

## Bonus episode #077 - The spontaneous chef

### Episode description

In this bonus episode, join Andrew as he tells a story about an unplanned cooking adventure. Listen as he talks about deciding to make homemade pizza, sharing his experiences from selecting ingredients to the final delicious outcome. This episode is perfect for improving your English fluency and learning new vocabulary, all while enjoying a lighthearted story about kitchen experiments and culinary surprises.

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Note: The transcript has been edited for clarity.

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**Andrew:** Thank you for clicking play and joining me for episode number 77 of our bonus series. My name is Andrew, and I'll be your host and your study buddy for today. And in our bonus episode series here, what I do is I tell you some stories from my everyday life, what I've been up to over the last week. And the goal is that by listening to these stories, you'll be able to improve your English fluency, and learn more about the culture of English speakers, and also build and grow your English vocabulary along the way as well. And in this episode, well, I have to say this is going to be more of a spontaneous episode. And the reason for that is usually I'm the kind of person who likes to be prepared. And I never like to go into a situation without really, well, preparing for it very well.

So that of course, **manifests itself**, that takes place, that happens when I do Culips, and when I record for Culips. And of course, you guys know that Culips is unscripted, so we don't have scripts that we follow. And there's not really any reading here on the podcast. However, that doesn't mean that we don't prepare notes. And often before I record a bonus episode, I prepare a page or so of notes, just with some bullet points about the things that I want to talk about. And that helps me to organize my thoughts, and hopefully put together a narrative that I can follow when I'm recording. So that the end result is a pretty well-polished story, I hope. It's still of course, very spontaneous, very **off the cuff**. But at the same time, there is some structure to it. Well, today, I decided to throw my planning out the window, to try something new, and just to be completely spontaneous.

So, in the note app on my phone, I only wrote down two things. I wrote down 'pizza', and I wrote down 'wife in Japan'. And those are the two things that I'm going to tell you about, those are the two stories that I'm going to tell you about in this bonus episode. And we'll see how it goes. We'll see if I can record an episode here with absolutely no notes to follow. I think I can do it. Of course, I know I can do it, I can do it. And the reason why I usually do take some notes and follow those notes while I record is because I don't want to forget any **juicy details**. And I feel like if I don't have those notes, then I might start talking

about something and then go off on a tangent, go off in one direction, and then later at the end when I'm you know preparing the episode for upload, and I'm listening back to it, then I might realize, "Oh, I forgot that, or I forgot to say this." So that's usually why I prepare some notes. But let's see how it goes today. And then maybe after you listen to this episode, you can let me know what you think and give me your feedback.

And of course, anytime you want to get in touch with me or talk with our community, or ask a question, or share some comments or feedback, that make sure you are a member of our Discord community. We have over 3000 members on our Discord, it has developed into this awesome community for English-language learners around the world. You can talk about tons of different topics there with so many of your peers, right? A peer is a fellow language learner, English learner. So, there are tons of peers there for you to connect with. And there's also some English teachers there that are **lurking** and hanging out as well, such as myself and our wonderful moderator Alina. So, if you're not a part of our community yet on Discord, what are you waiting for? Make sure to sign up. And you can do that for free, of course it's free, just by following the link in the description for this episode. And if you are one of our paid Culips members, then we also have a special member-only area where you can chat with other Culips members. And also, we have special events there on the Discord for members as well, such as our monthly member live streams. So yeah, join the Discord. It's an awesome place to connect with the Culips community.

And I mentioned free just a moment ago, didn't I? Well, there's also a free transcript that accompanies this episode comes in an interactive version, or a PDF version. And I've also started including a vocabulary glossary along with the transcript as well. So, it's an awesome learning tool. And to get it just follow the link in the description for this episode. All of the good stuff, all of the good information is in the description.

And then finally, one last announcement here slash advertisement and that is, of course, we offer a premium Culips membership option to any of you who are looking to take your English studies to the next level and to really boost your English fluency. We have so

many benefits that would take me forever to list them all out here that you get when you are a member, just to name a few, you'll get study guides and full transcripts to all of our regular episodes, you'll get ad-free audio, you'll get access to the member-only community part of our Discord which I mentioned just a moment ago, there's the live streams, and so much more. Plus, at the same time, you will be supporting the work that we do here at Culips, which allows us to keep making English lessons each and every week. And you can sign up and become a member for an affordable price just by following the link in the description for this episode. All right, so I got all the business out of the way, all the housecleaning, and now it's time to get started.

