid-March to the end of April, you have to submit all the bakes the first 9 weeks. Because, so you submit a signature and a showstopper. You do two weeks every week. So it's mad.

JVN [00:13:11] Oh, you can't-. And you can't change it?

NANCY BIRTWHISTLE [00:13:13] Yes. Because if, say, if we're both in week one and I see you do raspberry and diamond and I think, oh, I'm going to do next week.

JVN [00:13:23] Oh, you can't, 'cause. Oh.

NANCY BIRTWHISTLE [00:13:24] You can't, because you've submitted everything. Which is good.

JVN [00:13:26] But that's even more inexcusable when those people don't practice and you know, what have you been doing?

NANCY BIRTWHISTLE [00:13:34] I mean, I was every week, in fact, the, the final week when because it's quite good story about the final showstopper, because the final, you're not given that week in advance, you've given that the week before. And they said, right for the final, we want 12-. No. 24 Viennoiseries. I didn't know what Viennoiseries was. And for the showstopper, the five hour showstopper, we want a pièce montée.

JVN [00:14:01] Yes.

NANCY BIRTWHISTLE [00:14:02] And I said, what does that mean? And so they said, well it's, you know, you have to in five hours produce caramel cake, biscuits, petit four.

JVN [00:14:15] The petit four, I remember.

NANCY BIRTWHISTLE [00:14:17] Yeah. So we had to-.

JVN [00:14:18] No, keep going. Was the shoe pastry the last one?

NANCY BIRTWHISTLE [00:14:20] Yeah. And so we went home and we all have to decide what we were going, gonna do. So I thought I'm going to do my garden and I'll do a cake, as for the garden and then I'll do a shoe pastry tree because it had to be 30 centimeters tall. I'll do caramel garden furniture. I'll do petit fours as little flower tubes. And for the biscuit I'll do a crazy paving path. They'll love that. So I submitted it all, sent the recipes in. And then I was going to get me roots done, Jonathan. And I was off to go-.

JVN [00:14:57] That's when you had longer hair.

NANCY BIRTWHISTLE [00:14:58] Yeah.

JVN [00:14:58] Yeah.

NANCY BIRTWHISTLE [00:14:59] And I've got phone call, just as I was walking out the house and they said, "I'm sorry, you can't do that".

JVN [00:15:04] Why?

NANCY BIRTWHISTLE [00:15:05] I said, that's what I said. I said, "Why"? They said, "It doesn't fit the brief". And I said, "But why"? And they said, "Well, because this isn't a Pièce Montée". A Pièce Montée would adorn the center of a French banqueting table. And, and so it should be tall and in your face. It should be, you know. And so I said-.

JVN [00:15:25] Oh, yeah.

NANCY BIRTWHISTLE [00:15:26] Yeah. And so said to Tim at dinner, "Well, I'm not going". I said, "I can't do-".

JVN [00:15:33] You're just at the end of your rope from this stress.

NANCY BIRTWHISTLE [00:15:35] Yeah. I said, "I can't do any more of this. I'm not going". So he said, "Look, go and get your hair done and just have a think about it". And so I'm walking down to the hairdressers. I'm thinking, "What can I do? What can I do"? And they said to me, "We suggest you Google it and have a look at what Pièce Montée is". Well, of course, when you look at anything, there were all sort on ornate. And I thought, I don't know what to do. And I got into the hairdresser and, and I've been telling Charlie about what I was doing.

JVN [00:16:05] That's your hairdresser.

NANCY BIRTWHISTLE [00:16:06] Yeah.

JVN [00:16:07] Oh.

NANCY BIRTWHISTLE [00:16:07] And she said to me, "What is a Pièce Montée"? So I said, "It's French, Charlie". So she said, "Well, what have you been thinking of"? I said, "Well, I thought maybe a windmill". Because there is a local landmark that's a sort of windmill. So she said, "Well, what about a French windmill? You know, the Moulin Rouge".

JVN [00:16:23] Oh your 'Moulin Rogue' was so good!

NANCY BIRTWHISTLE [00:16:25] I said, "Get me out. Get me out". I know exactly what I'm going to do.



JVN [00:16:30] And remember when you're, the one broke, but you re-glued it back together.

NANCY BIRTWHISTLE [00:16:33] Yeah.

JVN [00:16:34] Now, Richard, did the, didn't he do that, that cream thing where you lowered it down. And they were not having that. They were like it's too like man made. And then you did your gorgeous "Moulin Rogue", and wasn't a ginger biscuit?

NANCY BIRTWHISTLE [00:16:43] Yeah. Yeah. It was, it was, there was a ginger biscuit thing and then there was a cake and there was, and because it was "Moulin Rouge", I wanted it all to be a bit so burlesque and a bit, so there was a slow gin truffles and I wanted it all black and red. But this is a funny one. You know, the choux buns round?

JVN [00:17:04] Yes.

NANCY BIRTWHISTLE [00:17:05] Well, originally they were black caramel. So it was red cake, black caramel and then red sails and it looked beautiful, because I had three gos at making that. And with the black caramel on, it looked gorgeous. And then I said to Tim, "Eat one of those shoe buns and tell me what you think". So he said, "These are absolutely lovely". But as he was talking, his teeth were black. And I thought, can you imagine Mary?

JVN [00:17:30] Oh my gosh. Oh no.

NANCY BIRTWHISTLE [00:17:33] So I said, I can't do black.

JVN [00:17:35] You should give it like some black ones and then given it for Paul. Just for Paul so he could have it.

NANCY BIRTWHISTLE [00:17:39] Yeah, yeah.

JVN [00:17:41] Oh, my gosh. Ew. We have to take a really quick break. We'll be right back with more "Getting Curious" and literally Nancy Birtwhistle right after the break. Welcome back to "Getting Curious", this is Jonathan Van Ness with Nancy Birtwhistle. We were just talking about the finale. So obviously, you know, I would be remiss if we didn't talk about Tin Gate, Freezer Gate.

NANCY BIRTWHISTLE [00:18:10] Yeah, yeah.

JVN [00:18:11] Poor babe. So, so basically it seems like everyone gets along really well.

NANCY BIRTWHISTLE [00:18:15] Yeah.

JVN [00:18:16] Right?

NANCY BIRTWHISTLE [00:18:16] Yeah.

JVN [00:18:17] Like everyone loves each other. And wait, in your season we didn't have, did we have any of those like little babies? Because there's always like a baby every season. There's always like-

NANCY BIRTWHISTLE [00:18:26] Martha.

JVN [00:18:27] Martha, yeah, she was so good cause she was studying for her school exams. She got fifth or fourth, right?

NANCY BIRTWHISTLE [00:18:32] Yeah. And we tried not to swear in front of Marthas. And we say, "Martha, close yours ears".

