

Cherry Metts



She's loved on-screen heroes from Shakespeare to Iron Man, and taught us the meaning of "conscious uncoupling". Here, Gwyneth Paltrow tells Elaine Lipworth why she is putting acting on the backburner to concentrate on building her lifestyle empire

**H**idden in a quiet neighbourhood of California's Santa Monica, the new open-plan offices of Gwyneth Paltrow's lifestyle website, Goop, are humming with activity. A dozen or so young women sit around a large table, tapping away on computers. There is an industrial feel to the minimalistic space: with exposed brick and concrete flooring, it's sparsely decorated. "We've just moved in so we're still getting organised," explains Paltrow as she settles into the grey sofa at the back of her office, long legs folded neatly beneath her.

The new headquarters (Paltrow also has a New York base) mark the start of an exciting chapter for the actress, mother of daughter Apple, 11, and son Moses, nine, from her marriage to Coldplay's Chris Martin, and entrepreneur. Until recently she ran the company from her home. "I didn't set out to create a brand and certainly not a business," she reveals. "The fact that it's grown organically as this collective of primarily women is a testament to the fact that Goop wasn't born with an agenda - it's just a way of sharing information."

Paltrow, 43, is dressed casually in a dark blue Carven cashmere sweater over Brunello Cucinelli trousers and high-heeled 3.1 Phillip Lim ankle boots. Stunning as always, a shiny curtain of stick-straight blonde hair falling over her shoulders, she isn't wearing make-up. There are fine lines around her eyes, her forehead is mobile and she looks totally natural, declaring: "I'm really happy with my flaws and my wrinkles, and I don't mind ageing." She puts her youthful appearance down to genes ("I got my grandmother's cheekbones"), healthy living (she works out daily with her friend, celebrity trainer Tracy Anderson) and, of course, she eats well.

With a love of cooking instigated by her "foodie" father, the late filmmaker Bruce Paltrow (he died in 2002 from cancer), the actress has

just written her third cookbook, *It's All Easy: Delicious Weekday Recipes For The Super-Busy Home Cook*. Her previous books were both bestsellers, and the theme of her new one is simple: fast homemade food (most dishes take under half an hour to prepare).

Unsurprisingly, many of the recipes from the willowy star, who has famously experimented with macrobiotic diets and extreme cleanses over the years, are gluten free, vegetarian and dairy-free. But Paltrow confesses that raising children means she has "loosened up. I believe in enjoying life and I don't diet", she says, as an assistant brings her a latte, "With full-fat milk! I don't believe you should rule anything out."

Contrary to reports that her children are deprived of sugar and carbs, Paltrow says Apple and Moses "have whatever they want, including fries, pasta and Coke, like any kids.

I try not to have too many processed things in the house because if you have Pop-Tarts and Doritos, that is what they are going to eat. But I am a pretty normal mother.

"If I am stressed out I start to cook and I completely relax," says Paltrow, pausing as her *It's All Easy* co-author, Thea Baumann, delivers

lunch: sweet potato and turnip soup, and a salmon salad with dressing made from soaked cashew nuts. Paltrow has a wholehearted enthusiasm for food, raving about her "sesame noodles - I could eat the whole bowl!" and her black bean soup, which her children "absolutely love". But her culinary interests extend beyond enjoyment and nutrition. She sees cooking as a metaphor for "warmth and connection", an antidote to the stress of balancing work and family life.

"There is a strong connection for me between food and emotion," says Paltrow, who emphasises the value of family dinners, even though the dynamics of her own family have changed since she and Martin split up, famously announcing on Goop in March 2014 that they were "consciously uncoupling". "I've seen so ▷

“I am really happy with my flaws and wrinkles, and I don't mind ageing”



“ I think Chris and I are better as friends than when we were married ”

much uncontained emotion in divorces,” says the actress. “People [who had separated] had told me: ‘Now we all have dinner together but for five years we didn’t speak to each other.’ I just thought to myself, ‘I wonder if it would be conceivably possible for the sake of our children to not even have one week of that?’

“I realise it sounds a bit corny,” she says, elaborating on the technique – devised by US therapist Katherine Woodward Thomas – to help families navigate divorce without bitterness or blame. “We are very lucky because we were both open to [this process].” In fact, the program has proved so effective for the family that they all go on holiday together, they live a few kilometres apart in L.A and are in and out of each other’s homes. “I think we are better as friends than when we were [married]. We are very close and supportive of one another. It hasn’t always been easy for us, because you have good days and bad days as you do in life with anything, but I feel lucky because Chris has been willing to push himself for the sake of the kids and help me co-create this new family. It’s like we are still a family, but we are not a couple.”

