



Off Menu – Ep117 – Ainsley Harriott

Ed Gamble

One shot of fun, one shot of chat, one shot of humour, add the ice cubes of good times, put it in the pot of the internet and shake it all around until it's all mixed up and pour yourself a nice long glass of the Off-Menu Podcast.

James Acaster

Merry Christmas.

Ed Gamble

You ruined it, why are you saying, 'Merry Christmas'? It's not Christmas, this is not a Christmas episode, it's currently July and it's baking. Why are you saying, 'Merry Christmas'? I thought I did quite a good intro and then you've said, 'Merry Christmas', what does that add?

James Acaster

You know why I've said, 'Merry Christmas' Ed.

Ed Gamble

Because it's our Christmas, in a way.

James Acaster

Yes, tiding of comfort and joy to you, Ed Gamble.

Ed Gamble

Alright, I take it back. I do feel Christmassy now.

James Acaster

This is the big one.

Ed Gamble

The big one. Our Santa Claus is here.

James Acaster

Yes, on the Off-Menu Podcast, where we welcome a guest into the dream restaurant and ask them their favourite ever starter, main course, dessert, side dish and drink.

Ed Gamble

Not in that order.

James Acaster

Not in that order actually, especially at Christmas time.



Ed Gamble

And our special guest today, our very special guest, the guest we've been trying to get since the beginning of this podcast is Ainsley Harriott.

James Acaster

Ainsley Harriott.

Ed Gamble

Ainsley Harriott. An absolute legend, a British institution of cooking, of entertainment television. He is a huge part of both of our childhoods I think James.

James Acaster

Massive.

Ed Gamble

Or a firm fixture on the TV and what a guy.

James Acaster

What a personality. No disrespect to any of the other guests that we've had on this podcast but you were all just ways to get to Ainsley. That's all you ever were, we booked you on the podcast just so we could show Ainsley Harriet that we had a good format and that we could talk to any old idiot and now we've got Ainsley Harriott on and, 'It's Christmas time baby, Christmas time.'

Ed Gamble

So we quit, we quit now we've got Ainsley, we're out-y.

James Acaster

Benito, you're fired.

Ed Gamble

We're hiring Ainsley as the producer.

James Acaster

Yes and we quit as well.

Ed Gamble

So, I hope you enjoy Ainsley's podcast next week, he's not on it he just produces it.

James Acaster

Yes he just produces a podcast so who knows what this is going to be next week, but there you go. However, maybe he won't be the producer if we have to kick him out the dream restaurant.



Ed Gamble

James if we have to kick Ainsley out the dream restaurant I'm going to be so upset.

James Acaster

I'll cry a thousand Christmas tears, it will be the worst Christmas ever if we have to kick Ainsley Harriott out the dream restaurant but, hey if he says the secret ingredient which is an ingredient that we deem to be gross then we have to kick him out. That's what we did to Jayde Adams.

Ed Gamble

And the secret ingredient this week is Sammy sardines.

James Acaster

Sammy sardines.

Ed Gamble

Sammy sardines. We've of course done it in the style of Ainsley of Susie salt, Percy pepper, Sammy sardines.

James Acaster

Yes. Sardines are the sharks of the sea.

Ed Gamble

The sharks of the sea, that what everyone's saying. So many bones in those things, it's not right, is it? How can something so small have so many bones?

James Acaster

Yes, you shouldn't be allowed that many bones if you're small and what are we doing trying to eat them? It's too much faff. I don't get anyone who doesn't have a problem with bones in fish, that doesn't mind it.

Ed Gamble

Eats around them, I hate that.

James Acaster

The whole thing is just such a pain. I hate the feeling of fish bones in my mouth, do you know what, we've never talked about it on the podcast really because no one, rightly, no one's ever chosen fish with bones in it on their dream meal.

Ed Gamble

There's some fish that it works okay for, they come off the bone quite easily, but those, like, sardines and all that, I had bonito once, did you know bonito is a fish?

James Acaster

What?



Ed Gamble

Let me say, it's not great.

James Acaster

No surprise.

Ed Gamble

No.

James Acaster

Small and bony?

Ed Gamble

No, it's massive, they're massive they're a bit like tuna but then the meat's not very good and then there's so many little thin bones in there. In fact, it's exactly what it would be like to eat the great Benito.

James Acaster

It would, wouldn't it? 'The meat's no good and he's full of little thin bones.' Well if I insist then sir, Sammy sardine and I'm looking for specifically that. I don't know about you Ed?

Ed Gamble

If it's Sammy sardine, he's out, if it's sardines we can talk about it.

James Acaster

We can talk about it, but we can just let him know, 'Look, we've said we'll kick you out if you said Sammy sardine, you've said sardine, did you mean to say Sammy sardine? Be honest.'

Ed Gamble

And then he'll say, 'Yes' and we'll kick him out.

James Acaster

Yes, he'll admit it, 'Yes I did, I forgot.'

Ed Gamble

Ainsley has a new book out that we'll tell you a little bit more during the episode I'm sure and then we'll mention it again afterwards.

James Acaster

Good Mood Food.

Ed Gamble

Good Mood Food. I pronounce it, 'Good Mood Food.'



James Acaster

Well I'm rhyming the whole thing.

Ed Gamble

You're rhyming the whole thing, yes I suppose, 'Good Mood Food.' then.

James Acaster

Yes either, 'Good Mood Food.' or 'Good Mood Food.'

Ed Gamble

Yes, I mean it looks great, it looks great fun.

James Acaster

Absolutely, it looks brilliant, it's Ainsley Harriott mate, my hero.

Ed Gamble

Yes.

James Acaster

It's out next week, I'm excited.

Ed Gamble

Yes, 'Good Mood Food' is out next week. I mean there's loads of fun, tasty recipes in there, I'm reading the thing now, there's things like beer-battered fish and triple-cooked chips, lovely, chicken Kiev with tarragon and lemony beans. I mean this is all good home cooking stuff, it truly is, 'Good Mood Food.'

James Acaster

Yes, it absolutely is 'Good Mood Food.', I can't wait to eat all that 'Good Mood Food.' and put myself in a good mood.