JVN [00:18:36] And did she just get married?

NANCY BIRTWHISTLE [00:18:37] Yeah, she got married in April.

JVN [00:18:39] And everyone was there.

NANCY BIRTWHISTLE [00:18:40] Yeah, we all were.

JVN [00:18:40] That was really good content. It really, and wasn't Diane there too?

NANCY BIRTWHISTLE [00:18:44] Yeah. Everybody went there.

JVN [00:18:45] Was Tim?

NANCY BIRTWHISTLE [00:18:46] Yeah. Yeah, we all went. It was brilliant.

JVN [00:18:48] So. So basically. So let, so we, we have to go back. So it's the Alaska episode, right?

NANCY BIRTWHISTLE [00:18:54] Yeah, yeah.

JVN [00:18:54] I'm literally getting heart palpitations, thinking about it. And it's a hot day and you, and you made like, didn't you make like a papaya?

NANCY BIRTWHISTLE [00:19:02] I'm made a, man what's called? What those? Summer pudding baked Alaska.

JVN [00:19:09] Oh, a summer pudd.

NANCY BIRTWHISTLE [00:19:10] So it was, it was on the BBC, the BBC had it as a sort of screensaver thing for a while because what I did was call it this marange to make it look like fruit juices leaking through it.

JVN [00:19:21] Yes.

NANCY BIRTWHISTLE [00:19:22] And then fruit round the edge. It was very pretty.

JVN [00:19:24] Did you win that? Who won that? Who won that baker or who won that, who was Star Baker that week?

NANCY BIRTWHISTLE [00:19:29] I can't remember.

JVN [00:19:30] I need my breakdown. So. But you're minding your own business. You're focusing on your gorgeous Alaska. I can't remember where you were on the floor in relation to where they were, weren't they? They were both on the right. If I was looking at the TV, they were both on the right. And weren't you in the back left?

NANCY BIRTWHISTLE [00:19:45] You see what? Yeah. And what happened was. And we'd all been allocated in the daytime, a freezer between two.

JVN [00:19:54] Really quick before you tell me this story. I want you to tell me the story like as from where you were like standing.

NANCY BIRTWHISTLE [00:19:59] Right.

JVN [00:19:59] Like you're minding your own business.

NANCY BIRTWHISTLE [00:20:01] Yeah, I'm at-, so our freezer's there. And I'm sharing the freezer with Dianne. So anyway, I know.

JVN [00:20:10] You were right there. Holy shit. Oh, my God.

NANCY BIRTWHISTLE [00:20:13] So we were told by the crew. Right? It's a hot day. You've got to make baked Alaska, which is essentially ice cream. And you've got your ice cream machine and you have to share one between two, your freezers. So we said, right. So we're all getting around quite nicely. And then all of a sudden there was this explosion over at the other side of voices. But of course, when you doing your own thing.

JVN [00:20:40] You're in your own world.

NANCY BIRTWHISTLE [00:20:42] And there were cameras moving around, and it, and anyway, with that, Diana, who actually was in a bit of a fluster herself, she got her and mine was in the freezer and she kept opening the freezer door to get hers out. To mess around with it. She was messing around with it with the freezer door-.

JVN [00:21:01] 'Cause she had a good Alaska. That week.

NANCY BIRTWHISTLE [00:21:03] Yeah.

JVN [00:21:03] Yeah, her shape was really good.

NANCY BIRTWHISTLE [00:21:04] And I said, "Diana, if you can mess around with it, why don't you put it on the worktop? And mess around with it, rather than work with the freezer door open because everything's just gonna get too warm in there". So she said, "Oh, good idea, Nancy. Good idea". So she got it out and she's messing around with it. In the meantime, Ian comes from nowhere. And unbeknown to us what had happened over at the other side when there was all this, one of the freezers had broken down. And so he said, probably a bit unfairly, "You're going to have to find somewhere else to put your-".

JVN [00:21:35] Poor Ian.

NANCY BIRTWHISTLE [00:21:36] So there was Chetna running round looking for a place in a freezer and she found a place in a freezer. And Ian was the other one running round with the plates, looking, and he opened our freezer. By this time, I was doing something else, so. And he opened the freezer door, saw space and put his in it. Which is fair enough.

JVN [00:21:54] Because Diana had taken hers out to like work-.

NANCY BIRTWHISTLE [00:21:55] Because she was working on hers, you see, and she didn't see him put it in there. I saw him put it in there, but again, didn't really attach much importance to it

because I was busy doing my own thing. And then Diana, when she'd finished working on hers, went over to the freezer. And saw that her place had been taken and took it out and put hers in and it was literally seconds. And then there was all hell let loose.

JVN [00:22:26] So he realized that she did that and was his melted by the time-? His was already melted by the time he realized.

NANCY BIRTWHISTLE [00:22:31] Yeah. And, but it was, they say that it was only about 90 seconds, it was out the freezer.

JVN [00:22:38] Oh, really? So it was maybe already-.

NANCY BIRTWHISTLE [00:22:40] I think the edit, it-.

JVN [00:22:42] Was unkind to her more because it was already melted.

NANCY BIRTWHISTLE [00:22:46] Yeah. And I think Ian would say himself he was trying to freeze, I think it was something like sesame seeds and honey.

JVN [00:22:54] And honey.

NANCY BIRTWHISTLE [00:22:55] And honey doesn't freeze very well anyway.

JVN [00:22:57] I mean, they found like intact honey in like King Tut's tomb. Like 4,000 years ago. Like that shit, it's like a roach. Like a food. Like I feel like it would be hard to make it, like, change state.

NANCY BIRTWHISTLE [00:23:07] I mean, there was no but feeling at the time. Nobody-.

JVN [00:23:11] There wasn't on that day?

NANCY BIRTWHISTLE [00:23:13] There wasn't any bad feeling.

JVN [00:23:14] So then, did Diana really have a family emergency then the next week?

NANCY BIRTWHISTLE [00:23:17] Oh yeah. Yeah she did.

JVN [00:23:18] Because I. Because that went over my head like that. Because like I think I was just like so enthralled and binge watching it so hard because like I think I literally watched your season like twice a day for like, like two years. Like even when new ones would come out on Netflix, I would just keep watching. 'Cause like I just like knew my friends and I just like, I knew what to expect and I loved it. But yeah, I mean, it didn't occur to me until, like, halfway through I was like, oh, my God, she's gone the next week.

NANCY BIRTWHISTLE [00:23:41] Yeah. And what-.

JVN [00:23:42] But that wasn't an unscripted TV thing, she really did have an actual family emergency.

NANCY BIRTWHISTLE [00:23:47] We, we. She was poll late because we were, they used to take us out for a meal on the Friday night. We all use to arrive Friday night, all go out for a meal. And then we're in the tent, top of six the next morning.

