

In Proximity
Season 3 Episode 11
Courtney Storer
Final Transcript

Courtney Storer: This place takes on a lot of different lives. Regarded to The Bear, we train a lot of the cast in this exact space. Culinary producing is sort of being a liaison between all of the different departments for cohesiveness. It's set decorating and props and working together to really execute something, and making sure it's actually reading the right way on the script as it is onscreen.

We are making our Bear red sauce. We're going to grab our salt goblet. We're going to do a chef pinch.

Paola Mardo: Now, what—

Courtney Storer: Do you want to see mine?

Paola Mardo: Yes, please. Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Courtney Storer: Okay.

Paola Mardo: Okay. Oh, my gosh! This is intimidating. [WITH SLOW-MO EFFECT] Wow!

[00:29 - "KN 9 to 5" by Ludwig Göransson]

[VOICEOVER]

Paola Mardo: You're watching and listening to In Proximity. I'm Paola Mardo, and today, we're cooking! [PRETENDS TO HOLD A MIXING BOWL AND STIR] This is cooking.

So this episode starts with a little story time. I was sitting in the studio one day, and I got kind of hungry. It's the holidays, and I wanted something special. I looked at my tie, then checked my mug. It's empty. No snacks in the stu right now. But then, an idea!

So, yes, I walk over to the snack cabinet, and I'm looking for something sweet only to be welcomed by empty shelves. Our snack cabinet order is overdue, and all we have are fruit snacks and soy sauce? Probably from a leftover lunch or something. Love it, but definitely need something more substantial.

So I head to the storage closet and find—what do we have here? Ramen. Okay, I need something else, and that's when it hit me. If I wanted something really good, I had to get out of the studio and visit my new friend, Courtney Storer.

Courtney Storer is a chef, formally the culinary director at Jon & Vinny's, now founder of Coco's to Go-Go, and the culinary producer and co-executive producer of FX's *The Bear*, the critically acclaimed original series that follows Carmen "Carmy" Berzatto played by Jeremy Allen White, Sydney Adamu played by Ayo Edebiri, and their whole kitchen crew as they work to transform Carmy's family sandwich shop, The Beef, into a fine dining restaurant called The Bear.

The Bear was created by Christopher Storer, who is Courtney's brother and who drew inspiration from his experiences, their family, and their hometown of Chicago to create a show that has been praised for its accurate depictions of the realities of the restaurant industry as well as issues like mental illness, toxic workplace environments, gentrification, and creativity, friendship, and family.

So I went out of the In Proximity stu to head to Courtney's kitchen and talk to her about her work as a culinary producer, how she helps bring The Bear's food to life through iconic episodes like "Tomorrow" and "Fishes." And we also cook a staple of Italian American cuisine and on The Bear, red sauce pasta. Get your aprons because we are indeed cooking.

[VOICEOVER ENDS]

Paola Mardo: Welcome to In Proximity, Courtney Storer.

[LAUGHTER]

Courtney Storer: Thank you so much!

Paola Mardo: Thanks for having me in your—what do you call this? Like a kitchen studio? Kitchen?

Courtney Storer: Yeah, kitchen studio is a great way to say it, but it's really, like, my home.

Paola Mardo: Okay. No, it's beautiful. Thanks for welcoming us in. So this podcast is video but also audio. So, for our listeners, but also viewers who are seeing this for the first time, can you talk about what this place is? And what are we looking at? There's so many things to look at in this space.

Courtney Storer: This place takes on a lot of different lives. And, you know, regarded to The Bear, we train a lot of the cast in this exact space. It's been here for five years now. So each season, it's a great, you know, meeting point for the cast to come in and talk about what we're working on for the following season.

Paola Mardo: So The Bear is inspired by you guys—you and Chris—Christopher Storer, creator of the show and showrunner and writer—it's sort of inspired by you guys's family, right?

Courtney Storer: Yeah.

Paola Mardo: And a lot of elements of it—

Courtney Storer: I think a lot of families, yes.

Paola Mardo: Yes, a lot of families.

Courtney Storer: I wouldn't dare say just ours, but a lot. Yeah.

Paola Mardo: Yeah. What do we have, and what are we doing?

Courtney Storer: Okay. So this is a staple in this kitchen and a staple on The Bear. We are making our Bear red sauce, and this is a dish that I make a lot. So, if you're on the crew at The Bear or the cast, you have had my spaghetti. And it's just such a fun dish to make, and I think that it's a great one for everyone to have in their repertoire, but also, you'll see it a lot in the show.

Paola Mardo: Yes.

Courtney Storer: So you'll see red sauce kind of peppered in throughout each season.

Paola Mardo: Splattered, actually, is probably more like it.

Courtney Storer: Yes. Yeah.