Ed Gamble

So, let's all get in a good mood and welcome to the Off-Menu Podcast, Ainsley Harriott.

James Acaster

Ainsley Harriott. (music 00:05:18-00:05:26)

Ed Gamble

Welcome Ainsley Harriott to the dream restaurant.

Ainsley Harriott

What a place to be, look at the genie, look what he's got on today.

James Acaster

Welcome Ainsley Harriott to the dream restaurant, we've been expecting you for some time.



Ainsley Harriott

I didn't even rub the lamp and you popped out.

James Acaster

Eager.

Ed Gamble

Very eager.

Ainsley Harriott

Impetuous and eager.

Ed Gamble

He's a very premature genie.

Ainsley Harriott

I love it, love it, love it, genie, you can literally-, anything that I command you can deliver.

James Acaster

I can deliver it and it's a good point, no one's ever pointed out before that no one ever rubs the lamp. I just come straight out, no one ever rubs it.

Ed Gamble

Yes.

Ainsley Harriott

Well if you rub it then it's kind of more of a personal thing, isn't it? Its kind of as you rub it, it's you own it if you know what I mean.

Ed Gamble

Yes, sure.

Ainsley Harriott

It sounds a bit twisted really doesn't it? If you rub it you own it.

Ed Gamble

So yes I guess this genie, it's not a case of 'you rub it you own it' because this genie lives in the lamp and is not owned by anyone but chooses to live in the lamp and pops out when he feels like it.

Ainsley Harriott

Right.



Ed Gamble

If you rub it, it's just for fun.

Ainsley Harriott

Is it really?

Ed Gamble

Yes.

James Acaster

I'm tethered to the restaurant, it's not 'you rub it you own it', if you rub it, it's just for fun.

Ainsley Harriott

Makes me want to go to bed really, 'I dream of genie.'

James Acaster

Is that your favourite genie? When you think of genies, am I dream of genie number one or is Aladdin genie up there?

Ainsley Harriott

I kind of, because I'm of that generation where we did fantasise a lot more do you know what I mean? And literally, you read books and you fantasised about what you were reading and your imagination would run wild, well I remember that great hit, 'Video Killed the Radio Star,' as soon as people started putting pictures and animation or real-life acting into something, you lose something because they're telling you how you should think as opposed to your imagination grasping it and thinking, 'Now this is where it takes me, this is what that song does for me.' And I think it's the same with when you rub the old lamp and the genie pops out, we have different imaginations of what we like. And do you come out in a puff of smoke or do you just come out?

James Acaster

However you like really actually. This is your dream restaurant, this is your dream meal so if you don't want any smoke at the meal I can tone the smoke down and make sure it doesn't come out the lamp.

Ainsley Harriott

There's no smoke without fire is there?

James Acaster

Yes exactly. Flaming lamp.

Ainsley Harriott

'Jean-genie let yourself go.'

Ed Gamble

Now I know we were talking about the power of the imagination being better than actually seeing what's



going on but I really wish everyone listening could see what happened there, because Ainsley really went for a little old dance.

Ainsley Harriott

I did, a little bit of shake of the shoulder. Ah huh huh. Love a bit of Elvis.

James Acaster

I'm very excited about, how are you visualising the dream restaurant actually like what is your dream restaurant set-up?

Ainsley Harriott

I think the dream restaurant setup is, kind of, something which is quite colourful, I think we are in the heart of Brixton just off Electric Avenue, this is Electric Lane and its got a nice vibe around here, lots of colour, lots of diversity and kind of makes you think, 'Yes.' It's relaxed, relaxing on the eye. Because I think what it is is, it's about you can tell by the way people, sort of, paint their living rooms and stuff now and, you know we are moving into an era of colour. We like a bit of vibrancy and you can see when you watch TV commercials about food, my new book is all about colour in the food, getting colour in the food and it, kind of, it's almost, we talk about titillating the tongue, it's all about titillating the eyes a little bit, if the colour's right. You know I don't like too dark, I don't like you know those when you get into a lift in New York and you can't even see how to press the button what floor, it's so f-kin' dark, do you know what I mean? It's so dark in there. If you want to get in and have a snog that bloody CCT camera is not going to pick up a bloody thing if you start getting a bit fruity, if you start rubbing it, get the old genie out.

James Acaster

You rub it, you own it.

Ainsley Harriott

Yes, 'Do not incur my displeasure.'

James Acaster

You mentioned your book as well just there, 'Good Mood Food.'

Ainsley Harriott

'Good Mood Food.' Yes, happy about that, happy about, 'Good Mood Food.' because I think all that we've gone through it's about giving stuff or doing stuff that just reminds you a little bit or more importantly just puts you in a good mood. You know I think food can do that, I think sometimes we can get sort of very bored with it but if you put a little imagination into it and we have so much choice now don't we? (TC 00:10:00) when you walk out there or when you pick up your phone and you want to get one of your delivery people and are spoilt for choice, it's not just an Indian and a Chinese now, it's every conceivable nation's cuisine. You gave me grapes earlier and I keep coughing up bits of skin.

Ed Gamble

Yes, Benito gave Ainsley a plate of grapes and I think they were, were they seeded Ainsley?



Ainsley Harriott

They're seedless but they've seen better days so what happens is the juice starts to dry out a little bit in the grape, you can see that and it's a little bit brown, it's still delicious and juicy but notice I'm squeezing it instead of rubbing it now (laughter). What are you like?

James Acaster

Don't rub the grape.

Ainsley Harriott

Just eat it.

James Acaster

You don't own it. Would you describe this plate of food that Benito gave you as good mood food?

Ed Gamble

Be honest.

James Acaster

Be honest.

Ainsley Harriott

Well I'll be perfectly honest with you.

James Acaster

Because people have said worse things about him.

Ainsley Harriott

I think looking at our producer I think he's probably got a few healthy bones in his body because look what he's bought me, he's bought me a plum, he's bought me some rather nice cherries, grapes.

James Acaster

The thing is that you were saying that you're still getting bits of grape from when you ate it earlier and then you put a grape in your mouth.

Ainsley Harriott

Well I was just showing you the juice and once I saw the extraction of juice I couldn't help but suck it.

