



SPI 313

Building a Strong and Healthy Brand with Michelle Tam of Nom Nom Paleo

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- Michelle Tam: Camel, Camel, Camel showed that book was like over 50% off on Amazon, and so I just blasted that out to everybody.
- Pat Flynn: What is Camel, Camel, Camel? I don't know what that is.
- Michelle Tam: Oh, you don't know? Camel, Camel, Camel is CamelCamelCamel.com is a site where you can track prices on Amazon. And so, let's say you wanted to ...
- Pat Flynn: You're listening to Michelle Tam, an author of two of my favorite books, and they're not entrepreneurial books. They're actually cookbooks, and these books changed my life. I am a cook in the household here, and I've gotten to know Michelle. I didn't even realize that she was a fan of SPI because I was a fan of her. And to have her on the show today is a huge honor and privilege, and I'm excited because she talks a lot about little strategies like this that she's used to launch her products and her books, and her merchandise, and so we're going to get deep into the details here.
- Nom Nom Paleo is her website. Best-selling author. Her brand is now in places like Whole Foods. We talk all about how it happened, and how she's able to balance family life as well, and that's another reason why I'm just so in tune with what Michelle is talking about, and what she stands for. She involves her family in her business in such a unique way, which is really exciting to me too. Because as you know, I love to get my family involved in my business in ways that are unique and smart.
- So before we get to Michelle, queue the music.
- Speaker 3: Welcome to the Smart Passive Income podcast, where it's all about working hard now so you can sit back and reap the benefits later. And now, your host. Other than English, the only other language he's 100% fluent in is, is numerics. Pat Flynn.
- Pat Flynn: All right. Welcome everybody to Session 313 of the Smart Passive Income podcast. Thank you so much for being here. My name is Pat Flynn. Here to help you make more money, save more time, and

help more people too. Today, like I said, we have Michelle Tam, the founder of Nom Nom Paleo, two best-selling books, an amazing brand, and just an amazing family person too. But before we get to Michelle and her interview and how this all happened, and tips for those of you who are just starting out as well, I do want to mention because we're getting a lot of requests, guys. A lot of you are having fun listening to the podcasts and subscribing to the show, and thank you all so much for that. Guess what? You can have your own listeners and subscribers too.

Whatever message you have, whether you already have a business and you want to expand that, or maybe you just want to start a business and use the podcast to build an audience and survey that audience to create some sort of business out of that, either way, a podcast is an amazingly powerful tool. Obviously, because here we are, chatting with each other right now. If you want to start a podcast of your own, I've put together a free three-day course to walk you through the process, step-by-step, taking all the crazy technical stuff and distilling it into only what you need, and nothing overwhelmed. And to get started, all you have to do is go to HowToStartAPodcast.com, to check that out. Again, HowToStartAPodcast.com. Sweet. Thanks so much, and let's get to today's interview with Michelle Tam from NomNomPaleo.com. Now, I'm hungry.

Michelle, thank you so much for coming on the SPI podcast.
Welcome.

Michelle Tam: Thank you. I am so excited to be here.

Pat Flynn: Oh, I am so excited you are here. I was just telling people right before this that your book has had a significant influence on myself and my family, and then to reach out to you have you agree to come on the show. It's just great, and I didn't even realize that you had actually known me for a while and have followed my stuff, so I'm just curious about how this all happened. But again, just thank you so much for the opportunity.

- Michelle Tam: Oh, no. I'm a huge fan. Like today, I was like oh my gosh, I'm going to be on Pat Flynn's show.
- Pat Flynn: It's so crazy. I'm at the Barnes, or not Barnes ... Well, Barnes & Noble too, but I was at the Amazon Bookstore here in San Diego, and I see this yellow book there, and it's your "Ready or Not" book from Nom Nom Paleo, and I'm just like oh my gosh, I read that book and I know her, and I'm going to interview her. This is so amazing, and to see all your stuff going big now. I'm just fascinated by it. So can you, really quick, just tell everybody what is it? What is it that you do, Michelle, and then we'll get into the origin story, after.
- Michelle Tam: So it's not just me. I always preface it by saying that Nom Nom Paleo is like a joint effort between my husband and I. So Nom Nom Paleo is a blog. We created an app, and then we have two cookbooks. But mostly, it's the blog because I think that's kind of the main thing that I'm always concentrating on. And then, all the social media that kind of goes with it. So I kinda do all the front-facing stuff, and I create all the recipes. And then, my husband, who has a day job, he does all of the design and all the photos, and all of the layouts. So all of the stuff people love about the books is normally something that Henry does, but he is kind of the wizard behind-the-scenes.
- Pat Flynn: Nice. Well, I know Henry is not here, but Henry, if you're listening to this, thank you so much for being a part of these. And what I love, Michelle, and you just right upfront just mentioned how it's not about you, it's very apparent in your books as well that you love to include your family in what it is that you do. I got to know your kids through the cookbook, which isn't a normal thing to see in a cookbook. So I just love how you've kind of included your family along the way as you've become successful here. Is that just naturally like who you are, or I don't know? I've never seen that before in a cookbook.
- Michelle Tam: No, it is really weird because when I first started Nom Nom Paleo, it was like a Tumblr blog, and I didn't expect anyone was reading it, ever. And so, I would swear in it, and it was just kind of my secret place, I thought. I mean of course, it's on the world wide web and