[LAUGHTER]

Paola Mardo: For the listeners, we've got, like, a tray of ingredients, literally, like tomato—stewed tomatoes or crushed tomatoes?

Courtney Storer: Yeah.

Paola Mardo: Okay.

Courtney Storer: Yeah, exactly. So these are hand-crushed tomatoes, and this is kind of a similar setup to what we would do on the show. And that's why, you know, I have everything labeled and ready so that we are set up for success.

Paola Mardo: Fabulous.

Courtney Storer: A big part of my job at The Bear. But these are my traditional elements of a red sauce. We've got butter, olive oil, garlic, onion, a little bit of chili flake. We've got parmesan and pecorino for later, a lot of basil, some garlic.

Paola Mardo: Smelling it, actually. It smells amazing.

Courtney Storer: Yes. So I'm going to have you add the butter. You can just—

Paola Mardo: Ooh, all of it!

Courtney Storer:—dump it in!

Paola Mardo: Okay.

Courtney Storer: Yeah.

Paola Mardo: All of this butter. Fabulous.

Courtney Storer: Because I like to feed a lot of people. You're going to drizzle some olive oil in.

Paola Mardo: Okay. Just kind of feel it.

Courtney Storer: Just go, and I'll tell you when.

Paola Mardo: Okay. Okay.

Courtney Storer: Keep going. And for people listening, it's about 5 tablespoons of olive oil, maybe six or seven.

Paola Mardo: Okay, cool.

Courtney Storer: And we're looking at our heat, so we're going to turn our heat to about medium. And then I diced this onion for us.

Paola Mardo: Fab. Ooh!

Courtney Storer: You can go ahead and drop that in.

Paola Mardo: Fabulous. This is great.

Courtney Storer: This is like a mellow, slow cook.

Paola Mardo: Okay.

Courtney Storer: We're kind of waking up the onion.

Paola Mardo: Okay.

Courtney Storer: And to cheat that, we're going to grab our salt goblet. So just grab that whole big thing down.

Paola Mardo: This thing? This thing.

Courtney Storer: And you're going to do a big—so I'll hold it for you.

Paola Mardo: Oh, yeah, yeah, yeah.

Courtney Storer: You're going to do a chef pinch.

Paola Mardo: Okay.

Courtney Storer: Do you want to see mine?

Paola Mardo: Now, what—yes, please.

Courtney Storer: Okay.

Paola Mardo: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Courtney Storer: So my chef pinch looks like this. [GRABS HANDFUL OF SALT AND SPRINKLES INTO ONIONS]

Paola Mardo: [WITH SLOW-MO EFFECT] Wow!

Paola Mardo: This is intimidating.

Courtney Storer: I know! It's scary!

[LAUGHTER]

Paola Mardo: I'm used to, like, a little, like, quarter of that. [SPRINKLES SALT INTO ONIONS] Oh, my gosh. Is that a lot?

Courtney Storer: That's perfect.

Paola Mardo: Okay, great.

Courtney Storer: That's perfect.

Paola Mardo: Fab, fab.

Courtney Storer: And what that salt's going to do is it starts to have that onion release a little bit of liquid, and that really releases the flavor, which we want.

Paola Mardo: Do I keep stirring or—

Courtney Storer: Keep stirring right now.

Paola Mardo: Okay. Cool.

Courtney Storer: And you're going to give a chef's pinch of chili flake.

Paola Mardo: Chef's pinch. I'm loving the chef's pinch. Fabulous.

[STOVE TURNS ON]

Courtney Storer: And then we have garlic, obviously.

Paola Mardo: Yes! Got to have the garlic. So how much garlic is this?

Courtney Storer: This is eight cloves of garlic.

Paola Mardo: Okay.

Courtney Storer: And some of these were gigantic, so it's really like six, but whatever.

Paola Mardo: How many are we cooking for, actually?

Courtney Storer: This is for seven people. So, if you're doing this at home, you're going to scale back.

Paola Mardo: Yes.

Courtney Storer: How are your knife skills?

Paola Mardo: I can cut.

Courtney Storer: Ooh, okay!

Paola Mardo: I can cut, but I don't know how perfectly.

Courtney Storer: Okay. Well, that's okay. We're not—we're not testing you for Michelin or anything.

Paola Mardo: Okay. Okay.

[CHOPPING GARLIC]

Courtney Storer: So you're just going to go ahead and do what I call "the sprinkler method"—

Paola Mardo: Ooh.

Courtney Storer:—which is just to sort of come through and chop this all. I hope you don't mind smelling like garlic for the rest of the day.

Paola Mardo: No! I love—I love garlic. So I'm into it.

[PAOLA CHOPS GARLIC]

Courtney Storer: I sort of smell like garlic at all times.

Paola Mardo: I like this sprinkler method.