JVN [00:23:57] And you don't really sleep in that house next to the tent?

NANCY BIRTWHISTLE [00:24:00] No, no, we were in a-

JVN [00:24:01] I did kind of want to imagine you guys were all like running around, like having fun in that little building at night time.

NANCY BIRTWHISTLE [00:24:07] No, we we were pawned off to a, you know, a plastic hotel.

JVN [00:24:10] A hotel. Yeah.

NANCY BIRTWHISTLE [00:24:12] And then, so. But we'd all go out for this meal on the Friday night and we're in this sort of Thai restaurant. And then we'd gone up to the bar to go and pay at the end of the night. And Diana's in and you know, when there's a bar and there's a mirror and you can see yourself in the mirror and I'm sort of like this and Diana's next to me. And then all of a sudden she wasn't there. And she'd, she had thought, she'd have some sort of funny thing and she'd fall down the floor and taken a nasty bang to her head. She ended up in the hospital.

JVN [00:24:42] Oh shit.

NANCY BIRTWHISTLE [00:24:44] Yeah. She ended up in the hospital. And when I saw her fall, because I'm not very good with emergencies. When the ambulance men came, they had to see to me first because I was, I was just fainting on the, because I can't stand blood.

JVN [00:25:00] And she had blood when she fell?

NANCY BIRTWHISTLE [00:25:01] Yeah, she was, yeah.

JVN [00:25:03] Wait, you were a nurse, though. Why couldn't you help?

NANCY BIRTWHISTLE [00:25:07] No, I wasn't nurse.

JVN [00:25:09] Then what did you do?

NANCY BIRTWHISTLE [00:25:09] I was. I worked in management.

JVN [00:25:11] Oh, yeah you were an admini-. Yes.

NANCY BIRTWHISTLE [00:25:14] Yeah, I worked in management. So yeah. Not very good with the patients.

JVN [00:25:18] So, so I mean. I mean, if you guys haven't watched "Bake Off", you have to watch it. It's like so incredible. But one thing I was, I was so happy I got to meet your husband for just a second. Because in that finale when everyone does their little backstories about each other like yours was so sweet and you can tell how much he's just your cheerleader and like you guys are just so supportive of each other.

NANCY BIRTWHISTLE [00:25:37] He's just like a proud parent. It's the same. And he goes, and I said, "Don't, don't keep going on about things". And he said, "Yeah, but so fantastic". It's so fantastic

JVN [00:25:47] I mean you fuckin' won "Bake Off" for Christ's sake. I mean, he's got to be so proud.

NANCY BIRTWISTLE [00:25:51] Yeah, I think he is. Yeah.

JVN [00:25:53] And then you also were doing, because you already were like a dog agility per-, like you already knew how to like trained dogs before.

NANCY BIRTWISTLE [00:25:59] Yeah, yeah.

JVN [00:25:59] I remember that was in your little baby story. But then tell me about Wilfred.

NANCY BIRTWISTLE [00:26:02] Oh Wilfred. We know we've got Wilfred. He's like a donkey. He is enormous. But he's still a puppy. And so he's-.

JVN [00:26:11] Because he's new. He's new addition to your family.

NANCY BIRTWISTLE [00:26:14] Oh, God. Yeah. And I say to him, I say, "Wilfred. I say that I'm gonna call you Wilf when you're a good boy and Wilfred, when you're not a good boy. And you never, ever get called Wilf because you are just", he is just naughty all the time. But in a childlike way.

JVN [00:26:30] He's so cute. What's your advice for like, for people that have dog, what's like, what's like a dog advice thing that people-? 'Cause I feel like you're just kind of an expert in all things.

NANCY BIRTWISTLE [00:26:39] I think the danger, and it's a bit like children. It's about consistency. Like if you say one day, come on, you can sit next to me on the couch. But then when friends come, no, you have to sit down there. The dog's not gonna understand that. So you it, it's, it's about being consistent.

JVN [00:26:59] So what's Wilfred's couch rule?

NANCY BIRTWISTLE [00:27:01] Wilfred is not allowed on the couch, but there is a couch in the conservatory that, that is a sort of, we walk straight in there from out of the garden and he can sit next to me, you know, if I've got my gardening clothes on. But if we're in the best room, he knows that he can't sit on the couch.

JVN [00:27:18] So wait, and then 'cause you live in, what's your town?

NANCY BIRTWISTLE [00:27:22] It's, it's north. I mean, it's called, well, it's called Barton. Well, if, it's north of England, but the nearest big city is Hawth.

JVN [00:27:32] But aren't you and Tan from the same, like, you know, Tan's from like Doncaster.

NANCY BIRTWISTLE [00:27:37] Yeah. Yeah. That's not, that's not far away.

JVN [00:27:38] It's not far?

NANCY BIRTWISTLE [00:27:39] No.

JVN [00:27:39] So would you guys have similar accents then from, I mean, obviously, I've like listen to you both, but like, are those accents similar? Are they really different? I can't remember.

NANCY BIRTWISTLE [00:27:45] His, they're similar.

JVN [00:27:47] Yeah. 'Cause I feel like Tan is like a kind of like a man version of like, I feel like you guys see similar things sometimes.

NANCY BIRTWHISTLE [00:27:52] Yeah, yeah, yeah. I think he's got, he's got sort of what I would called a West riding accent.

JVN [00:27:57] That's cause he lived in America for so long?

NANCY BIRTWHISTLE [00:27:59] Maybe. But I can tell there's that so the northern twang to his voice. Yeah.

JVN [00:28:06] So OK, wait. I got off track 'cause I started thinking about Tan, and then I got distracted. Oh yeah. Your house. So I love your house. I love. So I followed, I started following you as soon as I found you on "Bake Off". And I've always loved your Gram. I've been like just cheerleading your Gram so fucking hard for so long. I love it so much. But one thing that I've really been loving lately and my, it's, it's my mom and I's new big point of contention in our relationship because, like, we haven't had one for so long. So my mom's biggest point of contention right now is that she is still stuck in like a, and also you guys like don't judge my mom, she can help it. She's like a child of like the 70s, 80s.

NANCY BIRTWHISTLE [00:28:44] I'd like to meet Mary.

JVN [00:28:46] But plastic, so like plastic bottles. Like I'm all about, like I have my reusable water bottle, somewhere. I'm really into it. And I love that you've adopted that. Like you're really into it. Like what? What was your? 'Cause I love, I love that you. I'm just going to tell you all the things you do that you love. And I want you to talk about all them. That's one. The other thing that I like is that you are into baking like yummy things, but you're like a kind of a harm reduction queen with your baking, which I love.