I was just kind of sharing stuff that I would want to see in a paleo food book. There weren't too many back in 2010, but I would always mention my kids just because my family is a big part of my life, just like I know yours are a big part of your life and your business, and why you do what you do. But what's funny is my kids weren't paleo, initially. Even now, they're not 100% paleo. They're mostly paleo because whatever I cook at home, they have to eat. But everyone kept on asking, like what do you feed your kids? What do you feed your kids? And I would be like this is not about my kids, this is how I feed myself. But then, it actually made me think. I was like no, I really do need to feed my kids right because it's not cool that I'm not willing to eat their leftovers, like their leftovers are not healthy enough for me to eat.

So I actually thank my readers for kind of nudging me to kind of come to terms with that, and address it. And you know, they're definitely in the books, but we did that purposely because we really ... People were like you should come up with a kids' cookbook, and I'm like, well, our books are kind of secret kids' cookbooks because they're not for kids. But clearly, it's designed in a comic book format, where there's a picture for every single step, and our kids are sprinkled throughout it and there are funny jokes and cartoons. Just because we really wanted to kind of secretly get kids interested in cooking, and interested in ingredients, and that healthy foods can be delicious and exciting, but it was all kind of a stealth way of doing it.

Pat Flynn: That's cool. I really like that. So you said the blog started in 2010, is that correct?

Michelle Tam: Mm-hmm (affirmative), and I was still working. I used to do it because I was a zombie drug dealer because I worked the night shift at Stanford Hospital for 12 years. And for them, I was doing Nom Nom Paleo, and I think that's when I found you. When I first started blogging and then when I started getting more traffic, I was like maybe I could make this my thing. I could quit my job. And so I would listen to your podcasts, and I'd listen to all the people you interview, and I was like, wow, maybe there's a way this could work.

But it did take me four years, and it was even after our first book was published that I was still working until finally it just got to be so much work and I felt like I think we have enough income, and Henry still hasn't quit his job. So I was like I think we have enough of a buffer that I could quit, and do this full-time.

Pat Flynn: Was that a hard decision for you, or was that easy at that point?

Michelle Tam: I mean it was hard just because I was raised by ... I'm a child of immigrants and I was like I don't know. This is such a stable thing, working this hospital job, and I have insurance, and all this stuff. But I don't know, I think it just got to be where I don't like my job, and I love what I'm doing. Here, I can spend a lot of time with my kids, and I'm in charge of my own schedule, and so yeah, I did it.

Pat Flynn: I love that. I'm glad you did it. And when you started out and you were just blogging and you still say you're primarily a blogger, but when you were starting out, how were you able to get found? I know you said it took four years, and I'm thankful that you said that because a lot of people expect things to happen overnight, but how did things start to pick up for you.

Michelle Tam: I think a lot of it is timing. Obviously, there's a lot of hard work involved. Henry and I were working a lot on Nom Nom Paleo, and we weren't really expecting to make any money or anything I think it's kind of one of those things where anybody who kind of finds something that they feel is the key to helping other people, and you feel like you've been living in The Matrix this whole time, but you want to get the word out, I think that's why we were doing what we were doing with Nom Nom Paleo. But it also coincided with the paleo movement becoming popular, and so I think we discovered it in 2010, and I think paleo kind of peaked into 2012 in terms of people searching for it and being curious about it. I think being one following the first paleo bloggers and being really focused on food, like I think it just all kind of happened together. And then, I would go to paleo conferences, and I'd meet other paleo bloggers, and I'd meet other people, and so I think all of those things contributed to people discovering us.