Courtney Storer: And while you're doing that, I'm just keeping an eye on our onions. I haven't changed the heat at all.

[SIZZLE AS COURTNEY STIRS THE POT]

Paola Mardo: Okay. So when you do this on set, I mean, are you literally—oh, you said you guys have a kitchen on set, right?

Courtney Storer: Yeah. Right. Yes.

Paola Mardo: Is that normal? Do TV shows have kitchens?

Courtney Storer: No, not normal. We, we fought for that, and we have a whole culinary team. So, you know, this operation takes quite the village. I have CJ, who's my co-culinary producer, and then I work with a couple Chicago-based chefs, Brian Lockwood and Justin Selk, and then Nicole Bayani. We have, like, a whole culinary crew. And now, we have a kitchen.

Paola Mardo: Yes.

[PAOLA PICKS UP CHOPPED GARLIC WITH KNIFE]

Courtney Storer: So we grew from Season 1.

[COURTNEY PUSHES PLASTIC CONTAINER TOWARDS PAOLA]

Courtney Storer: That says "butter," by the—okay, so be careful on that.

Paola Mardo: Yes.

Courtney Storer: But beautiful job!

Paola Mardo: Thank you.

Courtney Storer: That was very natural.

Paola Mardo: Thank you! You set me up for success, so got to do it. Got to do it.

Courtney Storer: Got it.

Paola Mardo: Got to do it. And what time does your day start?

Courtney Storer: Early.

Paola Mardo: How early?

Courtney Storer: Like 4:30 in the morning.

Paola Mardo: Oh, wow.

Courtney Storer: We're used to restaurant setup. So it's very, very helpful for us to get there before the whole crew and cast sets up so that we can really get, like, the framework in place.

Paola Mardo: Yeah.

Courtney Storer: And work with the director. So it's really helpful on days—like, obviously Chris, being my brother, knows me from restaurants. So we have this little language that is, like, the best.

[8:27 - "In Proximity '90s" by Ludwig Göransson]

Paola Mardo: Stirring tomato into the garlic, buttery onion situation.

Courtney Storer: Yes! Yes.

Paola Mardo: Smells amazing.

Courtney Storer: It already smells so good, right?

Paola Mardo: Yes. What's set life like for a culinary producer. You just said you could get in at 4:30 in the morning.

Courtney Storer: It's so fun. Coffee first.

Paola Mardo: Yeah.

Courtney Storer: And then, you know, we usually set up a lot of stuff before, the night before. So similar to how we have these trays, we block out the scenes. So I can show you—

Paola Mardo: Yes.

Courtney Storer:—sort of how we arrange our day. [SETS PAPERS ON COUNTER] So this is what we call our Culinary Reference Guide. And we put these together for each episode so we know, when we look at the script, that we are prepared with not only our set decorating team but also our props department, and we all work sort of in unison to kind to bring to life some of these more tricky culinary scenes.

Preparation comes from us buying the right produce, placing it, and then also making sure the entire team cohesively knows what we're doing because it is a little bit advanced. The show itself is tracking a Michelin-level restaurant, which is, you know, very precise in how they set things up and also the tools that they use over things that they don't.

Paola Mardo: Right.

Courtney Storer: So it's just really important that everyone's on the same page. So the writing team sets us up with the scenes and where they're going to be, and then visually, we provide what we think it's going to look like as chefs.

Paola Mardo: Right.

Courtney Storer: And then we come to a middle ground: Is this rosemary bud the same thing that Chris wants to see, or whoever's directing?

Paola Mardo: And this is from the first episode of Season 3—

Courtney Storer: Yes.

Paola Mardo:—which is basically, we see multiple storylines but really focused on Carmy and his journey going to culinary school?

Courtney Storer: Yeah, yeah.

Paola Mardo: And then the different restaurants that he works in, Copenhagen and the—

Courtney Storer: New York.

Paola Mardo: New York.

Courtney Storer: Yeah.

Paola Mardo: I mean, I rewatched this and did not know, like, man, there's so many dishes, so many techniques, like you mentioned earlier, and, yeah, just a lot of detail.

Courtney Storer: Exactly what you're saying, you know, we're going back and forth through Carmy's journey, and what skills is he learning along the way? And that's really, really important from, you know, fileting a fish in his culinary journey 10 years ago to when you see him do it alone at The Bear and how he's able to do that competently.

Paola Mardo: Yes.

Courtney Storer: And how you get to that level in a career is you have to work hard. You have to do it 100 million times to get it.

Paola Mardo: Yes!

Courtney Storer: And we really had to show that onscreen.

Paola Mardo: Yeah. I remember seeing the peas, and it's, like, just a bunch of people shucking peas. But it's, like—you're like—here, it says, "a giant pile of peas," but you also have to blanch it, shuck it, peel it.