NANCY BIRTWHISTLE [00:29:08] Cook through the crap.

JVN [00:29:08] Yeah. And it's like, you'll have the cake, but you're like try to figure out ways to like do a little bit less sugar, like you'll have your cake, but you're like you try to like figure out a way to make it look a little bit less, you know? Like it's still yummy but not so much intensity on like the sugar side of things. I just like that you are into like an idea like bettering yourself and kind of like in a harm reduction way. Like you don't have to, like, never eat cake, just like can you do it a little bit more like.

NANCY BIRTWHISTLE [00:29:33] Yeah.

JVN [00:29:34] And I like how you're doing that with your reusable bags. 'Cause I feel like that's kind of similar. Like you're just figure out how to better yourself. I want you to tell me about all that.

NANCY BIRTWHISTLE [00:29:41] Yeah. And I think, I mean, I'm not doing it for me and I'm not even doing it for my own kids. But for grandchildren and they're really into it. You know, they really want to know. And, um, and I think if people will have a go at doing themselves. So I'm trying my little Insta posts everyday to simplify it. To say, you know, you can easily make a cake. You can because the tendency is then that you want cake. So you go out and buy it and goodness knows what's in it because it has a shelf life of about three weeks.

JVN [00:30:14] Oh, that's not normal.

NANCY BIRTWHISTLE [00:30:16] No, no.

JVN [00:30:16] So what do we do to put-? What, what do you think? Is it just preservatives?

NANCY BIRTWHISTLE [00:30:20] Yeah. Preservatives and stacks of sugar. Stacks of sugar.

JVN [00:30:23] So, because the sugar is a preservative.

NANCY BIRTWHISTLE [00:30:26] It's a preservative. So it's, everything's loaded with sugar and I'm thinking, and it tastes so much better if you've made it yourself.

JVN [00:30:32] I definitely feel like you've earned it more.

NANCY BIRTWHISTLE [00:30:34] Yeah. And so many people are coming back and saying, show me pictures of what they've made. And this was so easy. I never thought this would be. And that gives me such a laugh. You know, I've got such a lot, but then it's like you with your social media, Jonathan, because you have to keep feeding it. And, and I'm thinking now, you know, I've set myself up to put something on every single day.

JVN [00:30:57] Yeah, you did.

NANCY BIRTWHISTLE [00:30:58] It's a piece of work.

JVN [00:30:59] But I need that because I love it. I'm, I'm hungry for the info. But we have to take a really quick one more break and then we're going to be right back with more Nancy Birtwhistle right after that. Welcome back to "Getting Curious", this is Jonathan Van Ness. So you, because you do, do like teaching like stuff with your grandkids on the Gram, which I think is so cute. And I also love that it's like, you know, knowing what's in your ingredients, empowering yourself to, like, make things yourself. I think that's cute. But you lately you've been talking about like you've been making your own like bread, like bread containers and like reducing plastic use. How did that get on your radar? Was it like? Was it followers that were like, "Oh, that's a lot of plastic"? Or did you just kind of, was it the thing for the grandkids as well? Like?

NANCY BIRTWHISTLE [00:31:47] I think. I mean, it's, I think a lot of it was watching "The Blue Planet" stuff, you know? I'm seeing these poor turtles wound up with all this plastic and, and, and I thought, I am the world's worse, worst for single use, plastic piping bags, single, you know, clingfilm stuff. I was going through reams and reams of it, reeling it off and using it for everything. And so first of January this year was my New Year's resolution. I did my little video. You know?

JVN [00:32:17] I loved it.

NANCY BIRTWHISTLE [00:32:18] And said right from today. Hashtag SlingTheCling. And I am not going to use it again. There's a full roll on the wall. I'm not going to use it. And so I made myself look for alternatives. And you know, where I would have a bowl of something, just wrapped the cling 'round it. Now I just put a plate on it. Or-.

JVN [00:32:40] And it works just the same?

NANCY BIRTWHISTLE [00:32:41] And it works just the same. And things like wrapping up dough and so I made myself some beeswax wraps.

JVN [00:32:47] Those beeswax wraps content is amazing.



NANCY BIRTWISTLE [00:32:51] That was so popular. That was so inexpensive.

JVN [00:32:51] I feel like you could even do more of those.

NANCY BIRTWISTLE [00:32:55] Yeah. And you could give them as, as-. I mean that when storming. I couldn't believe it.

JVN [00:33:00] No, that, it was, it's, it was one of my favorite things you've done.

NANCY BIRTWISTLE [00:33:03] Yeah.

JVN [00:33:03] And I mean that was fucking genius.

NANCY BIRTWISTLE [00:33:07] Well, at the end, the thing is the mistake I made because I sent off for beeswax pellets, these little tiny pellets for at 3 pound 99. I don't know what that would be in dollars, but, but I looked at these beeswax wraps to buy for 5 pounds each and I thought, well I'm getting a pack of pellets here for 3.99. I don't know how many wraps I'm gonna get out of it. I got like 5 wraps out of it and I thought somebody's making a fortune and you can just do it and, but I was playing around. I've not done it before and um, but that was really popular.

JVN [00:33:41] And I really like how you clean them as well.

NANCY BIRTWISTLE [00:33:43] Yeah.

JVN [00:33:44] Like I mean I think that's a really good example of, I mean I do want to go back, more back into the specifics of like how those like work. But it's like. I just think that's I think forgot that you did it for New Years. I think I just remembered like that you started making more of, like that sort of content that was more from I could use less perspective. And I just, how has that made you feel? Like even on like a confidence level, like, that's cool that you set a resolution. It's October, you're all up in the resolution.

NANCY BIRTWISTLE [00:34:13] Still on it.

JVN [00:34:14] That's. I mean, has it really been difficult? Have you had moments where you were like, oh, fuck, I just want to use the cling wrap like?

NANCY BIRTWISTLE [00:34:20] I, no. Because I think anybody that knows me would say if I say I'm going to do something, I'll do it.

JVN [00:34:28] Hey, I saw your season. I know that dogged determination you have. Your husband told me about it.

NANCY BIRTWISTLE [00:34:33] I thought if I'm going to, if I say I'm going to do it, I'll do it. Even if you know and things like little shower caps, you know, that you get in a hotel?

JVN [00:34:41] Yes.

NANCY BIRTWISTLE [00:34:42] Where they just go in the bin. I now take them home and I use them to cover bowls instead of the clingfilm.

JVN [00:34:49] Oh. So like that's like kind of like for your like your former cling wrap addict. Like I still kind of get a little bit like I'm reusing. It's one of the Rs. Yes.

NANCY BIRTWHISTLE [00:34:57] Yeah, I can wash that and use it again. But the clingfilm, you'd never do that.

