

BEN *and*  
MARY-KATE



hello



We are so glad to meet you. Though we don't know who you are, where you are, or what journey you will have, we want you to know that we love and value you. We hope that you have support around you, that you feel loved, and that you have the space and resources to be kind to yourself. We are sending you care, positive thoughts, and hugs.

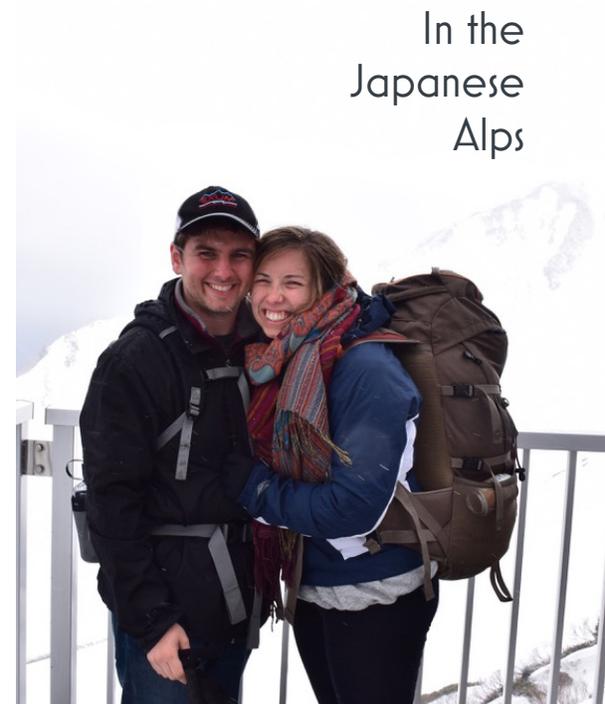
LOVE, BEN & MARY-KATE

## Our Story

Five years ago, we met on a train in Nara Prefecture, Japan, while we were living and studying in Japan. We became inseparable best friends and fell in love. We like to hold hands, travel, explore outdoors, eat delicious foods, learn new things, engage in our communities, and spend time with family and friends. We have both wanted to be parents since we were children ourselves, and we talked about growing our family through adoption within a few weeks of knowing each other. Over the last five years as we have moved among countries, states, and cultures together, our desire to grow as a family through adoption has only increased.



Soon after  
we met in 2016



In the  
Japanese  
Alps

## why adoption

We have always dreamed of, hoped to, and planned on growing our family through adoption. We feel so much joy and love when we think about all the possibilities of who our children will be. We are so eager to embrace each of our children's diverse experiences and identities. While we are hoping to adopt an infant, twins, triplets, or a young sibling group now, we want to and plan to adopt older children or sibling groups in the future. As a couple that met from small choices, chances, and colliding journeys halfway around the world, we can't imagine meeting, growing with, and learning from our children in any other way.