Courtney Storer: Yeah.

Paola Mardo: Like, you're thinking about all the little actions that they're doing, as well.

Courtney Storer: Absolutely. Absolutely. Like, peas in that episode are very significant. We see them placed in Carmy's dish at The Bear. You see them, you know, when he's working at Ever in Chicago. And so we really wanted to see how Carmy is taking something from his past and then bringing it into his present and that he, you know, recognizes his relationship with Chef Terry and loves her, and it makes it to his plate kind of like an homage to her.

Paola Mardo: Yeah.

Courtney Storer: And a lot of chefs experience that, and that's such a, like, special part of cooking in your journey—is, like, getting to build these relationships with your mentors.

Paola Mardo: Yeah.

Courtney Storer: Brian Lockwood, who helped us for this specific episode, and also Will Guidara and my culinary team, we kind of had to think about what are we going to do when we're in Chicago, and techniques that we needed to teach Jeremy, who plays Carmy, along the way. Like, it was very important to say, "Okay, we really need to get a beautiful demi glace on a plate. He's got to learn how to plate a demi glace." And how do you make a demi glace? It's a very—technique-wise, something that is used a lot in Michelin but is made a lot of different ways. And how, how did we want to show that hit the plate?

And then also the simplicity—you can see there's three components on this dish. So you can see that it's also, like, a very simple take on something quite complex.

Paola Mardo: Right. It's, like, a piece of Wagyu beef—

Courtney Storer: Yup. Perfectly cooked. Yup.

Paola Mardo:—the split pea. Yeah, perfectly cooked. And then a little bit of that demi glace. So you guys invented, like, the look of it, or is it written in the script?

Courtney Storer: The writing team put this on the plate. They're putting it on the script. So this is our interpretation. Why this document is so helpful is because then we sit down, we all review it together.

Paola Mardo: Gotcha.

Courtney Storer: So if any—you know, if the director's like, "Ooh, that's not what I envisioned," and luckily Chris and I, you know, are able to communicate a lot about, "Okay, is this the vibe, or is this the vibe?" in live action. I'm texting him photos as we're training, as well.

Paola Mardo: Oh, wow.

[12:58 - "Good Times" by Ludwig Göransson]

Paola Mardo: Checking on the sauce.

Courtney Storer: Can you stir?

Paola Mardo: Oh, yeah. It's a little—

Courtney Storer: Is it sticking at all?

Paola Mardo: A little bit.

Courtney Storer: A little bit. Okay. So if it's sticking a little, we just pull it all the way down.

Paola Mardo: When you say "sticking," like, when I push at it—

Courtney Storer: Like, it's sticky. But it's not burnt.

Paola Mardo: No.

Courtney Storer: But it's sticky. It's almost like slow tar.

Paola Mardo: Yes! Ooh, it is a little bit.

Courtney Storer: But it's not burning.

Paola Mardo: I remember in *The Bear*, there was a scene where Mikey, Carmy's brother was like, "Mix that sauce. I can hear it sticking." something like that.

Courtney Storer: That's why I said it!

[PAOLA AND COURTNEY HIGH-FIVE]

Paola Mardo: Yes! I'm like, that's what that is.

[13:29 - "In Proximity '90s" by Ludwig Göransson]

Paola Mardo: You said actors train here, and I think this is your kitchen. [POINTING TO PHOTO]

Courtney Storer: Yes.

Paola Mardo: You have Jeremy Allen White. What's he doing?

Courtney Storer: He "runs turnip through mandolin, slow like Boulud." Daniel Boulud is his mentor. He does the carrot the same way, potato the same way. "All shoot out in perfect circles." This is—

Paola Mardo: And that's in the script?

Courtney Storer: Yeah!

Paola Mardo: Oh.

Courtney Storer: So then we make them practice.

Paola Mardo: Very cool.

Courtney Storer: So that's really important that, you know, especially for this episode, technique-wise, there's quite a lot that we covered in that—in that episode. So luckily, he picks everything up super quickly, which is not normal. They all do! I was shocked.

Paola Mardo: That's great. I mean—

Courtney Storer: I was really shocked. Yeah.

Paola Mardo: But what were the—going into it, were you like, "Ooh, training actors, what's that going to be?" Were you a little nervous?

Courtney Storer: You know what's weird, I was—I was excited just because I knew Jeremy from coming to Jon & Vinny's, and Ayo and Lionel. So I was really excited to work with all of them. I was worried that I was going to make it too difficult, but luckily, like, everyone was really excited and willing.

Paola Mardo: They were game.

Courtney Storer: Yeah, they were. Enthusiasm goes a long way.

Paola Mardo: Yeah. No, it does.

Courtney Storer: You can be taught anything.