James Acaster

You had to eat it.

Ainsley Harriott

I had to and that coffee's pretty crap too but we don't care.



James Acaster

Yes, it's bad coffee.

Ainsley Harriott

You know what, we've become snobs haven't we?

James Acaster

We've become snobs.

Ainsley Harriott

Do you know if I went round my mate's as a kid and someone gave me a cup of coffee, I'd be happy just to get a cup of coffee, now we've become complete snobs, you know we're all sort of turning into that Australian barista people, you know what I mean? 'My god, the milk's far too hot,' you know, they've got to have the perfect temperature, it's got to be ground and everything's just got to absolutely come out the way it should to make the ideal cup of coffee. I'm not entirely sure, I think sometimes you're just in a hurry, life is just about, you know, whisking it together as-, was it Mr Bean who did that thing where he put-

Ed Gamble

We don't talk about him on this podcast.

James Acaster

Yes.

Ainsley Harriott

Really? Did he give you nightmares as a child then?

James Acaster

As an adult.

Ainsley Harriott

Did he not rub your lamp hard enough?

James Acaster

It wasn't his lamp that he was rubbing. We always start off, still or sparkling water, Ainsley?

Ainsley Harriott

Do you know what, I don't really mind but I will say that I will probably go down the still route but what I will absolutely insist on is no lemon or no cucumber. I mean, I just can't understand, if I want a finger bowl I'll ask for one, you know what I mean? I do not need the acidity or anything in my water, I just want water and if people really know about water, I've been with some people who are water connoisseurs. You know, water's water to me but when you are with them and you start going through there and you haven't got plastered from the night before and you haven't got tobacco breath or something like that, you can actually taste the difference. You know it's quite subtle, but it's there, so



why would you ruin it with lemon? And especially if you go a bit of fine dining, we're talking about going into the, 'Proper restaurants for proper food,' you know you just want water, you don't want anything with it. Because you know, cucumber, loads of slices of cucumber and mint floating in it, why?

Ed Gamble

It's horrible.

Ainsley Harriott

Just plain old water, a glass of water, beautiful glass, that really starts off the meal properly.

Ed Gamble

They call it 'spa water' that, have you had that before? Where they put, even in like the big water cooler they'll put, cucumber in it and mint and they call it spa water and it makes me think of it's like all the water that's run off from the baths. You know what I mean it's like you're drinking all the water coming down from someone being sluiced down, horrible. Just to ruin it even further for you, Ainsley.

Ainsley Harriott

I'd just like to imagine, I'd just like to think where you go to, quite frankly.

James Acaster

He's a grubby little boy isn't he.

Ainsley Harriott

I know he is.

James Acaster

Drinking dirty bath water.

Ainsley Harriott

He likes a bit of sluice water. 'What would you like sir? Some sluice, please, more sluice'

James Acaster

You said, 'Beautiful glass.' What are you imagining there when you imagine a beautiful glass?

Ainsley Harriott

I'm just imagining the correct weight. I can't stand things which are just flimsy or just, glass should be, it's the first thing you actually do when you arrive in a restaurant they normally come isn't it, before your drinks, you might have had a cocktail before, but if you get a beautiful glass that's put down. I don't mind a little bit of colour in the glass, just a sort of tinge, but a nice glass, good weight, it just sets you up.

Ed Gamble

It just resets you ready for the meal, like you're ready to go.



Ainsley Harriott

Yes, it's almost like buying a house and walking in there and they're baking potatoes you go, (sniffs), it just gives you that, 'Oh, what a lovely home.'

Ed Gamble

Is that the best well to sell a house, just bake a potato?

Ainsley Harriott

Well it used to be, I don't know about, I haven't done it for a while but apparently if you go in there and something's cooking it gives it that homely feel.

Ed Gamble

Yes I've heard that with bread, I've never heard it with potatoes.

Ainsley Harriott

With baked potatoes.

Ed Gamble

But that would work for me I think.

Ainsley Harriott

Yes, you know, well baked potatoes worked, bread would have worked but I suppose when I was at my peak when I was probably in that way when you kind of think, 'Alright, buy and sell.' Do you know when you get obsessed with buying and selling, you buy it and then you kind of do it up, 'Put a bit paint over that,' you know, 'Cover that up.' But water for me is, yes, that's how things start off and then we move on to the-

James Acaster

Poppadoms or bread, Ainsley Harriott?

Ainsley Harriott

I'm a sucker for the bread and the worst thing is when the bread is warm, god you know.

Ed Gamble

The worst thing being the best thing?

Ainsley Harriott

Yes, because when it's warm you just want more of it, it really is, there you are talking about bread coming, you know when you walk into a house, can you imagine being given that bread? My mum used to make her little hard dough bread or something and she'd take it out of the oven and we would just put the butter straight on it, it was the most wonderful, luscious thing ever. So when you go to a restaurant and you get those warm rolls or something like that or just a nice selection, you know, you go to one of those posh places and they have proper bread, proper, you know, you get a bit of sourdough, it's been souring up for three or four days.



Ed Gamble

Oh it's sour.

Ainsley Harriott

It's really got the flavour, it's sour and you put it in your mouth, and, 'Boy, that tastes sweet, oooh.'

Ed Gamble

What are you imagining on the selection at the dream restaurant, you've got a bit of that sourdough, what else is on there warm bread-wise?

Ainsley Harriott

Warm bread, do you know what, if the bread is right-, I know you can get lots of fancy butters with little bits of rock salt in it and some with a bit of chilli and some of them are this and that, and it can go on and on and on. If the bread is right, do you need much? You know, there's so much flavour going in there and I think this is sometimes what spoils it and why even when I think of my favourite foods, it's kind of straight down the line, there's not too much going on because you interfere with it too much you know, it's a lovely piece of bread maybe a lovely olive oil or something like that, just a little bit more rocksalt because as my late father would have said, 'Me like me salt.' And just put a little bit more salt in there, you know, fuck the arteries, you know? I'm sorry but it's true, if you like something like that and it gives you that much pleasure, well go for it.

James Acaster

Now, famously you always referred to salt as, 'Susie salt' but when it's rocksalt, does the first name change?