So, let's get to those two items that are written down here in my notes app on my phone. The first one is 'pizza'. And that's a good place to start because I ended the last bonus episode last week saying that I was going to make pizza. And I'm going to tell you a little bit about that culinary adventure. So recently, I've been feeling the urge to cook. Maybe it's because, you know, we're kind of deep into the fall here. As the saying goes, "Winter is coming!" And I can feel that winter is coming, especially at nights here in Seoul. It's getting quite cold. So yeah, maybe because it's a little bit cooler. And because I've been spending more time at home, I've just wanted to cook a little bit more. And I've always enjoyed cooking, I wouldn't say **by any means** that I'm a good cook or a talented cook. But at the same time, I'm not terrible. And I feel like if I had to prepare food for a guest, it would be totally fine. The guests would be like, "Well, it's good. It's yeah, totally edible food!" I don't think my guests would like jump up and down and be like, "Oh my god! This is the best thing I've ever tasted." OK, of course, I'm not like an amazing chef like that. But I'm not bad. I'm somewhere in the middle. But that doesn't take away from the fact that at least for me, cooking is quite fun.

And I don't know when or where it was, sometimes I get all of my Culips recordings mixed up because I can't remember all of the conversations that I've had with my other co-hosts, or with Alina on the live stream. But I have a feeling, I talked about this with Alina during one of our recent member live streams. And I said that one of the foods that I really miss from Canada, of course, my home country is Canada, but I live in South Korea now. So

occasionally, I do miss some food that's easy to find in Canada, but rather hard to find in Korea. And one of those foods that I miss is perogies, which maybe you're thinking, "Hey pierogi are Eastern European!" Of course, that's 100% correct. But pierogies are also a really popular food in western Canada and my hometown is Kelowna, that is in western Canada. And I grew up eating pierogi. So, I really miss them. And I think it was during that conversation with Alina where she was like, "They're actually pretty easy to make." And that **got the wheels spinning** in my head. And I thought, "Hmm, OK, well, I'll just try making some perogies at home."

So, I went on to YouTube to look for a recipe and I found this guy, I believe his channel name is the Polish Chef. And he broke down how to make perogies. And by the way, for listeners who don't know, a pierogi is just a dumpling that's filled with potato. The wrapping is made from flour, so it's got a flour base, and then inside there is potato and cheese. And once you have prepared the pierogi, then you boil it, and then after you can fry it, and it's often served with onion and sour cream, and they're delicious. One of my favorite foods of all time, super, super delicious, in my opinion.

So, I watched the Polish Chef's video on YouTube, and I learned how to make pierogi and then I made some pierogi. And they weren't beautiful. I don't think I had the dumpling wrapping part down. Although I did get better as it went on. I made probably about 20 or 25 dumplings. So, the first ones were pretty ugly. But once I **got the hang of it** and started to learn how to make the dumpling so that they would come out looking pretty, well then, they weren't so bad. But they all tasted really good. Even the ugly ones tasted good. And, in the end, that's really the most important thing, right when you're just cooking for yourself. And I was cooking for my wife as well. And she said the appearance. Yeah, not so good. Not so good on the presentation, I guess I got low points for presentation, but high points for flavor and taste. And when I was making the pierogies, I had to make the dough to make the wrapper, the shell, the case for the pierogi. I apologize to all of our eastern European listeners right now, I'm not actually sure what the correct terminology for that is. But you start by making the dough, and then you roll the dough out and make your dumplings make the pierogies that way.

And while I was doing that, the wheels in my head started spinning again. And I was like, "Huh, I could probably make homemade pizza dough **from scratch** as well and make pizza at home." And pizza's another one of my absolute favorite foods. I don't know, for whatever reason, all of my favorite foods seem to start with the letter P, at least the non-Korean foods. I love peanuts and peanut butter, perogies and pizza. Kind of funny now that I think of it. So anyways, I decided a few weeks later that I wanted to try making pizza. And this was just an idea that hit me **out of the blue**. I hadn't planned to do this at all. But last Saturday, my wife was out with her friends, and they were doing errands together. And I was home alone. And it was getting close to dinnertime late in the afternoon. And I decided suddenly, "Hey, why don't I cook pizza, that could be something fun to do." So, I did the same steps that I did last time. I went to YouTube, and I searched for some recipes, and looked up some recipes.