Paola Mardo: That's great. I'm learning right now.

Courtney Storer: Exactly.

[14:26 - "In Proximity '90s" by Ludwig Göransson]

[VIDEO CLIP: "FISHES" - THE BEAR FROM FX AND HULU]

Donna: Just say it!

Carmy: I love you, alright?

Mikey: Thank you!

[DONNA KISSES CARMY ON THE CHEEK]

Mikey: Thank you! Thank you.

[MIKEY KISSES CARMY ON THE CHEEK]

Donna: Okay.

Mikey: So happy the bear's home!

Donna: Yes. I'm happy. Come here. I am happy.

[DONNA EMBRACES CARMY]

Carry: Hi. Yeah. Okay.

Donna: Happy, happy! You know, it's nice being back again—

[VIDEO CONTINUES TO PLAY WITHOUT AUDIO]

[VOICEOVER]

Paola Mardo: Since it's the holidays, we decided to revisit the infamous "Fishes" episode. It's the sixth episode of the second season and is set around the holidays when the Berzatto family reunites at the home of family matriarch Donna, played by the incomparable Jamie Lee Curtis. It starts off like any typical family holiday get-together, but then it devolves into something deeper and darker as family secrets and deep-seated emotions and trauma are brought to the surface.

No spoilers here, but just know that this event is very food-centric and is set during the Italian American holiday of the Feast of the Seven Fishes. Here's Donna explaining the supposed origins of the holiday to Richie, played by Ebon Moss-Bachrach, with Uncle Lee played by Bob Odenkirk.

[VOICEOVER ENDS]

[VIDEO CONTINUES PLAYING WITH AUDIO]

Richie: Why the seven fishes?

Donna: Oh, my god! What is up with everyone today?

Richie: I just made—

Donna: I'm just trying to make a nice fucking thing!

Richie: Why the fuck do people even do it?

Donna: Because it's based on people who left Italy to find new dreams and homes with new people, and they brought their seven best things from their sea to their new homes and not so their families end up being a bunch of fucking jagoffs.

Lee: That's not even close!

Donna: What's not even close?

[VIDEO CLIP ENDS]

Paola Mardo: For those who don't know, what is the Feast of the Seven Fishes?

Courtney Storer: It's usually around Christmas, and it's usually highlighted around seven fishes. And like they talk about in *The Bear* is—the origination of what the seven fishes is is a whole different episode. But I think a lot of Italians still maintain this holiday, and they make, you know, seven traditional Italian dishes with seafood as the main ingredient. And it's very labor-intensive.

Paola Mardo: Yeah. So what are we looking at right now?

Courtney Storer: Well, this is my inspiration binder. Super duper important in the work that we do on the show is visual learning, visual cues, right?

Paola Mardo: Yes.

Courtney Storer: Visual things, dreaming. Dreaming, brainstorming, and with the seven fishes, I had so much fun thinking about what it could look like, which was great. And I think, on the pre-production side, it was really cool because we could put all these photos up. So these actually lived in my office, and, you know, I could show all the other producers and the team and the set team, the props team. And we could all dream up things together.

Paola Mardo: Can you talk about this day? We have this beautiful photo of Jamie Lee, who plays Donna, the mother—

Courtney Storer: Yes.

Paola Mardo:—in all black.

Courtney Storer: Yeah, that's—you know.

Paola Mardo: Like yourself. I love it. And she's holding up a tray. What is this tray?

Courtney Storer: So branzino—so when we had to do the menu for seven fishes, that was a big part of it: What is going to be on the table? And what actions will Jamie have to kind of maneuver that day? What are her props? What things is she pulling in and out of the oven?

Paola Mardo: Because this is her character's home.

Courtney Storer: Yes.

Paola Mardo: And everyone's coming to the home, and she's cooking.

Courtney Storer: Exactly.

Paola Mardo: And she's sort of, like, territorial about it, right? Is that—yeah.

Courtney Storer: Of course! She's like, "I'm making seven fishes by myself. I don't need anybody," you know?

Paola Mardo: Exactly, exactly.

Courtney Storer: "I don't need anyone's help. I've got it! I've got it."

Paola Mardo: Yes. To get you thinking about these images, what did you think when you read the story, the script?

Courtney Storer: Heartache, you know, vibrance, colors. Like, you know, like a lot of red. Like, because I'm a visual person, you know, when you think about, like, a bleeding heart like, you know, heartache, loneliness, suffering, pain, all those things. And then holidays, Christmas, red!

Paola Mardo: Yes. Red, yeah!

Courtney Storer: You know, green, Italian, like all these things kind of combining and what these characters might be experiencing and how I can do that through the food.

Paola Mardo: Yeah, through this family holiday, family reunion.

Courtney Storer: Yeah.