Ed Gamble

Robby rock?

James Acaster

Robby rocksalt? Reginald rocksalt?

Ed Gamble

Robin rock?

James Acaster

It doesn't feel good to call rocksalt, 'Susie salt' that doesn't feel right to me.

Ainsley Harriott

(Sings) Rock, rock rock, rockin' robin, rock, rock, rock, rockin' robin. Susie sling your hook, oh yes, Susie go away we no want you no more, we're all ready with Robin and rocking some more rocking salt. It makes you feel so good, I said a rocking salt, Susie you ain't no good.



Ed Gamble

Perfect, absolutely perfect.

James Acaster

Poor Susie.

Ed Gamble

Good answer, a great answer.

Ainsley Harriott

Poor Susie.

Ed Gamble

Poor old Susie.

Ainsley Harriott

Poor Susie salt.

Ed Gamble

She's had her time, it's all about Robin rock.

Ainsley Harriott

Well yes, but what goes on top of Susie salt? Percy pepper.

Ed Gamble

Percy pepper.

Ainsley Harriott

Yes you boys.

Ed Gamble

We know.

Ainsley Harriott

Good education that's right.

Ed Gamble

Every afternoon when I got home from school, Ready Steady Cook's straight on the TV.

James Acaster

Straight on.

Ainsley Harriott

(Sings theme to Ready Steady Cook 18.35-18.46)



James Acaster

Love it, and Can't Cook Won't Cook.

Ainsley Harriott

Yes, oh yes I used to love a bit of Can't Cook Won't Cook too. I think these nostalgic programmes they really identified, they touched a nerve with people, you know they connected with people because, and especially with Ready Steady Cook, that came along when I remember Fern Britton who was the most wonderful presenter, she's now busy away writing children's books, or I'm not even sure they're children's books but she's brilliant at anything like that. Anyway they wanted her to do something on ITV she said, 'Well I'm just doing this little programme on the BBC at the moment called Ready Steady something, Ready Steady Cooking or something and I think it could probably be going away in two or three weeks' because nobody wanted any cooking programme unless your name was Floyd or Franny or Fanny or something like that you just didn't get the gig. And of course, Ready Steady Cook came along and you know, there we were 16 years later, still kicking arse.

Ed Gamble

An institution, yes.

Ainsley Harriott

It was really something and Fern was there for the first seven or eight years presenting it then I came over and came back from the states and took over and loved every minute of it. It was a bit hard, I felt a bit like Kenny Dalglish having played for Liverpool then become a manager and you've got to be, you know. suddenly more responsibility, (talking over each other 20.00) (TC 00:20:00) holding it all together, you just want to have a great laugh with your mates, cooking food and throwing it up, adding a bit of Susie salt and Percy pepper. And of course, you're then having to, kind of, massage the whole show you know, keep everything going.

Ed Gamble

It's a different skill, I guess?

Ainsley Harriott

It's a totally different skill, different set of skills, very, very different but great, you know, what a buzz, what an energy. It's an almost like us going to work and think, 'Argh, what's going to happen today?' And we'd like a little bit of that, do you know what I mean?

Ed Gamble

Did you take any souvenirs from the show? I would have been tempted to take home like one of the tomato boards and get them framed in my house.

Ainsley Harriott

I might have one or two things. I might have a little Ready, Steady, Cook mug, you know. 'You're a mug', one of those. I've got a few of those at home because you didn't win. Yes, I've got a few bits of memorabilia. I wonder what happened to those ovens, because, you know, when a programme ends,



you wonder what happens to all the equipment. You have your van, or whatever it is, full of all your equipment and then the team come along and they bring everything out and get everything ready for the show and then it's all packed away again. You work solid for three weeks making three or four shows a day and crack on.

Ed Gamble

Were you doing three or four of those a day?

Ainsley Harriott

Yes.

Ed Gamble

You must have been knackered by the end of it.

Ainsley Harriott

Absolutely.

Ed Gamble

Because you threw yourself into every show, energy wise.

Ainsley Harriott

Well, you do because it's a 4:30 in the afternoon, it's what people want to see. They want energy. You get home and you're feeling a little bit flat from school, you know everyone's feeling a little bit, so to have to kind of energy and that magnetism and the fun and then giving you ideas about what you're going to nosh that night. How exciting is it? Thinking, 'Yes, I'll have some of that.' Beautiful.

Ed Gamble

Four a day though. Did you start to regret the decision to go high energy when you realised you had to do four a day?

Ainsley Harriott

Have you ever done anything four a day?

Ed Gamble

(Laughs)

Ainsley Harriott

Why are you laughing?

Ed Gamble

(Laughs)

Ainsley Harriott

Why have you gone red?



Ed Gamble

(Laughs)

James Acaster

Get back in your fucking lamp.

Ed Gamble

(Laughs).

Ainsley Harriott

(Laughs).

Ed Gamble

It's my time someone told me to do it. Yes, finally someone said it.

Ainsley Harriott

Did I regret four a day? No, you know, it was a gig and we could do it and we got pretty slick. But, you know, when you're in the zone, and we're all cooks and we've known each other for a long time, the show is well established, you just get into it. 'Right, here we go again. 'Hey good afternoon, welcome to Ready, Steady, Cook, joining me Antony Worrall Thompson and Brian Turner.' And then we'd go in, we'd interview, the guests would come along and people were genuinely excited and I actually missed, I think that we all became a little bit obsessed with having celebrities on the programme. Whether it was A, B, C or D grade celebrities, it didn't matter. They were on the programme, they were enthusiastic about cooking, I used to love the general public. I used to love when people used to come from a little town in Devon and start talking about their gooseberries or something like that and then you could find out some information. Real people and there was something really wonderful about it because there's something about the public, something really quiet and that's when I think I was, or still am, because I'm still making programmes, at my best when you're just meeting people.

Ed Gamble

They've got less of a guard up, I guess.

Ainsley Harriott

Yes.

Ed Gamble

They're less worried about their, sort of, image, yes.