And then I did a calculation of what I had in my fridge and what I would have to buy because I knew I had some ingredients **on hand**. But at the same time, I would have to go out and buy some ingredients. And that's a pretty cool expression there: on hand. If you have something on hand, it means that it's available to you and that you have it close by. But there were some ingredients that I didn't have on hand, and that meant that I had to go to the supermarket to pick them up. So, I looked in my fridge and my pantry. And I took inventory of the things that I would need to buy. And unfortunately, the list was pretty long. I had flour and I had cheese, but **that was about it**. I didn't really have too many vegetables or any meat that I could use for pizza topping. I didn't have any tomato sauce, I had one cup of flour, but that was it. So, I was very low on flour as well. And I didn't have any yeast. So, because of that I searched for a no-yeast pizza dough and decided to go that direction.

So, then I made my shopping list, and I wrote down all of the items that I would need to buy at the grocery store. I don't know about you, but I have a terrible memory for that kind of thing. And I tend to get distracted once I get into the grocery store. You know, it's very overwhelming with all of the people and all of the sales and all of the items that you can pass by. And so, I always tend to forget one or two things if I don't make a list. I'm not one



of those people that's got a great memory and can just make a mental shopping list. So, I wrote my shopping list down on my phone. And then I went over to the grocery store that's pretty close to my place, just a short walk. And I started shopping and started picking up all of the ingredients that I would need for my pizza. Now as I was shopping, I got a call from my wife and my wife said, "Hey, where are you? I'm almost home. I'll just be getting off the subway shortly." And it just so happens that the subway station is also very close to the grocery store. So, I told my wife, "Hey, come over to the grocery store and let's shop for these pizza ingredients together."

So, my wife got off the subway and she came over to the grocery store. And we did our shopping together. And yeah, I bought lots of vegetables. The toppings that I put on my pizza were green pepper, mushrooms, onions, and black olives. And then I also bought some pepperoni to put on the pizza as well. So, I guess I made a kind of the deluxe pizza. And I've also been growing kale at home. We have one of these little grow boxes. I'm not exactly sure what to call it. It's aquaponic grow boxes that we have in our kitchen. It's got a grow light on the top and there's a filter that filtrates the water to keep it clean. And it's great for growing leafy vegetables or herbs. And right now, I've been growing a lot of Kale with it. So, I also had some fresh kale that I put on the pizza as well. And I bought also some pizza sauce and a bag of flour. And I think that was all of the shopping I had to do. Anyways, the reason I want to tell you this, and all of the things that I bought at the grocery store is because when it was time to check out and pay, my grocery bill came to around 40,000 Korean won, which I don't know the exact currency conversion, but probably like 34 dollars American or so maybe 35 dollars American or so?

Which is pretty outrageous, because when you think about it, like growing up, I always learned that cooking at home was the most affordable, the most economical, and the best way to eat, right? Like it's much cheaper to eat at home and to cook your own meals than it is to eat out. But my bill **proved otherwise**. So, I guess it's not really the case anymore. Because I could just order a delivery pizza for maybe, I don't know, 20 American dollars, or less than that even, but make pizza at home cost me almost 35 American dollars. So,

it's crazy. I guess that's not really true anymore. And that doesn't even account for the labor and the time that I had to put into learning the recipe to doing the shopping to actually cooking the pizzas. So, in the end, cooking at home proved to be rather a luxury as opposed to just ordering delivery. But of course, the reason that I decided to make pizza wasn't to save money or to choose the affordable option. It was just to have a fun thing to do, to try and experiment in the kitchen a little bit, and hopefully learn how to make a really awesome, really delicious pizza.

So, although I planned to make the pizza alone, I was expecting my wife would be out a little later than she ended up being. And it was kind of cool, because I asked her like, "Do you want to cook pizza with me?" And at first, she was like, "No, I've been out all day. I don't want to cook pizza with you." But then, once I came home, and I started getting into it, I think she looked over and was like, that kind of looks fun. That kind of looks interesting. You know, we had a good atmosphere in the kitchen, I had some music playing. And I was rolling out the dough. And it was just a nice kind of vibe we had going on in the kitchen. And I think my wife also maybe felt a little sorry for me, because I was trying to make a perfectly round pizza.

But you know, I don't really have a lot of experience making pizza, so I wasn't able to get the pizza perfectly round. And like I was talking about earlier with the pierogies, my most important thing is the taste. That's **the bottom line**. Taste is more important than presentation, in my opinion when I'm not serving the pizza, or not serving the food to guests. But my wife really, really values presentation. As I've mentioned on Culips before, she's a designer, and she's just really **tuned into** the aesthetic parts of life. So, she always thinks that things should be beautiful if you can make them beautiful. And that was no exception with the pizza. So, she helped me to make the pizza perfectly round and fit perfectly into the pizza pan. And then she was like, "Hey, this is kind of fun!" So, we ended up cooking pizza together. And we could also customize the pizza toppings the way that we liked it. So, she made a pizza, I made a pizza. And we cooked them up in the oven. And we ended up having this like homemade pizza party date. And it was pretty fun.