I mean I think people are like, “Oh, how would you advise someone now to do it?” I’m like it’s a lot harder. I mean, obviously, if you’re talented and you work really hard, you will find success, but I’m not going to discount the fact that timing had a big part in it.

Pat Flynn: Mm-hmm (affirmative). Well, thank you for sharing that, and I didn’t even realize there were paleo conferences.

Michelle Tam: Yeah.

Pat Flynn: What was it like at your first one, to go as a fairly new blogger in this space? Tell me about that experience.

Michelle Tam: Well, it was weird. It was also when I was working nights at the same time, so I worked seven nights on, and then I’d have seven days off to kind of do whatever. And I’d go to these conferences, but of course, I’m still kind of jet-lagged and everything. It was amazing to meet people in real life because you can talk to them and comment. But I think until you meet people, it’s not real. I mean, I even feel that way with social media now. I look at some of the numbers and followers, it doesn’t seem real until I actually meet someone in real life. And so it was really cool, just meeting other paleo bloggers that we’d been communicating with online. And then, meeting just regular people that were cooking our meals and getting healthier. It was surreal, and it still is really surreal because I am ... I call myself a high-functioning introvert. Like when I have to do an event, I’m good at it, and I can socialize and be on, but I do prefer to introvert really hard and hang out with my family and my close friends to recharge.

Pat Flynn: You sound just like me.

Michelle Tam: Yeah.

Pat Flynn: When I go to these events, I’m on it and I perform. But then after I speak, I go back in the hotel room, I’m like phone is on silent. I just want to sit by myself and do nothing.

Michelle Tam: Yeah, totally, totally, totally. My happiest place is just hanging out

with my little family, and watch movies, and playing games. It's just very ... I think I didn't realize this is how I was until Nom Nom Paleo happened just because I was never put in these types of situations, but it's good. There's lots of really great learning opportunities, I think, because of Nom Nom Paleo. I've totally discovered what my personality type is, and what works for me, and what doesn't work for me and just challenging myself and taking risks, which was not something that I was comfortable doing before but because of that, I totally encourage my kids now. I'm like, no, you can't be afraid to try things, and you can't be afraid to ask because the worst thing that will happen is really not as bad as you think it'll be, and that'll empower you to kind of keep going.

Pat Flynn: Absolutely, and tell me about a risk that you took with Nom Nom Paleo that was kind of tough to make that decision, but you did it anyway?

Michelle Tam: Well, I think quitting my job was a big one. Because then, I really did have to kind of focus about trying to kind of make money, but I think that I kinda cheated because Henry still has his day job. But I think because I quit and I didn't have my own safety net and the constant regular income, we did really throw ourselves into making Nom Nom Paleo exactly what we want it to be, like in terms of quality, and in terms of how we wanted our books created. We were really focused on this is how we want it, and I think the risk of we were offered other book deals before our first book, but Henry was like, "No, we want to design it exactly how we want to design it, and we want total control," and that was a big risk. But we did it, and we're really happy with it.

I think we're happy with people having a really visceral reaction to our products. They either love it or they hate it, and it's okay that they hate it. We don't want people to just say it's like another health book or another diet book. We want people to get really excited about it, or if they don't like it, that's fine. This is not your cookbook then, and that's cool.

Pat Flynn: So the first book was published in 2013, did publishers approach or

did you approach publishers? And tell me the story about how that book got published.

Michelle Tam: So that book actually came after we made our Nom Nom Paleo app. So a lot of our friends, I think in like 2008 or so were ... No, no. Sorry, my timeline is all messed up. So I think we're in 2011 or '12 is when the first paleo cookbooks were coming out, and a lot of our friends were getting cookbook deals. But I think at the same time, there was a New York Times article that came out about how cooking apps were like the new cookbook of the future. And I think we had just gotten that iPad and we were like, wow, this thing is amazing, like can you imagine a cookbook on an iPad. And so we were like instead of doing a regular cookbook, let's do an iPad cookbook. And so Henry just started kind of looking, and he just started cold-calling developers, not knowing at all how expensive app development is, which is insane. But he happened to call some newer development agency that was trying to get into the food space, and they're like, "Oh, we'll help you, and we'll give you a steep discount", which still ended up being a lot of money.