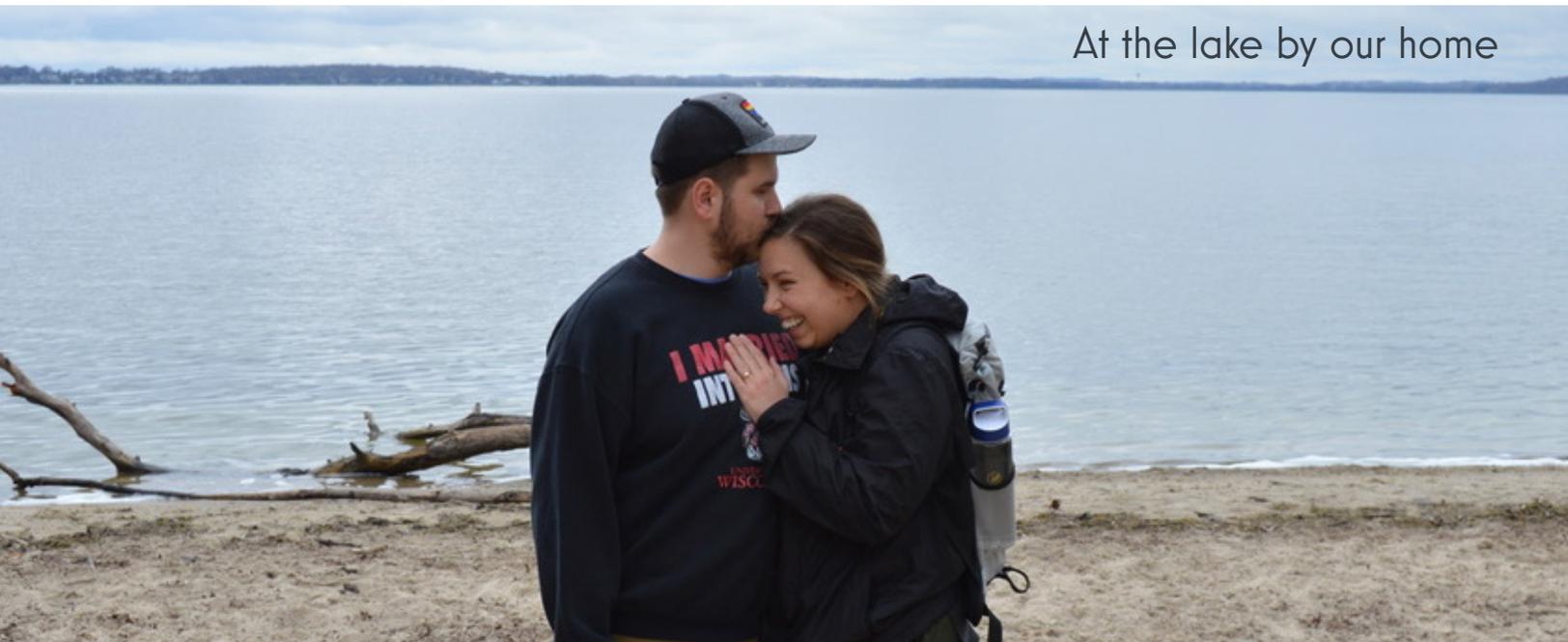
# OUR VALUES

As a family, we believe in and work to promote inclusivity and accessibility. We are allies, advocates, and supporters of the Black Lives Matter movement, Indigenous People, LGBTQIA+ Pride communities, People with Disabilities, and People of Color. We believe diversity brings strength and beauty to families and communities. We believe in embracing diverse friends, leaders, and role models. For us, being actively anti-racist means having conversations that acknowledge and confront our own mistakes and systemic injustices to promote positive changes. Though we do not practice a specific religion, we know there can be a lot of beauty and community support in religion. We plan to raise children with the opportunity to be educated about a multitude of faith backgrounds and to choose their own beliefs. We believe in the importance of community, kindness, social justice, communication, diversity, human rights, respect, dignity, education, relationships, and love.

# our home

Our home is full of books, art supplies, foods, games, toys, music, movies, laughter, and love. We have vaulted ceilings, lots of natural light, and a large living room and kitchen space. We have a deck where we love to grow flowers, eat meals, drink coffee, and read together. We live just outside of downtown Madison, Wisconsin, which is located on a land bridge between two huge lakes. We live walking distance from one of these lakes, a large nature conservancy, restaurants, shops, grocery stores, and parks. Our wider community also has many different green spaces, local restaurants, community centers, and events which we love to explore.

At the lake by our home



# our family

We are very close with both sides of our family and with our friends. Together we have four parents, three sisters, three brothers, and many grandparents, aunts, uncles, and cousins who we love. We don't have any pets right now. However, Ben grew up with a dog, and we want to add a dog to our family in the future. Both sides of our extended families include people of multiple races, religions, sexual orientations, cultures, and backgrounds. We have several cousins and friends who have adopted or who were adopted.



Mary-Kate's Immediate Family

Mary-Kate with her mom and sister in Wales



Ben's Immediate Family



Ben's brother and Ben in Ireland

# AND FRIENDS

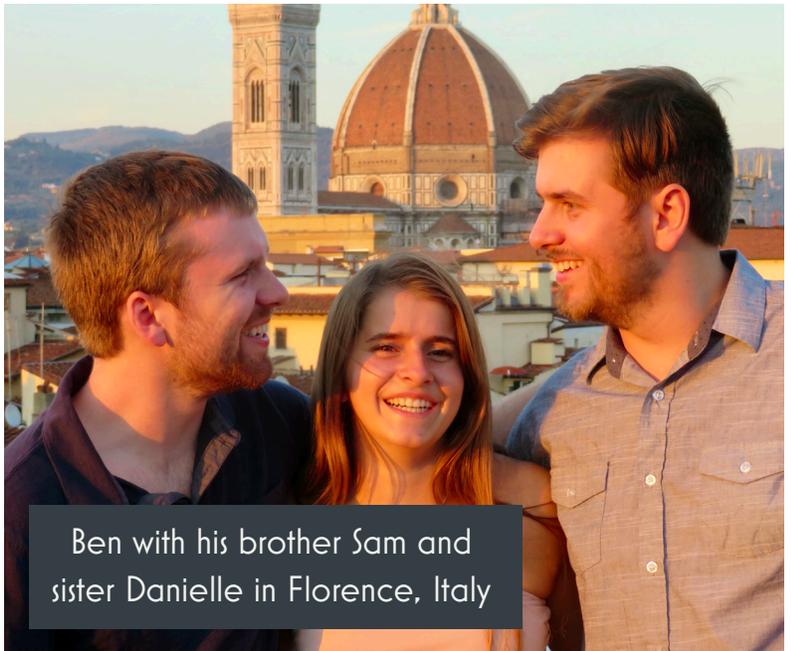
OUR BEST FRIENDS we met LIVING IN JAPAN—ALEEZA, ASHLEY, and BRITTANY  
—VISITING for OUR WEDDING

Because we have lived together in Japan, Kentucky, and Wisconsin; because Mary-Kate lived in New Mexico, England, and France before we met; and because Ben grew up in Minnesota, we have friends with many different backgrounds who we are so thankful for. Our friends are so, so excited for us to adopt.





Mary-Kate's  
parents,  
Suzee and  
Eric, at the  
horse track  
in Louisville,  
Kentucky



Ben with his brother Sam and  
sister Danielle in Florence, Italy



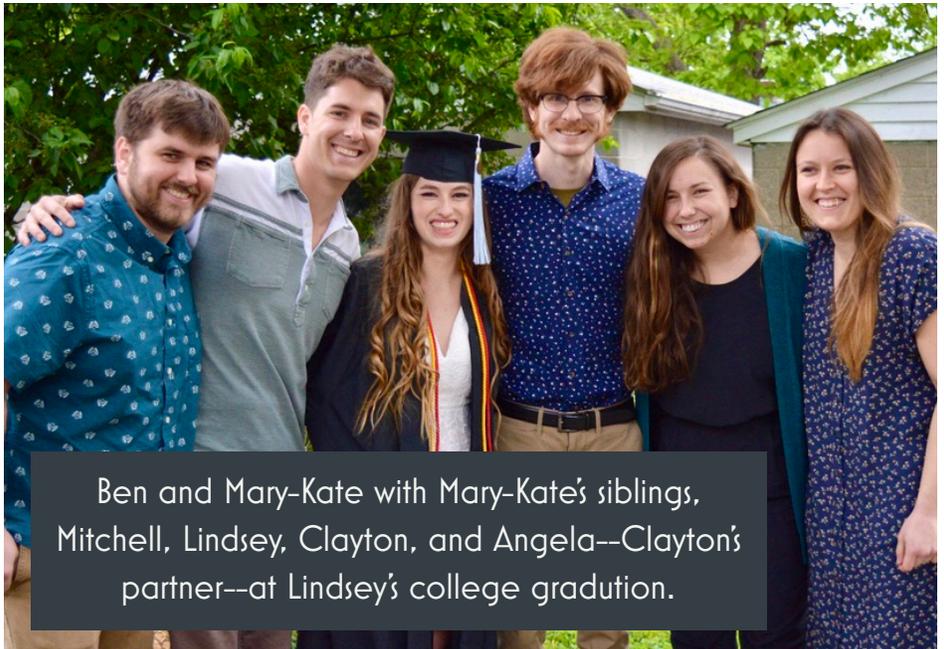
Ben's parents, Tim and Connie, at our wedding