Now you may be wondering about the taste of the pizza. Well, I think we kind of messed up with the sauce. We just bought this like store-bought sauce. And we bought the one that was on sale because I was already stressing out a little bit about how much the ingredients were costing. And I didn't want to have to pay too, too much money just to make you know, a couple of pizzas at home. So, I did end up just buying the cheapest sauce that was on sale. And that was the weakest link of the pizza. And I regret doing that. But other than that, the dough was good. The toppings were good. This was the first time that I tried cooking a pizza in my oven and I learned that my little oven that I have is actually really good for cooking pizza in as well. So yeah, you know you learn from your mistakes, right? And next time, if I ever do decide to cook a pizza again at home, I will make sure not to **skimp and save** on the pizza sauce. But to try and get a really good pizza sauce as well because that's an important part that really **ties the whole thing together**.

But I believe it was a few Simplified Speech episodes ago with Kassy, Kassy and I were talking about pizza, and we joked that all pizza is better than no pizza and I totally agree with her there. And the homemade pizza that we had, although it wasn't maybe the same quality as you would get at a fancy pizzeria in Italy. In my opinion, it was still pretty good. And thanks to my wife, it also looked really good. So those were a couple of the culinary adventures, the cooking adventures that I've had over the last few weeks here. And I want to keep it up.

And in fact, I realized when I was cooking pizza with my wife, that it's actually a pretty fun couple's activity. And I know there's the expression in English, **too many cooks in the kitchen**. And that is an expression that we use when you know things get stressful, because there are too many people trying to cook one thing at once, and maybe you're butting heads and disagreeing about how the food should be cooked. But I think if you choose a recipe and plan to make a dish, where there's not too much pressure, like pizza, for example, and especially if you're not serving to guests, you're just cooking for yourself, well, then it's an awesome activity for a date night. So, I ran the idea by my wife, I was like, "Hey, you know, like once a month or so we should just pick a different random

recipe. Maybe we could choose some recipes from different countries around the world. And just try cooking together once a month and see how it goes and see if we can't, you know, enjoy some quality time, but also improve our cooking skills as well." So, my wife **seems open to the idea**. And I'm hoping that going forward, we can try that out.

So, it looks like I've done it again. I originally planned to tell you two stories. But then once I got going and got started with the first story, well, it took me a lot longer to explain than I originally thought it would. So how about for this week's episode, everyone, we call it a wrap here. So, I'll save the other story about my wife's visits to Japan, and my week alone here in Seoul for next week. So, if that sounds interesting to you, and please make sure to not miss next week's episode.

So, with that being said, I think that will bring us to the end of this week's bonus episode. Thank you, as always for tuning in. And congratulations on completing another English study session with me. Although you may not realize it, you took one step forward to improving your English fluency here with me today. And I think you can be proud of that, feel good about that. Keep going! You're doing awesome! And if you just keep things up, then you'll continue to improve and get better. And today I told you the story about my recent cooking adventures, but I'm sure a lot of you out there have stories about cooking yourselves. And I'm very, very curious to hear what those are. So don't be shy, be active with your English, and share your stories with me and our Culips community on our Discord. And once again, the link is in the description. Alright, so I'm going to take off now but take care and I'll talk to you next time. Bye!

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## Glossary

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1. **To manifest itself:** To become apparent or clearly visible in actions or results.
2. **Off the cuff:** Speaking without preparation.
3. **Juicy details:** Interesting and exciting details or information.
4. **Lurking:** Staying hidden, usually behind the scenes. Often this has a negative meaning, however, in the context of this episode, it isn't used in a negative way.
5. **By any means:** To any extent.
6. **Got the wheels spinning:** Started thinking or generating ideas.
7. **To get the hang of it:** To learn how to do something well.
8. **From scratch:** From the beginning, without using anything already prepared.
9. **Out of the blue:** Unexpectedly, without warning.
10. **On hand:** Available, within reach.
11. **That was it:** That was all there was.
12. **To prove otherwise:** To show that the opposite is true.
13. **The bottom line:** The most important thing.
14. **To be tuned into something:** To be aware or interested in something.
15. **To skim and save:** To spend very little money, saving as much as possible.
16. **To tie the whole thing together:** To make various parts work well as a whole.
17. **Too many cooks in the kitchen:** Too many people trying to control something, causing problems.
18. **To seem open to the idea:** To appear willing to consider or accept an idea.

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## Episode credits

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Host and preparation: Andrew Bates

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Image: Canva.com