JVN [00:34:59] Because, you know, reduce, reuse, recycle is like an under, like I don't think about that enough. And I think that's good or it's it's good to think about it more. Like, can I reuse this?

NANCY BIRTWHISTLE [00:35:10] Yeah.

JVN [00:35:10] What other things have you thought of in that vein? But nothing if you're going to spoil your content. Because I don't want to-. We can't spoil your content.

NANCY BIRTWHISTLE [00:35:17] No, no. I mean, it's the natural cleaning thing, 'cause that really isn't having to look at alternatives. It's actually going back to what I used to do when I was young.

JVN [00:35:29] Which is more vinegar based?

NANCY BIRTWHISTLE [00:35:30] Made in the bicarbonate of soda and all those natural cleaning products that actually-.

JVN [00:35:35] Now that's how you clean your sink? That sink thing, right?

NANCY BIRTWHISTLE [00:35:39] See, all these things.

JVN [00:35:41] Yeah. So what's the bicarbonate? What is that?

NANCY BIRTWHISTLE [00:35:45] It's, it's-.

JVN [00:35:45] Because that's how you clean it. You guys like you can clean your like oven racks with that and, yeah.

NANCY BIRTWHISTLE [00:35:50] Yeah.

JVN [00:35:51] I watched the shit out of your Instagram. I have for a long time, I love it.

NANCY BIRTWHISTLE [00:35:55] Oh, the oven shelves are marvelous.

JVN [00:35:57] Yeah. They're so sparkly and your pantry. So OK, focus. So what's bicarbonate then?

NANCY BIRTWHISTLE [00:36:04] Bicarbonate soda is, is the chemical name. Is it just sodium bicarbonate.

JVN [00:36:08] And it's a cleanser.

NANCY BIRTWHISTLE [00:36:09] And then because somebody, always get them dirty on social and said to me, "How do you know that this product is environmentally safe"?

JVN [00:36:17] Right.

NANCY BIRTWHISTLE [00:36:17] And I thought, "Well, I don't really".

JVN [00:36:18] Yeah.

NANCY BIRTWISTLE [00:36:19] So I started looking at it to find out what it actually is.

JVN [00:36:23] Does it leave anything in the water. Yeah.

NANCY BIRTWISTLE [00:36:23] Yeah. And everything leaves a footprint.

JVN [00:36:25] Yeah.

NANCY BIRTWISTLE [00:36:26] Because I mean, this factory making this stuff.

JVN [00:36:28] Yeah.

NANCY BIRTWISTLE [00:36:28] So everything leaves a footprint. But I think it's derived from something like, oh I don't know if I'm right here, Jonathan, but somebody'll correct me. It's something like burn roots of something. So it's, it's, it's, it's a chemical, but it's probably not a harmful chemical in the same way that bleach is.

JVN [00:36:49] Or like a sodium lauryl sulfate.

NANCY BIRTWISTLE [00:36:50] Yeah. Yeah. Yeah.

JVN [00:36:52] Yeah. Ew, sodium lauryl sulfates. So you're, you did a really-. OK, well, here are some other things that you covered in your Instagram that I'm obsessed with. How to make preservatives.

NANCY BIRTWISTLE [00:37:00] Yep.

JVN [00:37:00] Love your preservative stuff. I love any and all of your hacks. But one thing that I remember from your content last year that I was obsessed with was your pantry, like your pantry journey and your garden journey. But you're, so do you clean your pantry like once a mon-, like, how do you do that?

NANCY BIRTWISTLE [00:37:15] It doesn't get done as often as it should.

JVN [00:37:18] Does it still look like it did when you left it on that last bit?

NANCY BIRTWISTLE [00:37:22] It, it probably needs some attention.

JVN [00:37:24] I could use a, I could use a part too.

NANCY BIRTWISTLE [00:37:26] Yeah, I'll, I'll make that a priority.

JVN [00:37:29] I really like being in your pantry, like on your Instagram.

NANCY BIRTWISTLE [00:37:31] Yeah. 'Cause that, the house that I live in was built in 1903.

JVN [00:37:34] Really?

NANCY BIRTWISTLE [00:37:36] So obviously before fridges and all that sort of thing. So that pantry is north facing, which means it never probably gets above about 12 degrees, even on a really hot day. So it's, the house is really well designed and-.

JVN [00:37:51] I'm shook right now. So in 1903 in the United Kingdom, they would build houses with like north facing pantries to keep them less-.

NANCY BIRTWHISTLE [00:38:00] Cool. Yeah, yeah.

JVN [00:38:02] And the north facing pantries like, like right off your kitchen so it doesn't have, like, windows or something?

NANCY BIRTWHISTLE [00:38:06] It's got a tiny window that never gets sunlight, only gets natural light, never, ever gets sunlight. So the way these-.

JVN [00:38:12] Because if it's north facing that the sun rises in the.

NANCY BIRTWHISTLE [00:38:15] East.

JVN [00:38:15] East and sets in the west.

NANCY BIRTWHISTLE [00:38:17] Yeah. And it never gets any sunshine. I mean, they were so clever about that sort of thing.

JVN [00:38:23] And not having electricity and stuff.

NANCY BIRTWHISTLE [00:38:25] They, our house did have electricity. So it must have been sort of an eco house in its time.

JVN [00:38:32] Very "Downton Abbey", honey. Did you watch "Downton"?

NANCY BIRTWHISTLE [00:38:36] Oh, I loved it.

JVN [00:38:36] Loved it.

NANCY BIRTWHISTLE [00:38:36] Yeah, I loved "Downton".

JVN [00:38:38] I'm restarting in Season 4 because I was so upset about Sybil and Matthew that I had to take a little break. So I didn't watch Season 4. And then I watched Season 5 and 6, but I never watch season 4 because I was just like too messed up over it. Now. Have you seen the movie yet?

NANCY BIRTWHISTLE [00:38:51] Yeah, I went to see it, yeah.

JVN [00:38:52] I haven't seen it.

NANCY BIRTWHISTLE [00:38:53] Yeah.

JVN [00:38:54] But it's good, right?

NANCY BIRTWHISTLE [00:38:55] It was good.

JVN [00:38:55] Was Maggie Smith just incredible in it?

NANCY BIRTWHISTLE [00:38:57] It's all fantastic. And I mean you've met lots of peo-. But I love, I love Maggie Smith.

JVN [00:39:06] Me too. Me too. Me too.

NANCY BIRTWHISTLE [00:39:08] She, she's, she's got some great one liners.

JVN [00:39:10] Oh, her one line-, no one does a-. OK, so now this is like. Sidebar. So when "Bake Off" went from BBC to Channel 4.

NANCY BIRTWHISTLE [00:39:20] Yeah, yeah.