Walking and laughing in Indiana



Visiting family in Louisville, Kentucky



Ben and Mary-Kate with Mary-Kate's siblings,  
Mitchell, Lindsey, Clayton, and Angela--Clayton's  
partner--at Lindsey's college graduation.



Mary-Kate with her best friend of more than 20 years Lillie



Hanging out in Madison with some of our best friends Ryan, Jenny, Nick, and Mike



Ben reading in our living room



Mary-Kate with our garden in full bloom



Mary-Kate and her sister Lindsey hanging out with their Granny



Ben with his childhood best friends visiting Atlanta, Georgia



Our favorite spot in the Conservancy by home in the summer



The same spot in the winter

Mary-Kate with friends in California



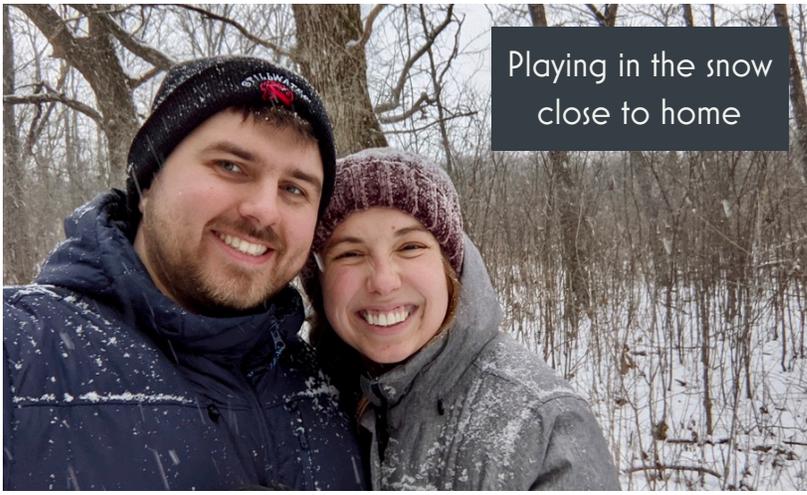
Food trucks in downtown Madison



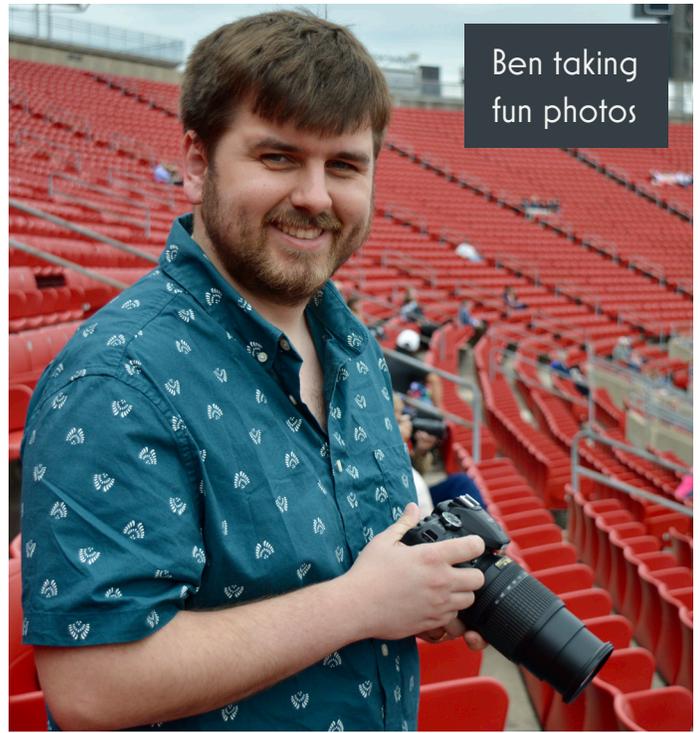
Where we love to hangout with friends and family on Lake Mendota

Ben's mom's identical twin Cathy, Ben's family dog Frank, and Mary-Kate at Ben's family cabin