Ainsley Harriott

A little bit shy. You've got to bring them out. There's something really human about that. We all are to start with. You know, you're a little bit guarded, 'Oh my God, a camera is pointing at me.' And look at us now, you know, we are but you think about our parents, petrified, 'Oh, am I looking alright?' Now,



there's a camera everywhere, you know, while we're doing this, there's cameras. It's part of our life and we just accept it, we get on with it.

Ed Gamble

Well let's get onto your dream meal. Here we go.

James Acaster

Do we have to?

Ainsley Harriott

(Laughs).

Ed Gamble

Your dream starter to begin with. Is this from a specific place or is it a general dish?

Ainsley Harriott

I know. Do you know, it's kind of food, it's so seasonal, so people-ish.

Ed Gamble

I thought that was your choice for a second, just food.

Ainsley Harriott

Yes.

Ed Gamble

That would be impressive.

Ainsley Harriott

Yes, oh well, it could have been. But it's about company and stuff like that. There's so many different elements that make your meal a happy meal. When I think back, you know, what do I love? I certainly love the idea of beautiful soups. I think, you know, as a starter a fantastic soup is great but it does encourage you to tuck into all that lovely bread. I think one of my favourites of all time was a tuna tartar with a Osetra caviar sat on top and a little sprinkling of diced avocado and chive around it and I think there was some caramelised chilli rings just placed delicately around. And the real beauty of a starter like that is that it's slowly consumed. You get a few of the-, do you remember the old Bath Oliver biscuits? I don't think you see them very much.

Ed Gamble

No, I don't think so.

Ainsley Harriott

Oh, there was something called Bath Oliver and they had a real crispy crunch to them and they just weighed enough too, they didn't, sort of, disintegrate when you put them on a plate and you spread something on it, you know a lot of crackers just crack away and it's quite delicate. And I remember just



eating that, because it's a slow process, and you're putting a bit on and then you put a little bit of that on there, and then you eat it. Do you see what I mean? It's almost like, normally with a starter or something, you just eat, eat, eat. But when you slow everything down, and you bite in, and then you've got to go back again, the whole enjoyment just goes up, up, up and up because it's so pleasurable, you keep going, 'Oh, I'll have a little bit more of that, a little bit more of that.' Instead of that one big hit that you get. And, of course, have you noticed, I prefer Belugas grape, Belugas also more expensive but when you get it right, when you can get the right caviar and the right blend and everything else, because it's so rare. I haven't had caviar, certainly with lockdown, I don't think I've had caviar in three or four years now. But, 'When you taste it, when that sturgeon lick your tongue-'

Ed Gamble

(Laughs).

Ainsley Harriott

And when you get your tongue and you push it onto the roof of your mouth, and you burst those little pockets, those little balls, then it just kind of spreads around your mouth and all the different flavours. Oh, I just love it.

Ed Gamble

I love the bursting thing. Some people can't bear it. My fiancée, she's like, 'I can't. It's horrible. Why would you want to burst something in your mouth?' Definitely do. I love the Japanese, like the tobiko, the really big orange balls and you get those and they're like basketballs, basically.

James Acaster

Really?

Ed Gamble

Push them to your roof of your mouth them blamo, done.

Ainsley Harriott

It's quite nice, isn't it?

Ed Gamble

Explosion.

James Acaster

Blamo?

Ed Gamble

Blamo.

James Acaster

I like blamo.



Ainsley Harriott

I love blamo. I love blamo. Maybe he's going out with the wrong person?

James Acaster

Yes (laughs).

Ed Gamble

He might be.

Ainsley Harriott

He might be. Orange balls.

James Acaster

Yes, why not?

Ainsley Harriott

Yes, wow. Why not? Blamo.

Ed Gamble

Blamo.

James Acaster

Blamo.

Ed Gamble

Where did you have this dish?

Ainsley Harriott

My first experience of it was at The Four Seasons in New York and it was very, very beautiful and me and my agent have this wonderful connection because the worst thing you could do to Ainsley is hand him the wine list and I was out there and they were, kind of, trying to make me feel good because I was going to do a programme out there, which I did, and lived out there for a while. But, and we had this fantastic Pinot Noir that I ordered and it just blew us away, it was fantastic. You don't get that opportunity very often. People want to show off and you can really try something because we often see a bit of expensive wine on the menu, you don't go for it. You normally turn around and say, 'Look how much they're charging. Fuck me, there's a £500 bottle of wine on here.' Do you know what I mean? You have those type of situations and kind of say, 'God, that would just be brilliant.' And you've had it at some tastings before. When I was involved and worked in the hotels used to go and meet the sommelier and stuff like that, they used to have these tastings down in the cellar and some of them, you know, they buy wine down there. They'd say, 'No, no, won't be ready for four or five years.' But they buy it and just put it and lay it down. But sometimes you get the little connections you taste and I'm not a connoisseur, I'd love to be, I'd love to be able to have that palette, being able to identify with something, and I'm pretty good, I know a cheap bottle of wine now, and I know what's really good,



medium, up to about a medium, up to about £15 or £20 in your store. Beyond that, I'm not very good. It's hard to really, really detect.

Ed Gamble

I mean, there's so much to learn isn't there? It's like crazy amounts of grape varieties and all of that.

Ainsley Harriott

Yes and I puff a bit, late at night playing my backgammon, a few scotches with my mate or a bottle of rum, so yes man, I need some of that. Or them cigarettes, straight.

Ed Gamble

(Laughs).

Ainsley Harriott

I don't want any of that. Anyway, and it's so lovely because you can appreciate it but when you get to that other level, as I said, I don't understand it. I really would love to be able to because it's beautiful, isn't it? Something that you never regret your extravagancies. You know when you go and bought something, you never regret it. You might talk about it, you might look at your bank account and go, 'Mmm,' but the reality is, you never really regret it because it's your pleasure. It's something that you've given you, you know? Anyway, so this meal is taking a bloody long time.

Ed Gamble

Oh no, it's perfect.

James Acaster

We're loving it.

Ed Gamble

We've got the tuna and the Four Seasons.

Ainsley Harriott

Yes, the tuna and that was The Four Seasons in New York and, beautiful. I loved the décor. I loved everything about it. I loved the company that I was with, a guy (TC 00:30:00) called Gelman who was one of those people that nod a lot before they answer. 'How are you?'