And so, we created this cookbook app, and I think because we didn't know what we could ask for, we just kind of asked for the moon, and they created a really cool app for us. But I think as soon as the first iOS update happened after our app came out, we were like, oh my gosh, this breaks our app. And I think we realized we're going to have to throw a ton of money into this, and we're going to always have to upkeep it, and people that want to pay more than 99% for it, but it's because most people create apps. Like most big companies create apps as marketing, and they have a huge marketing budget. But I think after that happened, we were like ... And then I realized, I was like eventually there will be no iPad anymore, and this app is just going to disappear and go away. And I was like I really want to create my own book, a physical book that no one can take away from us if they update anything.

One of our good friends Melissa Joulwan, self-published her own paleo cookbook, and she was advising us on how it's super smart to do. And I know you self-published, and it's just financially, it's better

and creatively, you have so much more control. And so we were intent on self-publishing, and so we were probably 70% or 80% done, and other publishers had reached out to us and said, “Hey, you want to do a cookbook deal?” But none of them ever sounded great because they’re like, “You should do a paleo junk food cookbook,” and I’m like that is not what I’m about. Or they’re like, “It should be a he said/she said, where Henry can talk about exercise, and you can talk about cooking,” and I’m like that’s not what we do either. And so, we were just kind of forging ahead on this whole self-publishing thing.

And so, our publisher, the one that we ended up going with, one of their editors reached out to us and kind of pitched us a standard cookbook deal. And we were like, no, let’s not do it. But then, they came back and said, “Our publisher is really interested in talking with you guys. Would you be willing to meet with her because she’s flying out to California on spring break to have coffee, and just kind of discuss what you guys could do?” Henry was like, “No. Our answer is going to be ‘No’, no matter what.” I was like I don’t know. I love cookbooks. At the time, back when we were even thinking about this, self-published cookbooks were not as well-respected, and it’s hard to get distribution. And so I was like, “Let’s just talk to her and see,” and so we met with her for coffee. She was totally open to talking to us about alternative publishing models, and she gave us an offer we couldn’t refuse, and gave us total creative control, and so we went with them and we’ve been super happy.

Pat Flynn: And now, it’s a New York Times best-seller.

Michelle Tam: Yeah, surprisingly. Yes. Yes, it was. It was great. And so, they’ve been really good about ... And so that one came out in 2013, and they kind of gave us two years to sit and stew, before they were like, “When’s your next cookbook coming out?” And we’re like, “I don’t know.”

For us, because Henry has his day job, and we do shoot everything ourselves, and the foot styling, and then even just the book design is all by us. It takes a long, long time to kind of create the book.

And so we didn't agree to do it until I think two years later, and then it took us a good two years to create it, our second book. But now that this new book is out, everyone is like when is this next one coming out? I'm like I don't know, I'm still recovering from the second one.

Pat Flynn:

I love that you just tell 'em behind-the-scenes about it. It's so funny. The New York Times thing, how did that ... When the book came out, you had a blog. How many people were coming to the blog? And how were you able to do that, or was that through your publisher that it kind of spread pretty wide? Because New York Times is not easy.

Michelle Tam:

No, it's really, really hard, and I didn't even know how it's more of an editorial list as opposed to a pure sales list until, I think, our second book. So the first one, we never expected to make New York Times, and we didn't make it until I feel like months later. Because our book came out in December, and I think it made New York Times ... I don't know, like in April or something, and we weren't even targeting it. I don't know how it happened, but it did. But also, I think it also happened because paleo was really hot back then, but we knew when our second book came out in August. We were like it would be really awesome to make the New York Times, but I don't really know how to do it. And so we started researching all the different ways to do it, and we knew it couldn't just be Amazon sales because there's all this weird stuff, right?

And so we just tried to really get our rabid super fans really, really excited about it, and to push pre-sales as hard as we could. And then, we did a book tour, and we really tried to partner with some of our favorite independent bookstores to push sales. And so it was all of these really different things that we tried. And so, our book did make New York Times, actually the first week it came out. But what was interesting was number three in our category, but it was according to BookScan the number one hardcover nonfiction book. So it is like it's not a pure sales thing, it really is. And then, it only made it that first week, it hasn't been on it since.

Pat Flynn: It dropped off.