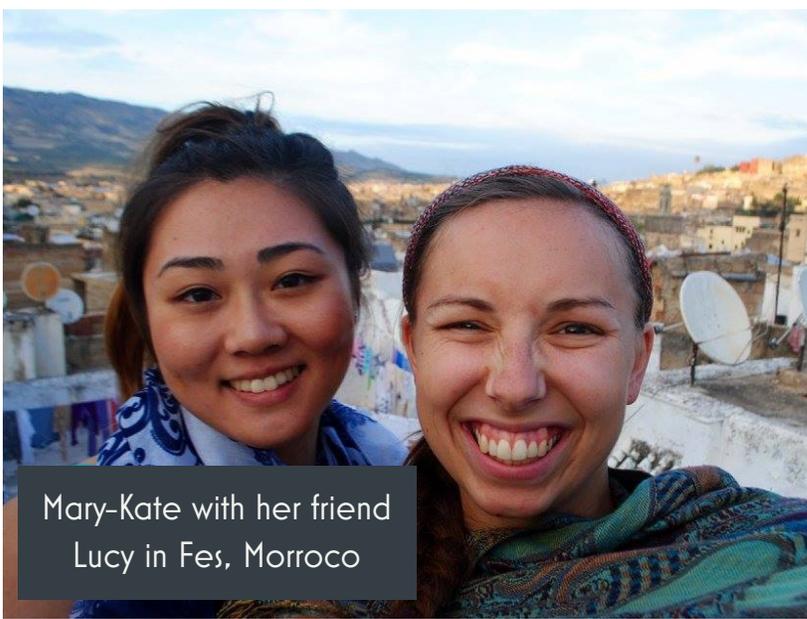
Playing in the snow close to home



Ben taking fun photos



Derby-themed wedding shower with Ben's cousins



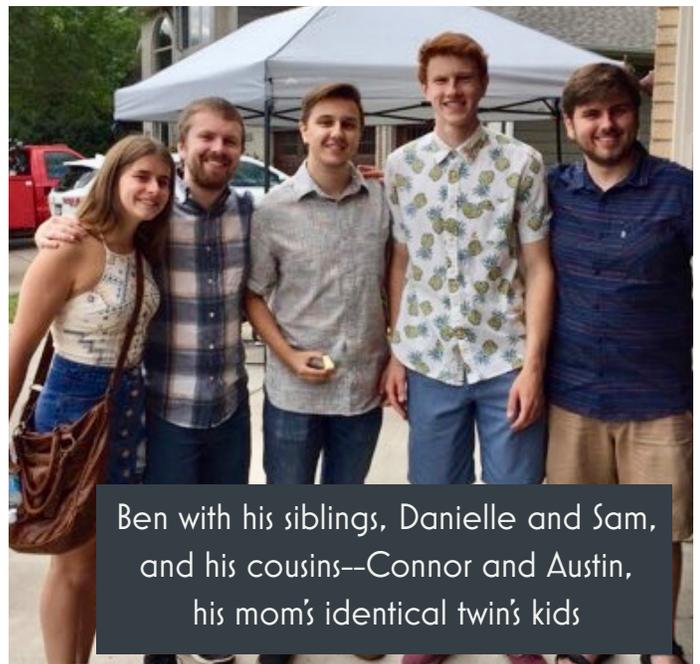
Mary-Kate with her friend Lucy in Fes, Morocco



Outside our home the day we moved to Wisconsin



At a festival with Mary-Kate's brother Clayton and his partner Angela



Ben with his siblings, Danielle and Sam, and his cousins--Connor and Austin, his mom's identical twin's kids

# about BEN BY MARY-KATE



Ben is the best friend I've ever had. When we met, we spent hours talking and walking together. Being around Ben makes me feel alive. After five years together, my face still breaks into a smile when I see him. Ben listens, and he makes me laugh. He is the strongest gentle person I know. Ben grew up just outside of St. Paul, Minnesota with his parents, younger brother, younger sister, and family dog, all of whom I am so thankful to call family. He studied English, Japanese, and Film in college and now works in software. I am so excited for him to be my partner in parenthood. He is going to be an incredible dad.

# about MARY-KATE BY BEN

I love Mary-Kate a lot. She loves unconditionally, and she makes everyone feel like the most special person in the room. Mary-Kate loves painting, gardening, and creating new recipes. She grew up in Louisville, Kentucky with her parents and three siblings. Mary-Kate is a writing teacher, tutor, and administrator at the University of Wisconsin-Madison and is getting her PhD in teaching writing. She's an incredible teacher. She's going to be an amazing mom.



# our favorites

MARY-KATE

BEN

ANIMALS

otters, lemurs, llamas & dogs

tigers & dogs

ANIMATED MOVIES

Coco, Ponyo &  
Kubo and the Two Strings

Spiderman: Into the Spider Verse  
& Princess Mononoke

BOOKS

The Elegance of the Hedgehog by  
Muriel Barbery

For Whom the Bell Tolls  
by Ernest Hemingway

CHILDRENS' BOOKS

Stargazing by Jen Wang, The  
Snowy Day by Ezra Jack Keats  
& I am Enough by Grace Byers

The Very Hungry Caterpillar  
by Eric Carle

COLORS

green, orange & yellow

blue & orange

DOCUMENTARIES

Salt Fat Acid Heat

An Honest Liar

FOODS

mayonnaise & plantains

pizza, sushi &  
Nashville hot chicken

GAMES

Scattergories

Codenames & Settlers of Catan

HOBBIES

graphic designing, painting,  
drawing, reading, cooking, mak-  
ing pottery, listening to audio  
books & swimming

baking, listening to podcasts and  
music, watching movies &  
fixing and building electronics

MOVIES

Hunt for the Wilderpeople

Godzilla

MUSICAL ARTISTS

Janelle Monáe & Stromae

Prince & Arcade Fire

SPORTS

field hockey

soccer, tennis, basketball  
& table tennis

TV SHOWS

Schitt's Creek

The Great British Bake Off

VIDEO GAMES

Zelda Breath of the Wild &  
Animal Crossing  
New Horizons

Super Smash Brothers & Jackbox  
Games

WRITERS

Maya Angelou

Kurt Vonnegut

# our FAMILY activities

Antigua,  
Guatemala



## TRAVELING



We are thrilled to travel to new places as a family as our children grow. As a couple, we have traveled to Tanzania, Nicaragua, Costa Rica, Hong Kong, South Korea, Guatemala, Vietnam, Ireland, Northern Ireland, Taiwan, and throughout Japan and the United States. Before we met, Mary-Kate lived in, studied in, and traveled throughout England and France. She has also spent time in Croatia, Morocco, Portugal, Italy, Spain, The Bahamas, Belgium, Poland, Germany, Wales, the Netherlands, Scotland, Canada, Monaco, Switzerland, and Hungary. With family, Ben has traveled to Mexico, Italy, and Canada.