Ed Gamble

(Laughs).

Ainsley Harriott

'I'm fine, how are you?' Do you know those nods?

James Acaster

Tell us about Gelman.



Ed Gamble

I want to know more about Gelman.

Ainsley Harriott

Gelman's biggest frustration was that he had the most wonderful view over New York because he lived on the 48th floor of an apartment in New York up on West Side but the only draw back is that unless you got out early in the morning, like you left at six, it could take you half an hour to get down because the lift would stop on every floor.

Ed Gamble

Oh, Gelman.

Ainsley Harriott

People don't realise that. Do you know what I mean? So you have this fantastic when you get out there. He said, 'Got to get your timing right, otherwise your whole day is fucked up' (laughs) and you can imagine-

Ed Gamble

Yes, that wasn't a nod, that was a nervous twitch from being in a lift too long.

Ainsley Harriott

Can you imagine? I mean, I'm terrible when someone jumps in the last minute when the doors are closing and they put their arm in. You feel like Muttley, don't you? Really pissed off that the doors have opened again. And then suddenly, you know, it takes a little bit longer because they stop on another floor and you have to wait. Standing at the back of an elevator and waiting for all that time. I don't know, would you take the stairs 48 flights?

Ed Gamble

Down. I'd do down. I wouldn't do up.

James Acaster

Might try it. Try it at least once, see how long that takes you, right? Gelman must have tried that.

Ainsley Harriott

I don't know if he did. He was quite fit though. He was quite fit. I once said to him that I needed a massage and he goes, I'm nodding here.

James Acaster

Yes, you did-

Ainsley Harriott

'I know a good guy.' And he sent me round this guy and he turned up, I thought, 'Fucking muscles out here,' he was, carrying a bag. You know they walk in with their bag and they put everything out and they've got the lovely super soft towels but then he started on me. Oh my God, it was so strong, so



powerful. You know when they push down and you feel every bit? I was much fitter then but you just feel your muscles and everything and when he left, I could hardly see him out the door, I kind of just walked really slowly and closed the door and just lay there like that. He just stretches everything, they're so powerful, their hands are just so-, that's all they do, you know what I mean? They'd be fantastic at kneading, you know, a bit of dough or something like that. Their hands were just amazing.

Ed Gamble

Well, Ainsley, this is the dream restaurant so if you want the bread that we've already brought you to have been kneaded by a masseuse, you're very welcome.

Ainsley Harriott

Ooh, that would have been quite nice, wouldn't it?

James Acaster

Yes, Gelman's masseuse.

Ainsley Harriott

Gelman's masseuse. (Laughs)

James Acaster

Yes, yes, yes.

Ed Gamble

Done. Done. Sorted.

Ainsley Harriott

GMB. Come to GMB. Gelman's masseuse bread. 'We knead it the way you like it.'

James Acaster

Your dream main course?

Ainsley Harriott

Do you know what? I looked at this when you guys crossed (ph 33.01) me and said, 'Your favourite main?' I'm a bit back and forward and I thought, 'God, I've had some amazing things,' but, you know, the thing that identifies with me more than anything else is food that is really succulent and luscious and you want to go back and that's my slow cooked lamb.

James Acaster

Yes.

Ainsley Harriott

Lamb. We're talking about, you know, getting some nice, big flavours here and one of the things I love to do is I like to crush up the garlic with a bit of anchovy, and people think it's going to taste really fishy, you know, when you push it into those-, you make little pockets, beautiful, and it's all about the quality



of the lamb. You know, spend a little bit more, get something-, the fact that you're slow cooking, you might be able to get away with a cheaper cut here actually, but I like the idea of the leg, and I just make these little pockets, little knife, make these little incisions with the garlic, crushed up, and you make it into, kind of, a paste and you put it in with the anchovies, and you push it in there. Everyone thinks you're going to push it in and it's going to be really, sort of, fishy tasting, but it's not. It just melts into the meat and you're cooking it for at least four hours, you know, and then, when you've done that and you know that it's cooked and you remove the foil, we've got loads of other flavours going on there too, you know?

We're not just stopping on the garlic and anchovies, and then you pull off your foil covering because you also cook it with stock. That's the secret of a slow-cook. You must keep introducing a little bit of moisture into it, it, kind of, steams away. Then you remove the foil, pop it back into the oven and just let it, kind of, crisp up. Turn that oven up to about 220, nice high heat and just finish it off fifteen, twenty minutes, take it out, let that rest. Boy.

Ed Gamble

That's so good.

Ainsley Harriott

Bring on the the cauliflower cheese, that's what they say. Yes man, push it on (ph 34.49) the side and I just love it. I love food like that because I just keep going back again, and again, and again, you know? I don't want it too delicate. We're talking about one's favourite food here, one that you sit down and you rub your belly and you look at your shirt, there's a few drips on your shirt just to remind you of how succulent that was and how hungry you were to get it into your gob, you know?

Ed Gamble

So good.

Ainsley Harriott

Drips down your chin and stuff.

Ed Gamble

That's my favourite way to cook as well, proper slow-cooking where you can put something on in the morning and the smell fills the house for the whole day leading up to it.

Ainsley Harriott

Isn't it just perfect?

Ed Gamble

It's the best.

Ainsley Harriott

And people know it too and it's so comforting, I think that's what it is. It really is comforting. My mum used to do a lot of it, she used to do more than, so much, slow-cooking, she used to do a lot of



marinading. So I can remember every time we opened up our fridge, one of those fridges with the big handles, used to clunk like this, you know, used to-, it was almost like an old car door handle. Anybody of any age would understand what I'm talking about, and every time I opened it up, this fridge, it was just-, even though she covered it with, no cling film in those days, it was wet greaseproof paper or a wet damp cloth that went on top of it, you know, and the smell, and this is why I love it. That, kind of, always Allspice was always in there, you know, that wonderful combination of cinnamon and nutmeg and clove and black pepper. All of those, kind of, things and it's no surprise that I've grown up with wanting to introduce flavours to things because food can be a little bit bland but when you get it right, it's so good.