Michelle Tam: Yeah. It's a hard thing that is hard to aim for, but we just tried our best to do it. So we did a bunch of different things, like we did try to drive pre-sales. We did two pre-sale bonuses. One was a separate ebook, which we called "One and Done", which would be one pan, one pot dishes that people could make really easily, and we made it in the same format as our cookbooks just so people would see what our new cookbook would be like, where it was like step-by-step for everything and it would be kind of comic format.

And then, we also gave them a 50-page preview of the cookbook. The way we distributed it is we created a brand new MailChimp mailing list just for people who said they pre-ordered. And all we did was we were like put your order number for wherever you bought it from. People were like how do you check? I'm like there is no way to check. We just hope people are being honest, and that they're doing it. But what's cool about that list, and then we would have MailChimp send out the two freebies. But once we had that list, we knew that list was kind of like our super fan list because they were willing to buy it, sight unseen. And so we kind of did things to always thank that super group of readers, and so I think when our book came out ... Also too, we also did a Camel Camel Camel tracking thing for our book before it came out, just to see when it would drip low. And then, we'd blast it out to everybody because I think six months ...

So our book had been ... I think you can pre-order a book on Amazon maybe eight months out or something, but I think six months out, Camel Camel Camel showed that our book was like over 50% off on Amazon, so I just blasted that out to everybody, like "Hey!"

Pat Flynn: What is Camel Camel Camel? I don't know what that is.

Michelle Tam: Oh, you don't know. Camel Camel Camel is CamelCamelCamel.com is a site where you can track prices on Amazon. And so let's say you want to know when an Instapot drops below \$100. It'll tell

you and it'll give you an alert, so you know to buy it because you know prices on Amazon fluctuate all the time. So we put a Camel Camel Camel ... I mean I have it on all three books, and on my favorite products. And so I think there was a Camel Camel Camel said our "Ready or Not" cookbook was marked down over 50%, and so I told everyone, "Hey, if you're thinking of pre-ordering our cookbook, now is a good time because it's over 50% off." And so, a lot of people bought it and it shot up to number four on all books Amazon, but that's all velocity, so it's not necessarily total books sales.

But then, after our book, and then like two months out, we sent our book to all of our favorite friends and influencers, and media. And then, I think the day that our book came out, obviously we blasted it to our email list. But to our pre-order list, we also gave them a bonus gift. Like we gave them an extra week of meal plans as a thank you for being so loyal and pre-ordering. We also told them that they had a special giveaway just for them, and all they had to do was just share about the book, not even like they have to buy the book. They can share about the book and just share this hashtag, like #NomNomPaleoRocks. We even created a site where they could share pictures really easily, just so it would be really easy for them, and to thank them. But I think the whole thing is just whipping up your super fans to show how grateful you are, that gets them excited. Because even if they have maybe 50 friends on Facebook, maybe they are the one person that they really trust for all things cooking and health. And so, they're going to buy it, you know what I mean?

Pat Flynn: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Michelle Tam: I think you are a great example of that. You always treat your readers and your listeners really well. They know that you're always giving them really great content, and so then they want to help you. I think that's how Henry and I always want to operate. We want to operate the whole NPR model, where we put out great free content. But every three years or so, we will have a book out, and that is our pledge drive, and so we appreciate when people support us back.

But another thing about that pre-order list email because you know that those people are verified purchases, and so you can ask them for an honest review and you hope. I mean, obviously, you can't ask for a positive or a good review or anything, and you can't gift them for their review. But I think if you just ask them to do a review, it reminds them to do it, which sometimes they don't even think to do it. And they're happy to do it because they want to help you, but then they're also a verified purchase on Amazon as opposed to just a non-verified purchase, which Amazon does not highlight at all. So I think all those things, I'm trying to think what else we did, but I think those are kind of the big things.

And then, when I went on the book tour, because we're money stupid as well, we just made all this swag to thank people, so people would come to the book signings. We'd give them dolls, and socks, and calendars, just to thank them.

Pat Flynn: That's amazing, and you have 1,400 customer reviews on your first book, and I can see it. Close to 400 now on the second one, which is just incredible. What has happened since ... A lot of people wonder is the New York Times list even worth shooting for? I know you didn't gain it other than just getting incredible hype and buzz for the new book with your fans, which is the way to do it. But what has happened as a result of getting on the New York Times? What new opportunities, if any, has opened up?