JVN [00:39:20] I was like, I'm not following. I love this show so much. And I am I cannot support this Team Mel and Sue, Mary Berry forever. Fuck this. Fuck that. I'm done. I have four seasons of it. And I also made me feel bad for that one cute boy who won that season, that was like in the betwixt season that didn't really get to be on Netflix or, because it was like that betwixt season. It was a-.

NANCY BIRTWHISTLE [00:39:44] John.

JVN [00:39:44] Yes.

NANCY BIRTWHISTLE [00:39:45] John Whaite. Yeah.

JVN [00:39:46] And because there's like the older, the, he, like there's like the, the one queen and then like the younger queen and like didn't the younger queen end up winning?

NANCY BIRTWHISTLE [00:39:53] Yeah.

JVN [00:39:53] Yeah.

NANCY BIRTWHISTLE [00:39:53] Yeah. That's right. Brendan.

JVN [00:39:55] Yes.

NANCY BIRTWHISTLE [00:39:56] Brendan who'd got Star Baker like every week.

JVN [00:39:58] Yes.

NANCY BIRTWHISTLE [00:39:58] And I can remember thinking, "Oh God, he's got it again", but then John went out to win it. Yeah.

JVN [00:40:03] Yeah.

NANCY BIRTWHISTLE [00:40:04] Yeah.

JVN [00:40:04] 'Cause he was really just Star Baker in and up that season.

NANCY BIRTWHISTLE [00:40:06] Yeah.

JVN [00:40:06] But I was like I'm not gonna watch, I can't follow because I love Mary Berry and Mel and Sue. Then after like three weeks when the, when that first season came out in America where it had switched, I was like every night, like, you know, Satan was just in my ear, like, "Honey, you better watch. Like, it's, it's right there. It's like, they're not that different". So then I started and they really just used the same music, the same opening and is literally the same show, but with just like three separate people. And it taught me a good lesson, honey. Like don't ever be a

bitch on set. Don't ever be a nightmare, because if you're a part of an unscripted TV show, that has a good working format. They will replace your ass so fast.

NANCY BIRTWHISTLE [00:40:36] Yeah. The brand is strong.

JVN [00:40:38] And people will still watch. It worked for me. I couldn't help it. So we, did that happen to you too? Like you still love it?

NANCY BIRTWHISTLE [00:40:44] Yeah, well I mean obviously because had been on it. People, there were all sorts of papers in the press and saying, "What do you think about Channel 4? What do you think? What do you think"? And I said, "Look, I don't know until I see it". And then I watched it. And I though actually, it's fine.

JVN [00:40:58] Do you still? So do you still like the show as like a fan? Do you still watch it?

NANCY BIRTWHISTLE [00:41:01] I still watch it. I thinks that some of the episode, I think, because they did something last season where I think they went outside and they had to make something, around bonfires, and I'm thinking this isn't really baking.

JVN [00:41:17] Yeah, sometimes it's like hard to, like, reinvent the wheel.

NANCY BIRTWHISTLE [00:41:19] Yeah. And, but then, you know, I don't like ever criticizing anything unless I haven't also got a solution.

JVN [00:41:28] I thought that-.

NANCY BIRTWHISTLE [00:41:28] It's, it's not helpful.

JVN [00:41:31] No, totes. But did, that one episode where they're like the frying episode, I was like in Benjamina's season, I was like, why are we frying so much stuff?

NANCY BIRTWHISTLE [00:41:39] Yeah.

JVN [00:41:39] That didn't feel super baking adjacent to me.

NANCY BIRTWHISTLE [00:41:41] No, no.

JVN [00:41:41] Not that I'm talking shit, but like, whatever. So OK. OK. We can also just like cut this right now, but I just have to ask. All Time Baking Challenges that I've seen, so from Season 5 on, all the ones I've ever seen. Has there ever been an elimination where you were like, they got it wrong? That is, they, I just, I just fundamentally disagree. If I were Prue-.

NANCY BIRTWHISTLE [00:42:02] I. There was, and you probably know more than me.

JVN [00:42:05] I just said mine, Benjamina. I thought that season. I did not think Benjamina deserve to go that week.

NANCY BIRTWHISTLE [00:42:10] Yeah. And there was another time when somebody got first in the technical and then they ended up leaving and I can remember who it was. But I think if you get first in a technical, you should be safe, because-.

JVN [00:42:21] That should be a cute little get out of jail free card.

NANCY BIRTWHISTLE [00:42:23] Because that is real exam conditions. That is really testing the skill because you haven't a clue what you going to be up against. And, you know, if it's something that you can practice, like the signature of the showstopper, then it's about how much you've practiced and how much you can perform on the day. If you can get first in a technical. I think that should be like you said.

JVN [00:42:44] You got a lot of technicals.

NANCY BIRTWHISTLE [00:42:46] I got-

JVN [00:42:47] You were like a queen of the technicals of your season.

NANCY BIRTWHISTLE [00:42:49] I used to tend to be in the top half.

JVN [00:42:51] And then. OK. Another question. Favorite technical of all time that wasn't in your season, just from like a viewer's perspective. I will re-wet your whistle if you are having a hard time remembering. OK. So Phyllis's season with, when they had to do those, those two Swiss rolls and then cut them up and then make it look like a brain with like that purple filling.

NANCY BIRTWHISTLE [00:43:10] I can't remember that one.

JVN [00:43:11] It's like, it's like, it's like these like to like strawberry, like raspberry, like Swiss rolls. I think it's like laying it on the board and put that like purple filling in it. And then like flip it over.

NANCY BIRTWHISTLE [00:43:19] I'll tell you, which was my favorite technical, so much so that I went out to buy all the kit, were chocolate teacakes. Chocolate teacakes where probably Series 3 or 4, you maybe didn't see it, Jonathan.

JVN [00:43:35] I need to see, yeah.

NANCY BIRTWHISTLE [00:43:37] And they, and they had to line these teacake molds with melted chocolate and then they had to fill them with marshmallow and then put a biscuit on the top and it was-, and there were chocolate everywhere. It was-.

JVN [00:43:48] Remember your self-saucing pudd? Your pistachio self-saucing pudd. But it only it, was, you, so you, they, they weren't melt-. You had one that was melty that day.

NANCY BIRTWHISTLE [00:43:58] Yeah. And, and, but again, that was, that was, because they said, and I said, well, the trouble is if you don't cut open a self-saucing pudd straight away.

JVN [00:44:08] Right away. See, OK.

NANCY BIRTWHISTLE [00:44:08] It's going to continue baking.

JVN [00:44:10] So they say that we have to wrap it up, but I need you about ten more minutes. 'Cause I'm not done. This is Nancy Birtwhistle's episode, and I'm not going to be rushed. So, because I've thought about that, what if yours would have been gooey, if they would have cut yours first? But if they start at the front of the tent and then your keeps baking or whatever, but would they say that's kind of on you because you should have pulled it like a few more minutes early?