James Acaster

I went round to Ed's house recently and he was making pizzas all day-.,

Ainsley Harriott

Oh yes?

James Acaster

For everyone, and he made a pizza where the topping was slow cooked lamb and anchovies.

Ainsley Harriott

Oh, wow.

James Acaster

It was delicious.

Ed Gamble

Yes, it worked out really well actually. It was really good, bit of chilli flakes on there as well.

Ainsley Harriott

Yes. It's a bit like the old pulled pork or something like that, you know?

Ed Gamble

Yes, exactly because I did the lamb the day before for, like, six hours, shoulder, and then it just, it pulls apart like pulled pork, it shreds and it's so good.

Ainsley Harriott

I know, it's lovely. You strip it and you put it down and people really enjoy it, don't they?

Ed Gamble

Yes.

Ainsley Harriott

It's something about it and, you know, it's a bit caveman-y really.



Ed Gamble

Yes.

Ainsley Harriott

Perhaps it takes us back to how we used to cook, really, really, slowly, you know, and you go out to Oz and they, you know how they take the roo, the kangaroo, and people in the wild, they dig this pit and then they fill it with bits of wood and stuff like that, set fire to it, and those hot flames-, then they put the kangaroo on top, burn off all the fur, strip that off, and then when those embers die down, all the fire and everything's really died down, they will then take the meat, through it on top, and if they did have salt or anything they'd just throw handfuls of this stuff. Then they'd take the soil and put the soil back on the top and they'd go away for two days, and they'd come back and they'd dig it up and that thing was so-,.

Ed Gamble

And that would be cooked, would it?

Ainsley Harriott

Cooked, tender. Can you imagine that? It would just be-,.

Ed Gamble

I can't because the only other time we've heard about that was a previous guest on this podcast called Joe Thomas who tried to do that with a lamb and it absolutely fucked it Ainsley.

Ainsley Harriott

Really?

Ed Gamble

It was awful. He ruined it.

Ainsley Harriott

I think what it is is that you've got to get the embers right. I think you've got to have enough of that, these are-, you know, we are talking about one of the oldest civilisations, the Aborigines, and they probably knew how to do it. I think your mate probably put it in his back garden.

Ed Gamble

Well the thing is the Aborigines are clearly doing it outside, in The Bush, in the correct environment for it.

Ainsley Harriott

And the sun, the heat.

Ed Gamble

In the super dry.



James Acaster

Like I say, generations of doing it, knowing how to do it.

Ed Gamble

Yes, Joe Thomas did it in Soft Touch's back garden.

James Acaster

Yes. A local mum called Soft Touch, and she let them do it in the back garden and him and his best friend, who at the time was someone's dad that he knew, so a much older man, buried this lamb in the back garden and then when it came out-..

Ed Gamble

It was raw.

James Acaster

Came out exactly how it went in but it smelt of blood.

Ainsley Harriott

Oh my God.

James Acaster

Yes.

Ainsley Harriott

Pretty disgusting.

James Acaster

Pretty bad.

Ainsley Harriott

Was there any embers in there? Was there any fire in there? Was there any heat?

James Acaster

Yes but they put some wet hessian sack in there and that, basically, put the fire out. So basically what they did is just bury the lamb in hole.

Ainsley Harriott

Yes.

James Acaster

And then dug it out again and it was very disappointing.

Ainsley Harriott

Yes.



Ed Gamble

They exhumed a lamb, basically.

Ainsley Harriott

I wouldn't give him a job in my restaurant.

Ed Gamble

No.

Ainsley Harriott

I'll tell you that.

Ed Gamble

I wouldn't.

Ainsley Harriott

He wouldn't get a gig at the-, 'What should I do?' 'Wash the pots.' No, that doesn't sound very clever.

James Acaster

No, but, if you want to bury a roo or something like that, we can put you in touch with Soft Touch.

Ainsley Harriott

Really?

Ed Gamble

She'd let you do it in her garden.

James Acaster

Would you want to bury a roo in Soft Touch's garden?

Ainsley Harriott

I'd turn into Gelman then, wouldn't I? Nodding my head, thinking about it, then, 'Would I like to bury something in Soft Touch's garden?'

James Acaster

Yes.

Ainsley Harriott

'I've got to meet Soft Touch first.'

James Acaster

I would love it if you met Soft Touch.



Ed Gamble

Yes, that would be great. (TC 00:40:00). That lamb sounds absolutely amazing.

Ainsley Harriott

Yes, lovely. Absolutely lovely, and as I said, I do like a bit of cauliflower cheese.

Ed Gamble

Well should we move on?

James Acaster

Is that going to be your dream side dish?

Ainsley Harriott

I'd probably say that is my dream side dish.

James Acaster

Bring on the cauliflower cheese.

Ainsley Harriott

You know, cauliflower cheese, it's one of those that even my son's girlfriend who, you know, is not found of dairy.

James Acaster

I thought you were going to say she's not found of you then. They way you went to that, 'Who is not that found of me.'

Ainsley Harriott

No, I love her. Love her to death. I really like all my kids partners actually, which is a cool thing isn't it?

James Acaster

Yes, that's good.

Ainsley Harriott

It's, kind of, I really, really like them even though my Maddy's boyfriend is a Spurs and I'm an Arsenal fan.

James Acaster

Oh yes.

Ainsley Harriott

It doesn't matter. I like Tristan (ph 40.48), I like the bloke, do you know what I mean?

James Acaster

Yes.



Ainsley Harriott

And the fact that he loves up my daughter is okay, do you know what I mean?

James Acaster

So that's okay.

Ainsley Harriott

Yes. I did tell him the first time I met him, I said, 'If you mess with my daughter, you're not going to be around.' And he just, kind of, 'Yes, alright,' you know, they've been together (ph 41.07) five years.

Ed Gamble

What a weird day in that guy's life. 'Ainsley Harriott just if I mess with his daughter I'm not going to be around.'

Ainsley Harriott

I know, I know. Thinking back, he loves going to the gym, he's got all the-, and he's as big a-, you know, he'd probably take me out in one.

Ed Gamble

Yes, you'd need to be packing, like, a Harry Hammer (ph 41.24) or something.