Paola Mardo: I ask because I'm staring at, literally, a photo of a hand—

Courtney Storer: Tuna.

Paola Mardo: Tuna being cut, a lot of blood happening, and it's, it's very vivid, very red.

Courtney Storer: Sure. Yeah, yeah. That's—I'm telling you, inspiration in all sorts of forms, but I think, as a cook, that is something that you're surrounded by all the time, is vibrance, just, like, things, flavors, colors, textures. And how could I show that in food? was really, really important. So I pulled from a lot of my favorite cookbooks, some chefs that I love and admire and kind of looked at the ways that I was feeling and how I could show that in a picture.

Paola Mardo: Yeah.

Courtney Storer: So it was helpful for me, you know, to look at sort of like a Sophia Loren, you know, a beautiful platter of—this is, I think, an eggplant dish she made, but just sort of this stark contrast of, like, presentable beauty and then what's underneath it. And how could you show that in food? How, how is that possible when all the candles are lit and all the things seemingly feel and look beautiful? What's actually underneath all of that?

Chris, you know, definitely wanted an action for Jamie. And I was thinking, what could Jamie Lee, who plays Donna, what could she be doing in the episode? And so this was sort of my process, thinking about, is she touching fish? Is she touching the meatballs? And, as you can see, you know—

Paola Mardo: There we go. It's a heaping pot of meatballs in red sauce, a lot of splatter on the counter. And, and I like this. What is this? This is like a cookbook photo.

Courtney Storer: This is from a cookbook I gave Chris, and then I took it back. Typical little sister. This photo represents a lot of effort like the precision, the way things are cut, the flowers, the doily, the tray. That is sort of the seven fishes, like all the effort, all the care that goes into something. And then the emotional energy can't hold it all, and it just breaks! You know? And I thought about something as pretty as this just falling off the counter.

Paola Mardo: Yeah.

Courtney Storer: So that was an idea that we had.

Paola Mardo: Well, what was it like kind of—I guess, personally, putting that scene together and being a part of it, that episode?

Courtney Storer: Yeah. It was incredible because first of all, I love the cast so much, and everyone was together with the crew. My brother was there. It was almost like a corrective holiday experience. Even in the dysfunction, it felt like art therapy.

Paola Mardo: Art therapy?

Courtney Storer: Yeah.

Paola Mardo: Why art therapy?

Courtney Storer: Because I was putting red sauce all over. I was making a mess. I was creating the thing that I was afraid of a lot, which was that feeling of unsteadiness and chaos as a kid. And I think when you take the reins on that and give yourself a corrective experience and where you're in the control of it, it's quite therapeutic, if that makes sense. Doing it, you know, alongside my brother and our whole team, it was really special. I'll never forget it.

And having Jamie that day, you know, teaching her how to break the heads off the lobsters, it was amazing. And her holding my hand, and, you know, it was just so—an amazing way to connect.

Paola Mardo: Do you have fun, like, either set memories from this day or even another day that, like, still stick in your brain?

Courtney Storer: Oh, my gosh. I mean, it was—it was amazing! That day, everyone was frustrated because everything on the table was edible, but in the context—

Paola Mardo: Oh, my gosh.

Courtney Storer:—we had to be very—

Paola Mardo: I didn't think about that!

Courtney Storer: Yeah.

[LAUGHTER]

Paola Mardo: So everyone was, like, hungry.

Courtney Storer: That's the crazy part, is everything on the show that we make is edible. Jon Bernthal always cracks me up because he's always eating. I'm so careful to make sure—like, our whole team is—to make sure everything tastes really good because a lot of times, the cast will want to nibble, and not just the cast but the crew.

Paola Mardo: Yeah!

Courtney Storer: You got to take care of the crew.

Paola Mardo: Yeah.

Courtney Storer: If you don't take care of the crew, forget about it!

[22:00 - "Good Times" by Ludwig Göransson]

Courtney Storer: So then I go...

Paola Mardo: Oh, my gosh. She literally is tilting the salt thing into the pot! Wow.

Courtney Storer: Yes, I am!

Paola Mardo: Wow. Okay.

Courtney Storer: Yes, I am. And then pasta. You want to do the honors?

[COURTNEY HANDS PAOLA BUNCH OF DRY SPAGHETTI NOODLES]

Paola Mardo: Oh, sure. Why not? Oh, my god, do I drop it like—

Courtney Storer: Yeah, just drop it. Yay! A beautiful job.

Paola Mardo: Love it. There have been shows about food or with food, not quite as, I think, nuanced as The Bear. And culinary producer, you don't hear that role very often.

Courtney Storer: No!

Paola Mardo: So we haven't asked you—

Courtney Storer: I didn't even know!

Paola Mardo: What is this job?

Courtney Storer: Yeah, good question.