Michelle Tam: I think it's always really good social proof. And obviously, an ego-stroking thing, but I think it's good in that if people want to partner with you, there is always that kind of elusive thing where the New York Times has kind of anointed you, you know? I think the Whole Foods partnership that we had, we were working with a local region, the northern California region for several years. And we've loved worked with them because they've totally understood our brand and they've let us do whatever we want, and we've respected each other. Obviously, we don't want to push paleo where it's not wanted, and we don't want to alienate their vegan customers or other customers who aren't paleo. But I think with Nor-Cal, they've been really good about letting us do our thing

and we've respected that they will treat our brand properly, and so we've worked with them for several years.

But I think because of the success of our second cookbook, national reached out probably two months after our book came out and said, "Hey, we've seen what you did with Nor-Cal," because we did a push with Nor-Cal right when our book came out and they're like we'd like to try this January, nationwide, where they would have some of our recipes from our second cookbook at the Hot Bar, and then my Nom Nom Paleo pics throughout the store. Maybe the New York Times kind of helped with that, but I don't know. It's hard to say because we don't have our own PR. We are our own PR. I don't have an agent. We don't have people working. We have one guy working for us, where he kind of helps with Facebook scheduling. And then, when I do my Facebook lives, he helps answer questions and kind of odd jobs that we have behind the scenes. But otherwise, it is just Henry and I, and the kids.

Pat Flynn: How do you guys navigate this not having any experience as these new opportunities come up, and not having really a huge team behind you? How do you navigate through?

Michelle Tam: Well, again, we're lucky in that Henry has his job, and so we don't have to kind of do any money grabs. If something we find really cool, we will say, "No, this sounds like a hell-yes opportunity." But then, in terms of negotiating, I never know, and I hate talking money because I don't know how to do it. I wasn't raised to ask for things. I think being raised by Chinese immigrants, it's hard. It's hard saying I want this and negotiating, instead of just accepting what's offered the first time.

Pat Flynn: Right.

Michelle Tam: But I think, we've just ... I've asked my friends who are kind of in this space, like what do you ask for if someone asks you to do a talk? We've kind of talked numbers. The next time, I'm going to ask for more money the next time I do it, and just kind of seeing where that is. But also, I think realizing that ... I think with the Whole Foods

thing, people are like, “You must have been paid a ton of money for this.” And I’m like, “No, we were not paid probably as much as you think,” but we recognize what we’re getting from it as well, like from a marketing perspective. I couldn’t pay to have our branding in every single store of Whole Foods, do you know what I mean?

Pat Flynn: Right.

Michelle Tam: And because that’s offered, of course, we’ll negotiate. And because we’re always picking opportunities that we already naturally love, we will just throw ourselves into promoting it and so it is a win-win for both sides. I think people are always like, “Hey, how do we partner with you,” or, “How do we get you to promote this?” If it’s something I’ve never tried, I’m not going to promote it because I don’t love it, and I won’t promote it as hard as if I loved it.

I think people always think Instapot and I have some sort of crazy deal going, and we don’t. I get an Amazon affiliate if someone buys it through my site, but that’s it. And I’ve asked them, I’m like, “Hey, you want to sponsor this giveaway?” But they just ship it to someone, and that way I don’t have to go to the post office. I think if I love it and it’s a great fit, then I’ll partner with people. I think I can count on my one hand, how many people I partnered with.

Pat Flynn: Wow, yeah. I love the Instapot stuff, for sure. That has been a big game-changer for me and my family, and thank you for the recipes, especially the pork carnitas, the carnitas pork recipe. That’s like a monthly thing.

Michelle Tam: Yeah, if you love pork, the carnitas Instapot recipe is super easy, and really good. I just put up a spicy pineapple pork recipe, also Instapot, and super easy.

Pat Flynn: That’s on the blog, right now?

Michelle Tam: Yeah, that is on the blog, right now. And that was one of the recipes that was at the Whole Foods Hot Bar.

Pat Flynn: Oh, nice.

Michelle Tam: Yeah. People were like where's the recipe? I'm like okay, I will put it up so you guys can make it at home.

Pat Flynn: I'll have to check it out. It's interesting. A lot of people are talking about blogging nowadays and how it's kind of not as powerful as it was. There's video now, and these live video platforms, and obviously podcasting too. How do you balance all of these different mediums now, that are available to spread your message and what you do versus what you originally started, which was your blog?