BALLOONING OVER THE SERENGETI



BUSAN, SOUTH KOREA



VIETNAM



IRELAND

FUKUI, JAPAN

MOUNT KILIMANJARO, TANZANIA



ARCHES NATIONAL PARK, UTAH



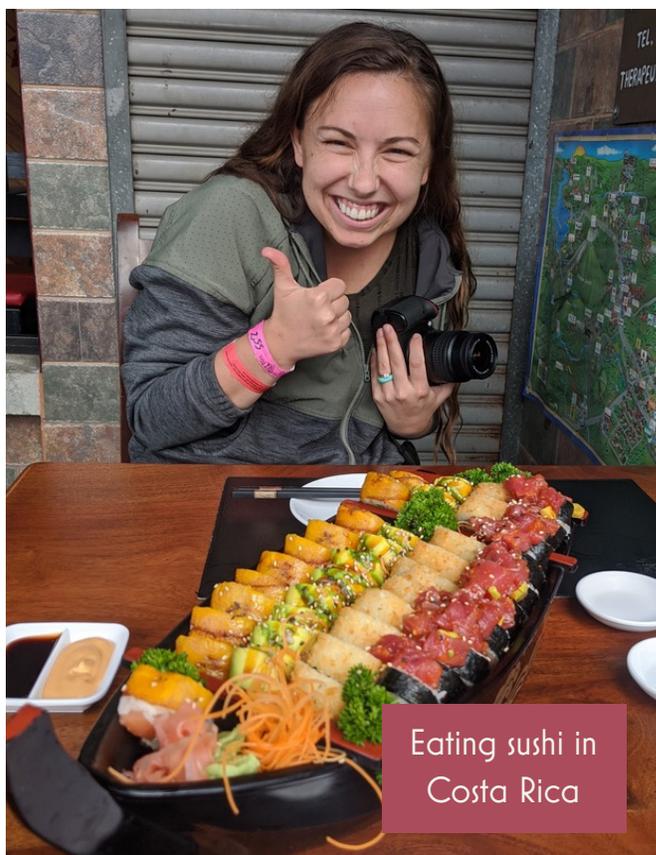
THE SAHARA DESERT, MOROCCO



# COOKING & SHARING MEALS



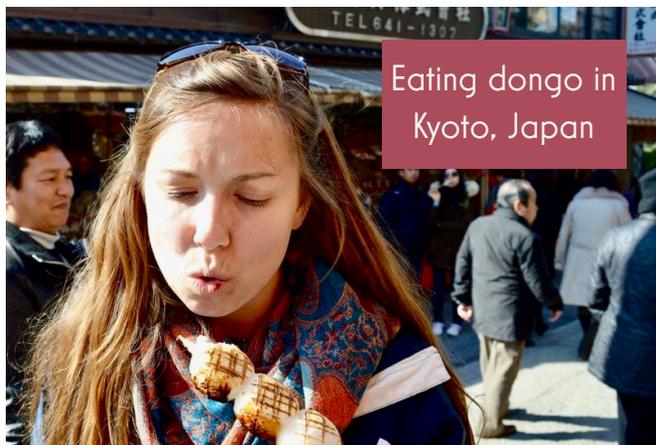
We really, really love food. We enjoy using new ingredients, reading cookbooks, drinking tea and coffee together, trying local restaurants, and sharing meals. Ben is passionate about baking and makes great pizza doughs, bagels, cookies, and scones. Mary-Kate loves cooking, especially making homemade sauces and soups. We have a pizza stone and often have friends over for pizza nights. We are so excited to spend time with our children as they learn about cooking and food.



Eating sushi in  
Costa Rica



Baking a bundt  
cake at home



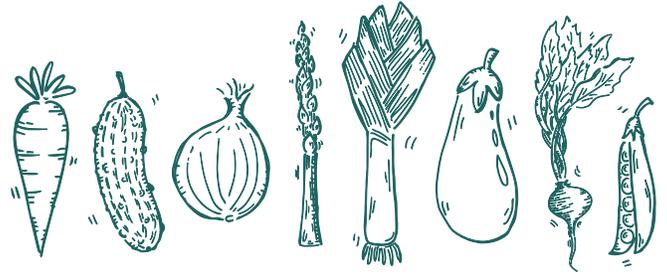
Eating dongo in  
Kyoto, Japan



Buying fresh fruit  
in Nicaragua

# GARDENING

We have a plot in a community garden where we grow veggies for our family, friends, and local food pantry. We are really looking forward to gardening with our children and teaching them about plants and foods.



Mary-Kate in our garden plot



Ben planting broccoli



Plant markers Mary-Kate made

## LEARNING new STORIES



We love finding fun childrens' books, going to concerts, watching standup comedy, listening to records, watching movies, reading novels, listening to podcasts, watching documentaries, attending plays, shouting answers at Jeopardy, making Spotify playlists, watching British baking and pottery competition shows, and just overall learning other peoples' stories. Reading with our children is one of the things we are most excited for about parenthood.