Paola Mardo: We talked about it throughout, but, like, how would you sort of describe it to someone who just—who hears it for the first time and is like, "What do you do?"

Courtney Storer: I think culinary producing is sort of being a liaison between all the different departments for cohesiveness.

Paola Mardo: Gotcha.

Courtney Storer: It's set decorating and props and working together to really execute something and making sure it's actually reading the right way on the script as it is onscreen. I think that there is a whole world of the culinary arts that can be difficult to illustrate on camera just because there are so many technicalities. And there's such a wide range of kitchens, you know, from a mom-and-pop owned restaurant to, like, The Beef in Chicago.

Paola Mardo: Yeah, The Beef. Yep, and The Bear. Mr. Beef and The Bear.

Courtney Storer: Mr. Beef and then The Bear, and the wild contrast of all things in-between: catering versus private cheffing versus being a chef at a restaurant. And so it really is to work to really make sure things feel accurate, I think. A culinary producer is also in charge of kind of being the facilitator amongst all the different amazing chefs we've had join us on the seasons

and reaching out to the industry to ask for help. There's no way we could have made this show without so many other chefs that helped us.

Paola Mardo: It's great. There's also when Terry, I guess, shuts her restaurant down.

Courtney Storer: Yes.

Paola Mardo: And all the chefs show up.

Courtney Storer: Yes. Yes.

Paola Mardo: It's, like, kind of crazy.

Courtney Storer: I know.

Paola Mardo: It's, like—it's a funeral for a restaurant, so to speak.

Courtney Storer: Yes.

Paola Mardo: But, yeah, just the amount of focus you guys had in there just for that detail because you guys could've just cast actors.

Courtney Storer: Right, right.

Paola Mardo: But you guys wanted to bring in chefs.

Courtney Storer: Because it's so important. Like, every, every chef you work for, you carry them in your heart forever no matter where you go. Good, bad, ugly, or indifferent, like, those people, you know, stick to your ribs sort of a thing. And I think it's really important when restaurants succeed or they don't make it, like, how chefs show up for each other. It's really family. It's community. We need each other. Restaurants more than ever right now need support. And I think in that scene with Terry sort of moving on to her next thing, it's really like a respect to show up and say, "Hey, thank you," and, "We appreciate what you've made." It's kind of like a play.

Paola Mardo: Yeah, it is.

Courtney Storer: Similar things like being grateful for the art and taking it with you.

[24:52 - "In Proximity '90s" by Ludwig Göransson]

Paola Mardo: Ooh, beautiful.

Courtney Storer: Beauty shot!

Paola Mardo: Get that.

Courtney Storer: Watch out. Don't burn yourself. [PULLING PASTA FROM BOILING WATER WITH TONGS] Right into the pan.

Paola Mardo: Okay. Do we—

Courtney Storer: So did you see how I did that with tongs?

Paola Mardo: Mm-hmm. We're doing this thing where we go into your community, and we asked someone in your Bear family to send a little message/question for you, and it's a surprise.

Courtney Storer: No way! Oh my god.

Paola Mardo: And you will answer their question. Are you ready?

Courtney Storer: Yes! This is so cool!

Paola Mardo: Okay, here we go. I'm just going to play it right here.

Courtney Storer: Oh!

[VIDEO CLIP: SURPRISE QUESTION]

Matty Matheson: Hi, Coco! You know, Matty here. Hi, everybody on the ol' podcast. You guys are podcasting, talking about probably incredible things, you know?

[OVER VIDEO]

Courtney Storer: Is he on a boat?

Paola Mardo: I think so.

[LAUGHTER]

[VIDEO CONTINUES]

Matty Matheson: And, Coco, first off, I just wanted to say you're the greatest, you know? Literally one of the greatest chefs, friends. All around, just, what a perfect, perfect person you are. We love you. I love you. We love you. Everybody loves you.

What are you really actually doing to take care of Coco in those moments when Coco needs Coco, you know? I love you so much.

[OVER VIDEO]

Courtney Storer: I love him.

[VIDEO CONTINUES]

Matty Matheson: And I hope you have a beautiful day. I'm sure this podcast is incredible, and—

[OVER VIDEO]

Paola Mardo: Of course.

Courtney Storer: Yes, it is!

[VIDEO CONTINUES]

Matty Matheson: And, you know, the world needs more Cocos! I love you. Bye.

[VIDEO CLIP ENDS]

Courtney Storer: I love you! Aww, that's—that's really—I love stuff like that, so you just—that's my love language. I don't know which language that is, but, thank you, Matty, for that. That was really, really sweet.

Paola Mardo: Yes. Shout out! Can you tell—well, that was Matty Matheson.

Courtney Storer: Yeah!

Paola Mardo: Can you tell folks who he is and how you guys know each other, actually?