NANCY BIRTWHISTLE [00:44:26] I think at the end of the day, the conditions were the same for everybody.

JVN [00:44:30] Will they tell you when they're coming to judge? They're like, hey, we're going to start up here for a signature bakes.

NANCY BIRTWHISTLE [00:44:35] I think to be fair, they did sort of say, you know, but you see, the, the judging doesn't happen straight after the baking because they clear up. They clear all the mess up, and all that sort of thing. But I think for the self-saucing puddings, what they said was, we're gonna come around straightaway because we know if we don't cut them out straightaway, they're gonna continue baking, then they'll be solid on the inside. And mine was solid on the inside one.

JVN [00:45:01] You had one that was melty.

NANCY BIRTWHISTLE [00:45:01] But Paul Hollywoods said, "They're dry", and they were not dry. So I told him.

JVN [00:45:11] So, wow. OK. So you win and I, I don't know. I'm almost, like my voice just shook thinking about it. When you win, it is like, it's one of the most emotional moments. And I'm like on "Queer Eye". So, like, I have seen many things. And I was so happy for you. So happy for you. And I think that it kind of like, like I thought it was interesting at the beginning, the podcast, when you said, is it? Can I get feedback? And I thought it was interesting that you were like, "Is it because of my age"? And I think that culturally, like we are so, women are specifically, are so, there is age, age discrimination is so incredibly real.

NANCY BIRTWHISTLE [00:45:48] It's, it's, yeah. And I think in, because I thought your book was interesting when you talked about your mom having to work so hard to just keep her head above water as far as the rest of the workforce. And I think I can relate to some of that, because certainly in, in sort of the 70s and 80s, if you were a woman that decided to go to work, then family couldn't interfere with it, kids' sickness couldn't interfere with it, schoolrooms couldn't interfere with it. You've taken your job, and your job comes before everything else. And that's, fortunately, turned on its head now. And there's work life balance and all this sort of thing for young people at work. But, and I think that is now part of my, how, how I operate. I mean, I always think that, you know, and then reading your book was how that feels for the child, because mom's always at work. And I thought, actually, I feel a bit guilty of that, because my kids were, you know, I was out at work and they would do it because I think the edited version of me on "Bake Off" was very much that I was this stay at home mom. And I'm surrounded by baking and the fire's going. I worked full time for 34 years.

JVN [00:47:02] I thought it was kind of, well, I guess, throughout the season, I could, I understand that edit. But by the last episode, I feel like I kind of understood that it was like if it was your job or training animals or gardening or baking, like whatever you set your mind to, like you had always been an example of that. So I think your kids have to look up to you. I immediately just like looked up to you and just thought you were so incredible. And I just have always been such a big fan. And in seeing you win and rightfully so. And I think just like so deservedly like it just turns all of that on its head. And I think just the whole age discrimination thing, it's like, you are the best. You were the best. Absolutely fabulous. And I also do love that show, I didn't mean to say it, like I'm literally in Britain like, that's so fun. You know? But yeah, I just think that I just I really only brought that up just to say that, like, you go and I love that story. And, so, but "Bake Off" changed your life a lot because-

NANCY BIRTWHISTLE [00:47:53] Oh god, yeah.



JVN [00:47:55] Because like now you're just like a social media maven. And also you do lots of other stuff now.

NANCY BIRTWHISTLE [00:48:01] Well, you see. I. I totally, totally underestimated the power of the media. I was going into that tent every week and I'd got to know the rest of the crew.

JVN [00:48:11] 'Cause was it coming out as you were on it? Like it would, would a week come out, and then you'll be going to the tent the next week? Or was it all shot and then it came out later?

NANCY BIRTWHISTLE [00:48:20] No, no, no. It. The final was filmed on, at the end of June. And then it went on the TV in August and the final was the 8th of October. So we had to keep it a secret a long, long time. And. And I totally underestimated the power of the media because, I mean, we used to arrive on the Friday night and they would say, "Alright, we want everybody's phone". 'Cause you can't have your phone in case you take any photos. Well, I didn't even have a phone. I didn't. And they said, "Oh, you're alright, Nancy". You, you know? And, and then, of course, it came to the end. Then we had some sort of media meeting and they said, you know, you ought to get on social media. And I said, "Well, I don't really know what it is". And so they said, "Well, we'll set you up a Twitter account". By this time I'd got an iPhone. And we'll set you up a Twitter account. But I just sat passively looking at these numbers going up, didn't engage with anybody, didn't like anything, didn't retweet anything, didn't say anything because I didn't know what to do. And I just saw the followers going up and up and up. And then after "Bake Off", then they started to fall off because I wasn't doing anything.

JVN [00:49:26] Yeah.

NANCY BIRTWHISTLE [00:49:28] And I was told that actually being the winner, you'll get a book deal. So anyway, I started to see publishers and they said, well, we need about 100 hundred recipes. And I said, "Well, I ain't got any". Because the recipes that you write for "Bake Off" are the property of the BBC.

JVN [00:49:43] Right.

NANCY BIRTWHISTLE [00:49:45] I couldn't use any of those. So I said, "Well, I'll need time to do that". "Well, you know, we've only got a year, really. Because you're-". Anyway, I had an agent. I have an agent. And she said to me, "Well, you can do so much more than baking, you know, why don't you extend it for the long haul? Build up your social media presence". And I said, "Well, how are we supposed to do that"? I didn't have an Instagram account, and I didn't have a Facebook account. So I'm, I, that, then it was probably nearly two years since I had won and I hadn't, I was going to food shows and doing, but I didn't really know what, what I was doing. And then, and I decided it was put to me at a meeting. You need to be on social media. You need a social media presence. And I said, "Well, how? Nobody is going to want to look at selfies of me, for goodness sake".

JVN [00:50:36] Sometimes. I love your pictures when you post pictures of your outfits. I love it.

NANCY BIRTWHISTLE [00:50:39] But I find that, I find that a, you know?

JVN [00:50:42] That could be, honestly, Nance, here, here's the thing. I love all of your content. I really do. I could almost like fuckin' give you notes on it, like without even like having a phone in front of my face. Like, I love your content. But you are absolutely beautiful. Your style is impeccable. No, it is. You have, you always look amazing. And I think that being confident and being beautiful and competent in your beauty is like, we all need more of that. So like post a selfie. Tell us how you did your eye makeup like that. I want to know how Charlie does your hair. It

always looks amazing. I loved it long. I love it short. I love all the ways. Why did you pick that necklace? How are we putting our clothes together like, yes, Queen. That's totally a pillar of your social media that you don't really get into, but when you wore that one dress to that wedding in like Switzerland or Italy or something a few weeks ago. I loved that photo.