# EXPLORING the OUTDOORS

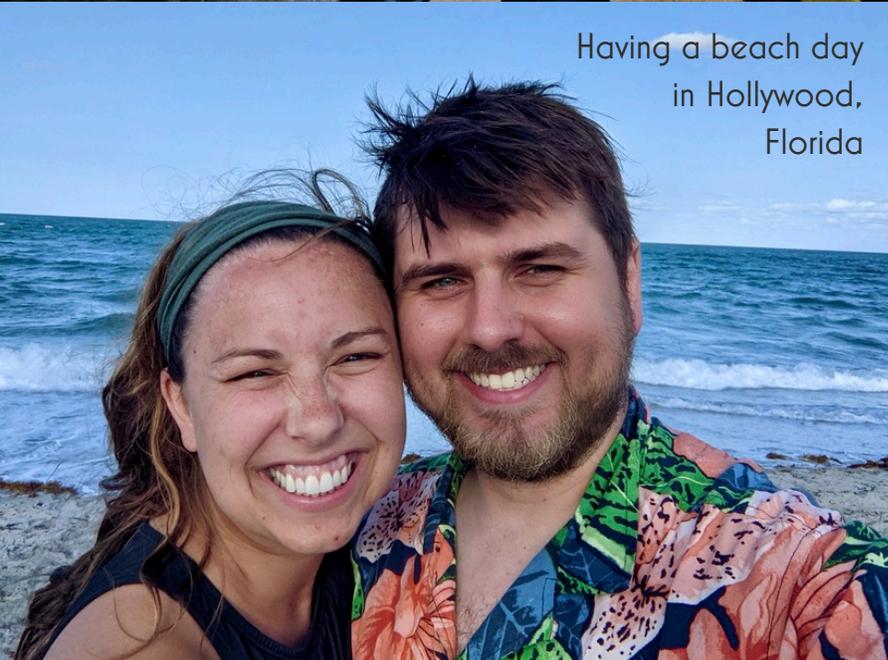
Fishing near home  
in Madison, Wisconsin



Hiking near  
home in the  
Wisconsin Dells



Having a beach day  
in Hollywood,  
Florida



We love to play outside with our friends, their children, and our families. We are so ready for our children to be a part of that. We live next to a nature conservancy and a ton of parks where we walk or bike most days. We live walking distance from a big lake where we have a membership to check out kayaks, canoes, and paddle boards, so we go out on the lake to paddle, swim, or fish at least once a week in the summer. We love to visit local, state, national, and international parks.