Michelle Tam: Yeah. I think you have to do the thing ... For me, because our resources are so limited in terms of manpower and all that other stuff, I only kinda do the things I love, and I love Instagram and I love Instagram stories, and I really loved Snapchat for a while, and Periscope I loved. But then, Instagram kind of swallowed of those things up, and Facebook Live kinda swallowed up a lot of those things. YouTube is really hard for me to do just because we don't have the manpower or the know-how to do great video. And so, Instagram is my number one. I love Twitter as well, but not that many people are on Twitter.

But I love the Instagram, you can put stuff and still push people to your blog by having your link in profile. But I love the Instagram stories because it also lets people kinda get to know you behind the scenes. And I think before, when I started my blog, it really was kind of like a daily journal of everything I was eating, but that's now morphed into what I show on Instagram. And now, the content on my blog is basically evergreen recipes.

And then, Facebook is just kind of the social media that you have to deal with because that's the one that everybody is on, and everybody wants to be on it. And so that one, I kind of schedule. I have Lauren, our assistant, schedule stuff on it, and then I do a weekly Facebook live, which used to get tons and tons of engagement, like when they were first trying to push it. But now, it still gets a lot of engagement, way more than just posting. But I

always post stuff that I think people would find useful, so it's not just my stuff in promoting my recipes.

I have Lauren maybe put up one recipe post a month from my blog a day. But everything else, I'm like just make sure it's something super useful and something that you would want to look at as opposed to just sponsored stuff, or pitching stuff. Because I think for all of the things that I try to put out, I always think of myself as the consumer, and I'm like would I be annoyed by seeing 20 Instagram stories of my face? I'm like yeah, so I only want to show, hopefully, useful things, or least things that I find useful. I try to do that, and I'm like in terms of marketing, would I be annoyed if someone kept on pitching my book, or how would I want to be marketed to, and that's how I try to approach things.

Pat Flynn: I love it. I'm so fascinated because I thought that you had this giant team behind all you were doing, and the design, I mean that's Henry, now that I've learned. It's just fantastic. I mean everything is just so pro-looking. Did it start out like that?

Michelle Tam: No. No, no, no. In fact, it was awful. And I don't even want to go back into our archives, but if you look in our archives, it's so ugly, and the pictures are just poorly lit, iPhone pictures, and it's just gross. And then, I think as more people started, we started getting more eyeballs. Henry was like, "You really need to fix your photos, and you need to fix this." The whole rule of threes. I'm like, "Dude, I don't know what ... I don't understand any of that. If you want to help me, you need to help me." He's been blogging for a long time. He had a daddy blog when Owen was born, and so that was like 14 years ago. And then, he had a fitness blog called Fit Bomb, which chronicled his P90X journey. And so, he's been doing this for a while, and he's always been super artistic, like ever since he was a kid. He did kind of the smart, logical thing that makes a stable income, and he went to law school. But at Cal, because I know you're a Cal graduate.

Pat Flynn: Go Bears.

Michelle Tam: Go Bears. He used to have a comic strip in the Daily Cal, and one of the little characters was this mean little girl named Meimei, who was me because that was back when I would eat gluten and I was not a very nice person. And so he's been drawing me for like 25 years, and so this whole thing with Nom Nom Paleo, I almost ... Like when people ask what do you think led to the success of it? I think part of it has to do creating it in our mid 30s, when we weren't expecting anything from it, and we already had stable jobs so that we weren't depending on it to bring in income. And so, we were able to create whatever we wanted without worrying about where our next paycheck would come from. And so when Henry came on board, like 2012, he dumped Fit Bomb and he started helping out when he wasn't at work. That's when, I think, our blog took off. But yeah, the old stuff is ugly. It's terrible.

Pat Flynn: Well, I'll make sure to go back in the archives and check it out.

Michelle Tam: Yeah, you should.

Pat Flynn: But I mean you've won all these awards, and things seem to be going so well for you. I want to finish up by asking you what was the hardest part since really going full on with Nom Nom Paleo, what's been the toughest thing for you here?

Michelle Tam: I think the toughest thing is balancing everything with family and friends. Because obviously, food is important and exercise is important, but sleep and community, all of those things help with a healthy lifestyle. You could be super perfect and everything else is terrible, and you're not going to be healthy. And so, I think it's been balancing, taking care of ourselves, and making sure we have healthy relationships with work. Because we could be working late into the night all the time, and I think we did initially. But now, I'm always like we have to be in bed by 10:30. We need to turn off all the screens. We need to go see our friends. It's very ... We have to start meditating. It's all these things, where we have to find a good balance.