Courtney Storer: Yeah. If, if folks don't know Matty Matheson, look him up because he's the best. And he's a dear friend. I have known Matty, you know, probably for about 13 years. I met him very early on in my chef journey here in Los Angeles. And he is such a great example of someone who, like, can be this big food personality but also can work to elbow-to-elbow. He—he's like a cook's cook.

For a while, Chris and Matty, their paths never crossed. And I was like, "Matty, you're doing television. My brother's doing television and movies. Like, just meet each other because there might be something there." The rest is history. They finally set a meeting, and Matty's become like family to us. And it's really special for me to see the relationship he's built with Chris and maintains with me. And that's really sweet. Yeah.

Paola Mardo: I love that! Yeah, the message was awesome. Shout out, Matty Matheson.

Courtney Storer: Yes!

Paola Mardo: He's also an actor on The Bear, of course.

Courtney Storer: Yes.

Paola Mardo: And executive producer.

Courtney Storer: Yes.

Paola Mardo: Where you are a culinary producer. So how are you taking care of yourself, right?

Courtney Storer: Yeah.

Paola Mardo: Because he was saying you do so many things. What does Coco do—nickname—when it's time for your time for yourself?

Courtney Storer: Well, I think one of the things he said is, "You find a way to help others," and helping others has really helped me. And I know that that might seem crazy, but it's the biggest reward for me, you know, teaching people how to cook, being around food, because that's how I really kind of felt a lot better in my own mental health journey and in my own headspace. I think, as a really anxious kid, a little bit on the, you know, ADD spectrum, just, like, moving really, really fast all the time, I found that a lot of stimulation helped me. Working in a team helped me. And I take it so seriously to be able to pass that gift on to others.

It also is my way of providing some sort of food legacy. I think that's my responsibility. Like, all these opportunities that I have, not only that have come my way from the show, but also in restaurants, is that when people look up to you, what example are you, you know, setting?

[28:44 - "Prox Recs Theme" with Ludwig Göransson and Ken Nana]

[COURTNEY SERVING PASTA]

Courtney Storer: Give it a little twist.

Paola Mardo: Ooh, a little twirl. On the show, we ask everyone to do a Prox Rec or a recommendation for listeners/viewers. It could really be anything. Most people do a recommendation for what they do. So, for you, you're our first chef on the show. So, yeah, what would your recommendation be, your Prox Rec?

Courtney Storer: I would say, you know, Essentials of Italian Cooking by Marcella Hazan. The Essentials of Italian Cooking is a book I carried with me just because it felt like a piece of home.

Even when I cooked in Paris, I brought it with me. It just has been a really grounding energy thing to pick up and touch and watch how far I've come.

And I think cookbooks have a really strong—like, I have a really strong connection to them because of where I was in my cooking career. So just like people have huge movie collections, I have huge cookbook collections, and I'm always seeking out, like, the older, you know, dusty cookbooks because I think how people taught cooking was so different, you know, 50 years ago to where it's at now. And it's just so important to, like, reference back to go forward.

[30:10 - "Good Times" by Ludwig Göransson]

Paola Mardo: Oh, my gosh!

[SPRINKLING CHEESE ON RED SAUCE PASTA]

Courtney Storer: Bon appetit!

Paola Mardo: Bon appetit! Cheers! Wait, we cheers.

Courtney Storer: Cheers.

Paola Mardo: We cheers!

Courtney Storer: Cheers.

Paola Mardo: Cheers to you! Thank you.

Courtney Storer: Nothing better, you know?

Paola Mardo: Thanks.

[EATING RED SAUCE PASTA]

Paola Mardo: Mm.

Courtney Storer: Nice, right?

Paola Mardo: This is delicious. Thank you very much, Courtney. This was so fun. Thanks for teaching me a little bit more about cooking, sharing your journey on The Bear and what you do. And, yeah, excited for the next season but also just very amazing to hear all about your work and your process. So thank you.

Courtney Storer: It's my pleasure. I'm such a fan of In Proximity. Keep going. And we'll see you next time!

Paola Mardo: Oh, we will.

[LAUGHTER]

[30:39 - In Proximity Theme by Ludwig Göransson]

[VOICEOVER]

Paola Mardo: In Proximity is a production of Proximity Media.

The show is hosted, directed, and produced by Paola Mardo.

Executive producers are Ryan Coogler, Zinzi Coogler, and Sev Ohanian.

Theme song and additional music by Ludwig Göransson.

Patrick Epino is our co-director and director of photography.

Ken Nana is our sound designer and mix engineer.

The production team includes Brittani Brown, Isabella Miller, and Alexandria Santana.

Follow us on social media @proximitymedia. For transcripts and more information, head to proximitymedia.com.

[VOICEOVER ENDS]