## ZIPLINING IN COSTA RICA

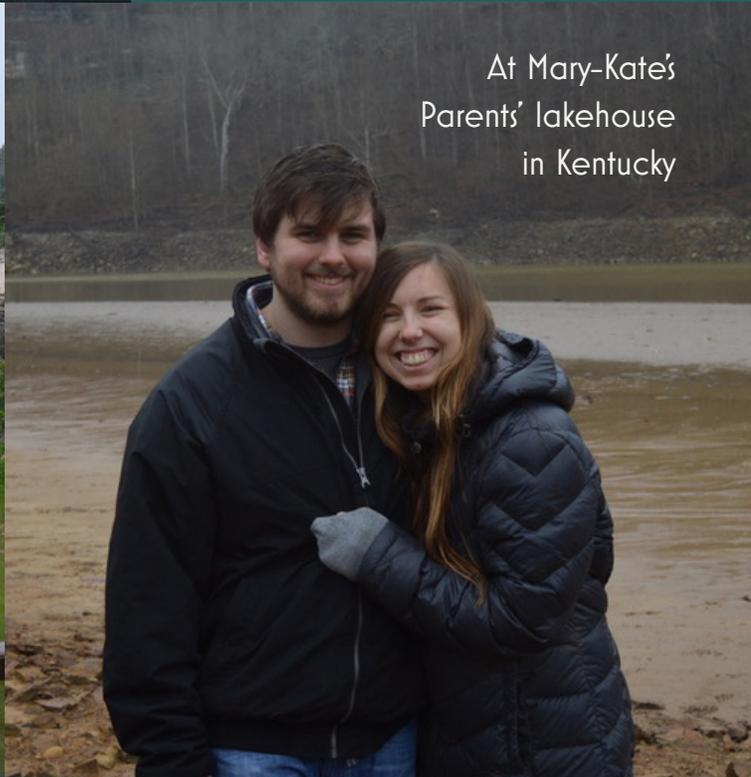




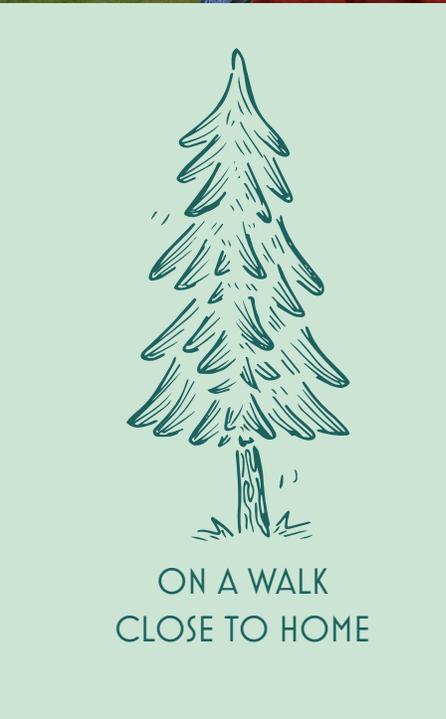
Mary-Kate  
in the Swiss Alps



Tikal, Guatemala



At Mary-Kate's  
Parents' lakehouse  
in Kentucky



ON A WALK  
CLOSE TO HOME



# CREATING ARTS & CRAFTS



SOME of OUR POTTERY

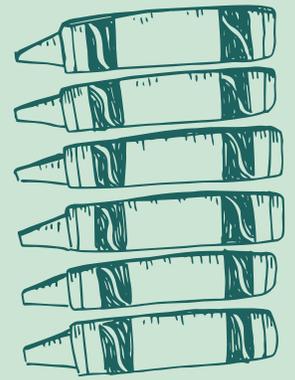


MARY-KATE KNITTING with HER SISTER

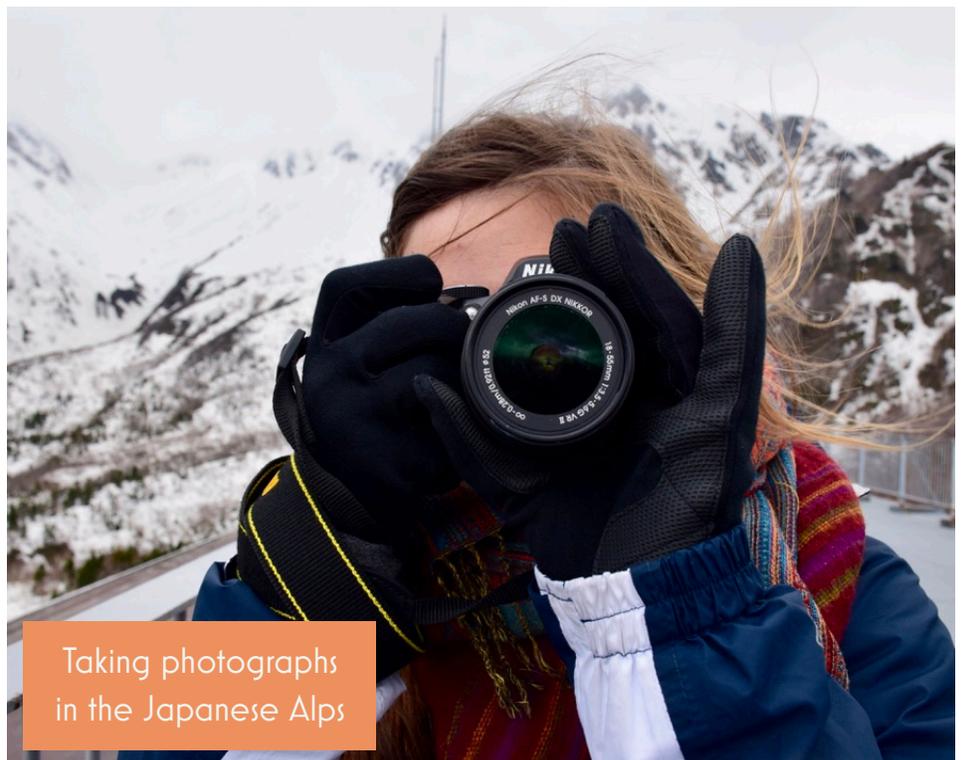


MARY-KATE'S GREETING CARDS

Growing up, Mary-Kate's family had an art room in their house dedicated to letting everyone who came into their home be creative with paint, clay, crayons, markers, oil pastels, fabric, yarn, recycled materials, and many other art supplies. We hope to offer our children a similar space and supplies to explore their creativity. Mary-Kate is life-long painter, illustrator, and fan of art stuff being everywhere. She drew the doodles in this book, and she likes to knit, make greeting cards, and throw pottery on the wheel. Ben recently started sketching and doing watercolors. We both love photography too!



Ben crafting with his little cousin in the Minnesota Children's Museum



Taking photographs in the Japanese Alps

# LEARNING LANGUAGES

We love language and communication so much, which makes sense as Mary-Kate is a language, communication, and writing teacher. Our first language is English, and we have basic skills in Spanish, Japanese, and French. If our children come from different language backgrounds, we plan to embrace their linguistic heritage collectively as a family by actively learning that language; collecting books, music, and movies in that language; and being part of communities that speak that language. We have many childrens' books in Spanish and some in French. We will always keep looking for more fun childrens' books in various languages. We have a sister who has basic skills in American Sign Language, cousins who are fluent in Spanish, and close friends who speak Mandarin, Cantonese, Japanese, French, Russian, Hebrew, Swahili, Thai, German, Korean, and a number of other world languages.

## PLAYING GAMES

We are thrilled to play cards, sports, video games, and board games with our children. Growing up, we both frequently had game nights with our friends and family members, and this is something we still love to do as adults. We especially love playing games with our little cousins, and we can't wait to play games with our children too.

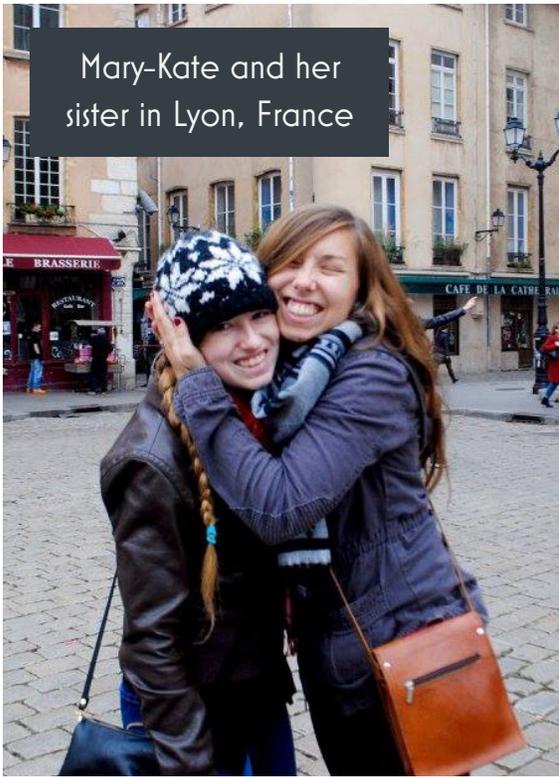


## EMBRACING LIFE TOGETHER

As we grow, we are eager to see what new ideas and interests our children will teach us about and bring into our lives. We are excited to help our children build dreams, follow those dreams, and embrace their own identities. We support each other, and we love building our lives together.