NANCY BIRTWHISTLE [00:51:31] Oh, yeah. Oh, well, thank you.

JVN [00:51:33] That could be something that you like, that you could do a little bit on there.

NANCY BIRTWHISTLE [00:51:36] But so much is, is young, beautiful people. And I'm almost like, oh, I don't know about-.

JVN [00:51:41] That's exactly why I think you should do it more, because you're a beautiful person. And I think that age is, like, so irrelevant and-.

NANCY BIRTWHISTLE [00:51:47] Yeah.

JVN [00:51:47] And just ridiculous.

NANCY BIRTWHISTLE [00:51:49] Yeah.

JVN [00:51:49] And I think that that's something that you could really help remove the stigma from. Like you're one of those active, engaged people that I, you are literally one of my favorite accounts I have ever followed.

NANCY BIRTWHISTLE [00:51:59] I mean, I love social media. I love it. And it is addictive.

JVN [00:52:03] And it comes through, though, in your content, though, that you are passionate about what you're doing and that you care. I love that. That's really special. And I want you to keep doing it, like forever.

JVN [00:52:12] You've been giving me the most amazing-, I mean, in fact, probably you have been the person that's kept me, kept me on it because-. Well, you got such a huge following anyway. So you're doing it right. So for somebody that's doing it right to say actually, you're doing it right, then that gives me a confidence to keep going. And I think, you know what? I don't care if I look daft in front of the camera, I'm going to give it some of this.

JVN [00:52:37] Yes.

NANCY BIRTWHISTLE [00:52:38] Because-.

JVN [00:52:39] You never look daft. You always look amazing. I love your, I love it when you do little like accents and little costumes. But wait, but now your book. We have to talk about your book. Because now I actually do like have to warm up for my like thing, so I have to get going. But your book is?

NANCY BIRTWHISTLE [00:52:52] "Sizzle and Drizzle". It's out next Friday. A week today. Also-.

JVN [00:52:55] Publishing day is next Friday.

NANCY BIRTWHISTLE [00:52:58] Next Friday. And I was hoping that I'd have like a little copy to bring you, but I'm going to post you one. And one for your mum. And-.

JVN [00:53:04] Signed please.

NANCY BIRTWHISTLE [00:53:05] Jonathan wrote-.

JVN [00:53:06] I want it signed.

NANCY BIRTWHISTLE [00:53:07] Oh yeah, signed .

JVN [00:53:07] Yeah. And my mom too.

NANCY BIRTWHISTLE [00:53:09] Yeah.

JVN [00:53:09] Yeah.

NANCY BIRTWHISTLE [00:53:10] And I, I wanted to bring my "Over the Top" so you could sign it for me, and I've forgotten it.

JVN [00:53:15] Oh no.

NANCY BIRTWHISTLE [00:53:16] Because I finished reading it.

JVN [00:53:16] I think I have one, I might have one that I can sign.

NANCY BIRTWHISTLE [00:53:18] Anyway. Anyway.

JVN [00:53:20] But I'll send you one. You send me one of yours, I'll send you one of mine.

NANCY BIRTWHISTLE [00:53:22] And. But that book has been, there, I mean, talk about a story, Jonathan. I mean, we even had an, a sort of video chat about, and I said, "Jonathan, I cannot get a publisher. I can't". And he said, "Look, I'll, let me have a word to my publisher". I said, "No, I'm going to do it". Something instinctive tells me I'm going to do it myself. It's not out yet and I'm on a second reprint, so I'm-.

JVN [00:53:46] On a second reprint?

NANCY BIRTWHISTLE [00:53:48] Reprint. So, yeah. So I'm dead sure.

JVN [00:53:51] Oh, I cannot wait. Wait, but can people in America get on Amazon? Or?

NANCY BIRTWHISTLE [00:53:55] I, I told them, I'm going to sign it and personalize it and post it.

JVN [00:53:57] Oh yeah. Because I mean, I'm going to post all that.

NANCY BIRTWHISTLE [00:53:59] I've got more U.S. followers, which is thanks to you. Then I have, but the followers are great. They said, "JVN sent me here and I'm going nowhere".

JVN [00:54:08] Your drive and your focus is just so amazing and your talent is so incredible and your energy is so incredible. I think the only thing that is not even missing, but that I could just use more of in your Insta and your Twitter is just like even more of you, like even more. I love all the things I learned. I just want, like, more of, don't you play the piano?

NANCY BIRTWHISTLE [00:54:32] No. I could learn.

JVN [00:54:33] Yeah. Learn.

NANCY BIRTWISTLE [00:54:33] I'll do it.

JVN [00:54:34] Maybe like learn something. I just like want to see you more. I'm really into your style. I really love how you carry yourself. It's very, it's just really confident and beautiful. And I think people always tell me, like one thing they like about me is like, you know, the comfort that I have in my skin. And there, you have that. I think that it's some have always been attracted to in you as you are like comfortable. At least it seems so, that you're comfortable and confident in your skin.

NANCY BIRTWISTLE [00:54:57] Oh yeah. I don't think I. I don't think I've ever been jealous of anybody. You feel envy for what someone may be able to do or somebody has a certain skill or whatever. And you think, "God, I'd really like to be able to do that". But on the whole, I'm alright. I think.

JVN [00:55:16] And you're just, you just have a lovely-, I also love your working out content when you do working out content.

NANCY BIRTWISTLE [00:55:20] Oh.

JVN [00:55:20] That could be the other thing that you do. Maybe that's like, maybe that's what I need more of.

NANCY BIRTWISTLE [00:55:24] But I'm not good. I can't do it, you know? I, I, I make it look like-.

JVN [00:55:27] Whatever your version. OK, Rae is freaking out. We have to go. Nancy, I love you so much. Thank you so much for coming and giving us your time.

NANCY BIRTWISTLE [00:55:34] I can't wait for tonight.

JVN [00:55:35] It's going to be so much fun. I love you so much. I can't wait to read the book.

NANCY BIRTWISTLE [00:55:42] Yeah, thank you.

JVN [00:55:42] You've been listening to "Getting Curious" with me, Jonathan Van Ness. My guest this week was Nancy Birtwhistle. You'll find links to her work in the episode description of whatever you're listening to the show on. Follow us on Instagram and Twitter @curiouswithjvn. Our theme music is "Freak" by Quin. Thank you so much, Quin, for letting us use your gorgeous song. If you enjoyed our show, introduce a friend and show them how to subscribe, honey. "Getting Curious" is produced by me, Julie Carrillo, Rae Ellis, Harry Nelson and Colin Anderson, with special guest bookings by Mary O'Hara.