But I have to say, I've never been more happy and grateful for how

things have been going. I am super grateful that I am not working at the hospital in the middle of the night, especially in the middle of probably one of the worst flu seasons ever.

Pat Flynn: Oh gosh. Yeah.

Michelle Tam: You know? Even though I would never change anything because I do think because I worked nights and I had the time to kind of do Nom Nom Paleo, it also gives me a really good counterpoint. So any time I'm like, ugh, I have to do this, this, or that, I'm like developing a recipe and testing it is not the worst thing in the world. It could be way worse.

Pat Flynn: Any final words of encouragement for those listening, who are now inspired to either just start or with their existing business, they're fired up about it? How would you encourage them to really just keep going, and find their way to success?

Michelle Tam: I think that if you are super passionate about it, you should just keep doing it. I think it's so cliché to say keep creating great content, but I mean you do. You keep creating great content. Be open and flexible to all of the new social media that's available. I wasn't even on Facebook until I created Nom Nom Paleo, and I only have a "personal account" to manage my Facebook page. But I think since then, I've totally embraced Instagram, and Twitter, and whatever comes out just because it's a fun, free tool. And like when people get mad about Instagram throttling their reach or whatever throttling their reach, I'm like don't complain about it. It's free. They're throttling their reach because it's boring, like you have to figure out ways to make it interesting and fun, and it should push you out of your comfort zone.

Pat Flynn: For sure. That's always my advice is just to try to make it fun because when it's fun for you to make and create, which obviously comes from the passion that you have for it, or just the joy of the journey, then it's fun for everybody else on the other side.

Michelle Tam: No, and I totally get that from you. I know that it's super fun for you

to create. I love watching your videos. I'm like look how fun this is, and I know you had a really fun time creating it. I love all the content you put out there because you exemplify awesome, great, free content that benefits so many people.

Pat Flynn: Well, thank you. I appreciate you talking about how I've helped you and just giving me a shout out. But you know I am so thankful for you and all you've done, and all you continue to do. I'm so just proud of all of the success you've had, and it's inspiring me, especially when it comes to the reach that you have as a result of your book-writing and such. But Michelle ...

Michelle Tam: I was so excited when you finally got that Tesla. I was like he got that Tesla he wanted.

Pat Flynn: I know. That was a huge goal for me, so it was really cool to see that come in. But hey, where can people go and find more from you and Henry, and your family?

Michelle Tam: So I am at Nom Nom Paleo on all things, except for Snapchat, which I'm not even on anymore.

Pat Flynn: Nom Nom Paleo, got it.

Michelle Tam: Yeah, Nom Nom Paleo. And again, there is no big team behind this. So if you ping me, I see everything. But it does take me a little bit longer to get back to people, unless you tweet me on Twitter. I'm very fast because it's very fast to reply to those.

Pat Flynn: Cool. All right. Well, I'm sure everybody is going to go and say hi, and say thank you. So if you wanted to thank Michelle and you're on Twitter or Instagram, Nom Nom Paleo is where you can find her. Big thanks to Henry and your kids, and thank you for taking the time today, Michelle. I appreciate you.

Michelle Tam: No, thank you. It's been my pleasure.

Pat Flynn: All rights, guys. I hope you enjoyed that interview with Michelle



Tam. Make sure you check her out at NomNomPaleo.com. Also, we've got some links and resources at the show notes page at SmartPassiveIncome.com/session313, as you know.

And Michelle, I know you listen to the podcast. You're amazing, your family is awesome. Wonderful job on the brand. I cannot wait to see where else you go with it, and I'm looking forward to meeting you in person one day, and hanging out, and having some good food, and having the families chill together. It's going to happen. We will make it happen.

Michelle, thank you so much. Thank you all for listening, and I appreciate you. And one more time, that link to the show notes is SmartPassiveIncome.com/session313.

And as a reminder, because I know a lot of you are like, "Yeah, I want to start a podcast too." You can get started for free. A three-day course. I'll walk you through the process on how to get from scratch to set up, and up on iTunes. HowToStartAPodcast.com.

Cheers. Thank you so much, and I look forward to serving you in next week's episodes. Make sure you hit that subscribe button, if you haven't already because I'm coming at you with some more good stuff. So hey, my name is Pat Flynn, here to help you make more money, save more time, and help more people too. You're awesome. Take care, and I will see you next week. Bye.

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