

# PARTY *of* FIVE

AS THE FAMILY WELCOME THEIR NEWEST ADDITION, Rhiane Kirkby CATCHES UP WITH Jamie Oliver TO TALK WEANING, SUPERFOODS AND FATHERHOOD



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**A** new addition to any household usually brings with it some chaos, and when that little bundle of joy is your fifth child, you'd be forgiven for taking things a bit easier. Not Jamie Oliver. Despite the arrival of his baby boy, River Rocket, he's still found the time to bring out a new book and TV series. And he also claims to have more energy than ever before – that's despite getting up every night to help with the early morning feeds. "I see how tired Jools gets and I'm happy to be hands-on. The first couple of months are incredibly hard and sleep deprivation, well, it's a bit of a nightmare!"

So how does Jamie still appear to have boundless energy? "It's down to my superfood philosophy," he explains. "Superfoods," I retort sceptically. "Do they really exist?"

"Well," says Jamie, "there are definitely foods which are better for you, such as green leafy vegetables and unsalted nuts – but it's all about variety. There isn't one superfood for me – it's the superfood *principles* which put you on the path to good health."

What's more, Jamie guarantees his latest recipes will "fill you up and revive, restore and energise you." Given his non-stop work schedule and hectic family life, these bold claims are something I'm keen to explore. I ask whether superfoods really can give tired and overworked new parents the energy kick they crave. "Definitely," says Jamie. "People mistake energy for sugar most of the time, but it's far better to eat slow-release foods that stabilise your insulin. I eat a handful of nuts every day and you can't go wrong with eggs, but the best thing to do is swap white pasta for whole wheat and white rice for brown."

For Jamie, it's never too early to adopt this approach. "Research suggests that mums who eat a wide range of nutritious foods during pregnancy end up with babies with the same range of tastes in weaning and in later life, too."



Jamie captures a moment with newborn River Rocket

And talking of weaning, I ask Jamie about his experiences and whether he's planning to do anything differently this time around; especially as he admits River is "a little bit livelier than the other four!" He tells me he tends to purée from about six months, but quickly moves onto "blending, mashing and bashing" as babies need to get used to different textures. "Letting them learn to feed themselves is also very important."

Of course, for Jamie, flavour is the key to successful weaning and although he holds back on the salt, sugar and spices, he introduces a wide range of food groups early on. "The more flavours and textures you can get them used to in early life, the less likely they are to develop fussy eating habits. Me and Jools used Annabel Karmel recipes to start but switched the ingredients the kids didn't like. We've managed to get them to be a pretty well-rounded bunch."


Jamie's other top tip is to be a role model and try to get everyone eating the same thing. "If you don't eat fruit and veg then your kids won't either." I ask whether River will join the rest of the Oliver family in eating from his new *Super Food* cookbook in a few months time. "Lots of the recipes are suitable for the whole family and could be mashed and

## I NEVER THOUGHT I'D HAVE MORE THAN TWO KIDS – OUR FAMILY FEELS VERY COMPLETE NOW

puréed for those just starting out on solids. Just make sure you avoid added salt and salty, unpasteurised, low fat or high fibre ingredients – and watch out for foods that may cause choking, like whole nuts. As babies, my kids all loved salmon, fish pies, pasta and devoured spaghetti bolognese, so from this book I'd try the alphabet tomato soup, jumbo fish fingers, spaghetti cake and chicken nuggets. Some can even be cooked and frozen to save time."

I put to Jamie that even though he's convinced me of the benefits of a diet rich in superfoods, I'm still not certain sleep-deprived new parents will find the time, or the energy, to whip up these meals. He's proud to say his book has lots of "clever shortcuts to help you get ahead." Easy for a super-chef to say, I joke!

"I've never gone out of my way to make my recipes difficult or 'cheffy'," he bites back. "It's important to me that anyone can make them."

Finally, I throw in the question everyone seems to want to know the answer to – will Jamie and Jools be adding to their already extensive brood? "I really don't think so," he laughs. "I never thought I'd have more than two kids, but our family feels very complete now. River's just so cute and I'm very grateful that Jools is such a brilliant mum." 

***Super Food Family Classics* by Jamie Oliver (£26, Penguin Books) is out now**



The chef shares this sweet snap of Jools and River on his wife's Instagram



The family became seven this summer

