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on her new book, new store, and life in Nashville

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# *R*new *Roots*

Behold Kristin Cavallari's evolution from SoCal starlet to Nashville-based entrepreneur.

BY KATY LINDENMUTH

In 2004, Kristin Cavallari made her television debut on *Laguna Beach* as the queen of California cool: tan, blond, and a master of attracting drama, and then shutting it down with a cutting one-liner. But, if you can believe it, the landmark MTV reality show wasn't 100-percent real. Cavallari had lived in Laguna for only two years when producers cast her as their sun-kissed high-school villain—she grew up in Denver and the Chicago suburbs—and off-screen, she was your typical confused teen.

"Sixteen, 17, 18, I was a mess," Cavallari, who moved to Nashville last spring, confesses over tea at a crowded Green Hills coffee shop. "I remember watching that show and being like, 'I don't know who I am, but I know I don't want to be that person.' In a lot of ways, it's helped me because it really made me look inside and figure out myself and know that I didn't want to be this nasty, unhappy girl."

More than a decade later, Cavallari has retained that self-awareness and developed the chill confidence of her MTV persona. Now 31 and a mom of three under six, she's also building a Nashville-based lifestyle empire that includes her year-old jewelry company, Uncommon James, and a clean-eating cookbook that's been simmering on her to-do list for years. Out April 3 via Rodale Books, *True Roots* reflects her healthy, balanced outlook on food.

"I try to eat as natural as possible, which sounds easy, but has actually become way more complicated than people realize," she explains. "I don't read calorie [counts]; I only read ingredients. If

it's heavily processed or there are a lot of additives, I just don't eat it. Eighty percent of the time, I stick by that. The other 20 percent, when I go out to eat or I'm traveling, I don't think about it. I'm not in a restaurant paranoid that I'm eating GMOs. I enjoy it, I indulge, I have fun, and then I get back on track."

*True Roots* is Cavallari's 80 percent. All 100-plus recipes are free of gluten and refined sugar, and only a few include dairy. The book is full of gorgeously shot dishes, like prosciutto-wrapped trout and blackberry-glazed duck, and just as prominently featured are photos of her family: husband Jay Cutler, sons Camden and Jaxon, and daughter Saylor. Unknowingly, they helped Cavallari break some bad diet habits that lingered from her 20s.

"My lifestyle really changed when I had kids," she says. "When I got pregnant with Camden, my oldest, it was the freest I had been around food. During my pregnancy, I didn't put any restrictions on myself; I let myself indulge. I was the happiest. That was a turning point for me."

It also helped that she'd escaped the Hollywood scene. After starring in a second reality series, *The Hills*, and taking a stab at acting, she met and fell in love with NFL star Cutler, now a Miami Dolphins quarterback. At the time, he was playing for the Chicago Bears, but he'd gotten his start on the Vanderbilt gridiron—and he took Cavallari to his old stomping grounds on one of their first whirlwind dates.





*“...I love  
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I feel like  
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life.”*

"Jay introduced me to Nashville," she says proudly. "It was the second time we had ever hung out. We did the whole Broadway thing—I remember seeing Winners and Losers and thinking those were the funniest names...I fell in love with the people; I fell in love with the city."

Within a year, the couple was engaged and had bought a house in Green Hills; then, they had their wedding in downtown Nashville and started spending Cutler's off-seasons here. But Chicago was still their home base and where Cavallari was focusing on her business ventures: a trendy shoe line with Chinese Laundry, regular red-carpet coverage for E!, and her first book, a *New York Times* best-selling snapshot of her busy life, called *Balancing in Heels*. By the time the family had grown to five and officially moved to Nashville in April 2017, she was finishing up *True Roots* and prepping for the launch of Uncommon James. Unlike the shoe collaboration and even the cookbook—which she coauthored with Chicago chef Mike Kubiesa—the jewelry line is completely hers.

"Having that kind of creative freedom is so refreshing and so amazing," she says. "Being able to do what I want is so much more rewarding for me. It's a dream job."

The **Uncommon James Spring 2018 collection**, available March 1, features a pair of delicate gold hoop earrings, a crescent pendant necklace, and pink tassel earrings. As with the two previously released collections, the pieces are simple, easy to mix and match, and sold exclusively at [UncommonJames.com](http://UncommonJames.com)—for now. Later this month, Cavallari plans to open a brick-and-mortar shop in The Gulch, where she'll sell the jewelry in addition to her upcoming home goods line (think tongs, textiles, and totes) and items from other local brands.

"The majority of my time is spent on Uncommon James," she says. "I love the jewelry, but I *love* owning a company. I feel like I've finally found what I'm supposed to be doing, and I'm just having the time of my life."

*Get to know Kristin Cavallari's favorite local places and activities at [NashvilleLifestyles.com](http://NashvilleLifestyles.com).*





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