At our  
wedding



Mary-Kate and her sister in Lyon, France



Ben proposing to Mary-Kate in the Louisville, Kentucky Airport



Ben baking babka



Mary-Kate and her mom backpacking in Europe



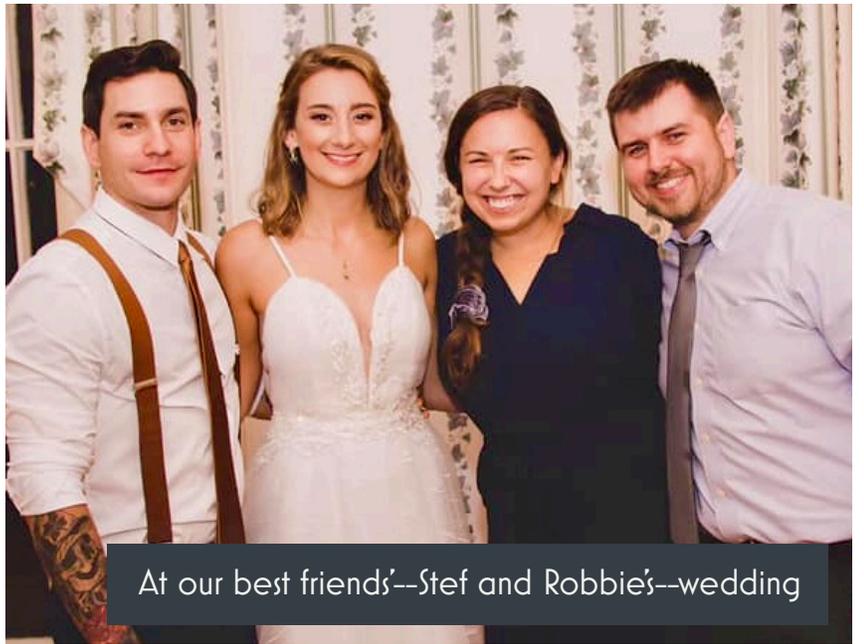
Ben and Mary-Kate's brother watching horse races



Mary-Kate on a gondola in Venice, Italy



Mary-Kate at the lake with her cousin



At our best friends'--Stef and Robbie's--wedding



The terrace by Mary-Kate's office at UW-Madison



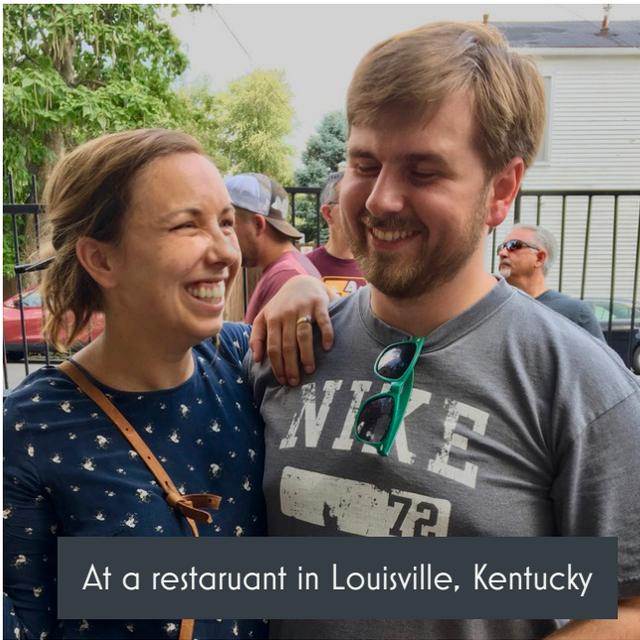
Ben's homemade bagels



Mary-Kate with her mom and sister in their traditional family present--matching Christmas pajamas



Going out to dinner



At a restaruant in Louisville, Kentucky



With our best friend Wes and Ben's brother Sam at Giant's Causeway in Northern Ireland



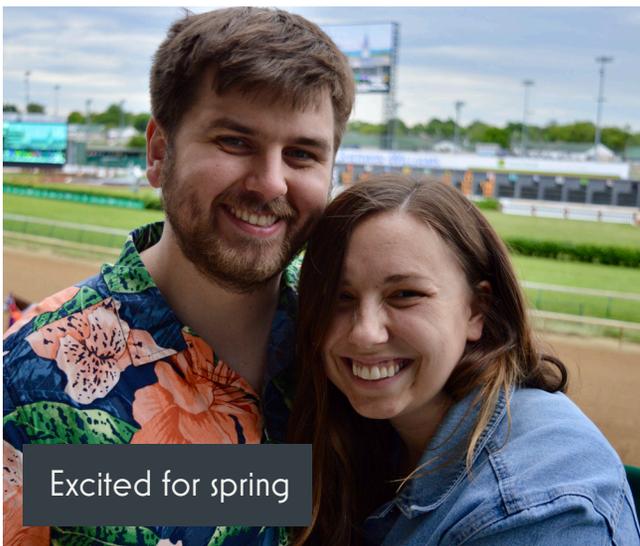
Visiting Ben at work with family



Mary-Kate smiling at Ben while hiking in Japan



Ben with his college best friends



Excited for spring



Ben having coffee on our deck



Mary-Kate and her friend going out for coffee in Lyon, France



At Devil's Lake State Park in Wisconsin



Kilimanjaro, Tanzania



Having a snow cone in Osaka, Japan



Ben's cousin with Mary-Kate at our wedding



Ben and his dad on a family hiking trip in east Africa

# with love

Adoption and parenthood will bring so much joy and love into our lives. We already feel so much happiness with our two person home, and we look forward to how much new love and joy children will bring into our family. We are excited to grow and change together as parents and as a family. Being adoptive parents will shape our decisions. We will build our schedules to provide as much time as possible with our children. We will choose homes, school systems, jobs, activities, and community connections based on the needs, identities, and goals of our children. We will ask family members, friends, books, fellow adoptive parents, and others we admire for parenting advice and guidance. We will respect and value birth cultures by learning new languages and participating in communities in which diverse peoples are engaged and represented. We want to have the level of relationship openness with our childrens' birth families that they and their birth families feel comfortable with. In our hearts, our childrens' birth families will part of our family, and we want to respect the needs of our birth family and their adoption plan. We want our children to always know they are important and they are loved. We also want you to know that you are important and you are loved. Thank you for seeing, reading, and hearing our story.

## BEN & MARY-KATE



love,



Ben AND Mary-Kate