Paltrow admits that this approach has not, of course, blotted out the inevitable emotions which follow any split and which are invariably complicated, particularly where new relationships are concerned. She is now involved with television producer and writer Brad Falchuk (*Glee* and *American Horror Story*), and Martin has been linked with actresses Jennifer Lawrence and Annabelle Wallis. “You just have to move forward and there are phases,” says Paltrow, choosing her words carefully. “You have to be as graceful as possible through the transition because the truth is, time crystallises everything.” There has been no acrimony, she insists. “It doesn’t behove me in my relationship with Chris, or our children, for any kind of negativity to be in my orbit. Chris is a really great person and he has a warm, kind heart.”

She won’t be drawn on her relationship with Falchuk. “I don’t want to say too much,” she smiles, “but I will say you just never know what is going to happen, what people you are going to meet, what amazing lessons you are going to learn. To have gone through a life that has been really amazing, with its own

complications and major ups and downs, then to be truly surprised is really lovely.” So what has she learnt about relationships? “Hopefully that you evolve and you grow, and that you’re bringing a lot more to the table,” she responds.

“I do feel very optimistic,” reflects Paltrow. “I believe in love and I believe in human connection.” She refers to the late American anthropologist Margaret Mead, whom she cites as theorising that “women need different men in different phases of their lives. I think it’s fascinating that sometimes people get lucky and are with one person for their whole lives and then sometimes we have different soul mates at different times in our lives.” Her current views on marriage? “I think marriage is really a beautiful and noble institution, but it is not like I am holding a goal of getting remarried.”

However, Paltrow says she and Martin are on the same page in their approach to bringing up the children. “We co-parent very well.” So is it challenging when kids are growing up in a privileged environment? “Actually I don’t think it matters,” she says. “What’s important is how you are with them at home; what you are showing them by your actions as opposed to your words. Our children have parents who both work very hard and have great work ethics. We are responsible people. They see that. You keep them grounded.”

Raised with similarly strong ethics by her parents, Bruce and her actress mother, Blythe Danner, Paltrow was always independent, dropping out of uni to pursue her acting career. “I got nothing from my parents from the age of 18. Not one penny. It was hard. I had to save money for gas to drive to auditions. I thought my father would cave in and give me money and he didn’t! He said, ‘I think you are really talented but you should know that if you are not in college, then you have to pay for your own life,’” reveals the actress, who had early career triumphs with the 1995 thriller *Seven*, before going on to win her Best Actress Oscar, aged 26, for *Shakespeare In Love* (1998).

“I am a working mother, so I hope that is inspiring to my daughter”

Paltrow and Martin are teaching similar values to their children. “Apple and Moses have chores. They have to tidy their rooms and clean up around the kitchen. We want to put children out into the world who are capable of looking after themselves and know the value of money, children who have empathy and who are aware of the bigger world.” Is it important for Apple to see her mother working at a job she loves? “I think it’s great for daughters to see their mothers living their truth in whatever way that is for each particular mother. She might want to get married and be a stay-at-home mum. In my case, I am a working mother and so I hope that it is inspiring to my daughter, if that is what she wants to do.”

Despite the demands of a growing business, Paltrow is a hands-on parent. “I help [Apple and Moses] with their homework and I bathe them and I get them ready for bed – I’m very much there. A lot of times I will go and pick them up and I’ll work from home for the rest of the afternoon. We make it work.”

Running a “serious and fast-growing business”, she is clearly engrossed in the world of commerce. “It’s been a steep learning curve for me in terms of learning

about business and reading spreadsheets. I’m responsible for my investors’ money. It is my responsibility to scale the company the way I envision it – which involves a lot of new initiatives.” One is a make-up range, another an organic skincare line – both collaborations with Juice Beauty that are “free of toxic chemicals”.

Lunch over, it’s interesting that Paltrow has not mentioned her formidable acting career, which has included hits as diverse as *Emma* (1996), the Iron Man blockbusters and her 2011 Emmy winning guest-starring performance on *Glee*. When the subject does come up, it’s clear it is not at the top of her list of priorities: “I’m not interested. Acting is an amazing job that a lot of people want and I was incredibly fortunate to have done some wonderful films, but to be driving a business is rewarding in a different way.”

But while fully engaged in Goop, Paltrow is most content at home. “I really like being with my kids. I love the challenges that present themselves at different ages. I have to be grateful for my life, because a lot of times I feel like I don’t deserve all this. I just feel like I got really, really, lucky in this lifetime.”

Later today, Paltrow will spend a couple more hours at work, before picking up the children and heading across Los Angeles to the dentist. Then, “we are meeting Chris at our favourite health food store for dinner and then I’m going to take Apple to ballet”. An ordinary day in the life of an extraordinary woman. □ *It’s All Easy (Sphere, \$45) is out April 12.*

#### LIVING LIFE TO THE FULL

Clockwise from right: stepping out with then-fiancé Brad Pitt in 1997; “We are still a family, but we are not a couple,” says Paltrow of her ex-husband, Chris Martin; the hands-on mum takes her children, Apple and Moses, shopping; accepting the Best Actress Oscar in 1998; she has just penned her third cookbook.