Ainsley Harriott

I know, but you would keep coming back if you're the dad wouldn't you? It doesn't matter how many times they're going to knock you down.

James Acaster

You're going to keep getting up again.

Ainsley Harriott

Yes.

James Acaster

You used to do four shows a day.

Ainsley Harriott

'Give it a rest. I've got to get home and do the cooking and do the gardening.'

James Acaster

Yes.

Ainsley Harriott

'And I've got to rub the lamb after that.' Jean Genie let yourself go. Lovely.



James Acaster

So the cauliflower cheese?

Ainsley Harriott

The cauliflower, yes. I do like a bit of (mw 42.02) polonaise, which is the cauliflower with all that, sort of, you know, that crumb and the garlic and the parsley and everything. I think, with the polonaise, if I'm not mistaken, I think you actually chop up the egg. You've got some hard boiled egg and you, kind of, you chop it up fine or you grate it and it's lovely, and it's all mixed in and that goes on top and there's a lot of buttery crunchiness. Also, I love textures. I think textures are really, really important, so I do like that, but cauliflower cheese, as I said, it just works, doesn't it? And people just love it and, if it's baked right, and it comes out and the cauliflower, you know-, you don't want it too hard though. I don't like when you go a place and the cauliflower is too firm. It should just be able to go into your mouth and it goes along with your beautiful, slow roast lamb and some of those tray juices just drizzled on the top there. Isn't it lovely?

Ed Gamble

It's done a lot for cauliflower, as well, cauliflower cheese.

Ainsley Harriott

Sure.

Ed Gamble

People who don't like cauliflower will eat cauliflower cheese.

Ainsley Harriott

Oh, yes.

Ed Gamble

It's huge.

Ainsley Harriott

Even a good soup crème dubarry, me and my old French training, crème dubarry, it's, like, a cream cauliflower soup.

Ed Gamble

Barry's cream?

Ainsley Harriott

Dubarry.

Ed Gamble

Oh right.



Ainsley Harriott

Dubarry, crème dubarry, and it's lovely. I love it. I love the texture of it, I love the flavour of it. I mean, it is that, kind of, slightly bitterness, isn't it? There's a little bit of bitterness in there.

Ed Gamble

Yes.

Ainsley Harriott

So you need to enhance it, you need to add something to it but boy, lovely. Love it, love it, love it.

James Acaster

Ed told me, before you got here, something that I didn't know about you. Is it the Calypso Twins?

Ainsley Harriott

Oh, yes.

Ed Gamble

You used to be in a double act because still-.,

James Acaster

I did not know this.

Ed Gamble

I don't know if you know this Ainsley, still on the wall of The Comedy Store and I think Up The Creek, there is framed, your old publicity shot of you putting your finger all the way through your double-act partner's head.

Ainsley Harriott

Yes.

Ed Gamble

They're still up there. So every comic who starts is like, 'Is that Ainsley Harriott? Was he in a double act?'

Ainsley Harriott

I know, isn't it fantastic? I first started doing that when I went to-, I think we went on a train journey, me and my friend Charles, an old school buddy that I'd known since-, still one of my greatest friends, lives out in Australia now, we went on this tour, Euro-rail I think they call it. Do you know Euro-rail? You go around there and we were playing all the-, every time we went into these, kind of, squares and stuff like that, and we're talking about a time when there was no Euros then. Everybody, you know, the Austrians had the Austrian Shillings, the Italians had the Lira and the French had the Franc. You know what I mean? And there was the Swiss Franc. It wasn't like Euros for everybody right across the board.



We went off and did this, kind of, forming of these squares, and, of course, we'd get all this money in a hat and then we'd go and sit down in these fine restaurants, we loved our food, and then we'd pay with all this change. Stacks and stacks of coins, you know, pennies and what have you, the bloody-, you could see the waiter, people looking at us, throwing the eyes in the air, but it gave us an opportunity to, kind of, perfect our skills a little bit. We came back, we went and did an audition down in Convent Garden, he was teaching at the time, being a school teacher, and there's me working in one of the nice hotels in the West End, and we'd come together on a Saturday afternoon at 2:30, 3 o'clock, to perform on the cobble stones of Convent Garden and get, you know, the equivalent of the money that we got there.

Ed Gamble

Wow.

Ainsley Harriott

I'd have to work all week for that, and we did it in half an hour.

James Acaster

What was the act? What was the Calypso Twins act?

Ainsley Harriott

The Calypso Twins act was a great act. We used to sing. He was Greek and, of course, I was Jamaican and so we, (sings) 'Well here we are again, woah. We've come to sing and we don't really know why. It's that time again, woah. The rhythm music will make you feel so fine. Yes. I'm a Greek man, he's Jamaican, culture differences stood in our way. I can remember when we both used to say hey, where's my mango, where's my moussaka, I like a lick a rum and mead red scene, Bob Marley, Nana Mouskouri, complications and a constant fury. Well here we are.'

Ed Gamble

It's great that you still remember, I can see you click into muscle memory there as well, when you just reel it back there.

Ainsley Harriott

I know, I know, I did a Gelman.

James Acaster

Yes, yes, Paul Gelmaned it, you absolutely Gelmaned that.

Ed Gamble

So did you do the comedy clubs as well?

Ainsley Harriott

Oh God yes, yes, we did comedy store, we did lots of Jongleurs, because Jongleurs was the big club at the time and we used to go down to-, what was the one that Malcolm Hardy did?



Ed Gamble

So the Tunnel Club was before that?

Ainsley Harriott

Tunnel Club, Tunnel Club was Malcolm. Tragic death wasn't it, fantastic the way he went though. He used to get a boat, and he used to live across the lake, and he got so pissed one night he got in the boat, fell in the river, that was the end of it. All of the comics that got together, was just the humour and everything, the way we embraced the love of Malcolm Hardy, and only Malcolm could have done that, 'Whoa, oi, hey.' And falling in the water, you know, sadly no-one was there.

James Acaster

I remember Jo Brand telling a story about him in Edinburgh, when he was doing his show, and there was a reviewer in, who had given him a really bad review, and he said he was going to do a magic trick and he asked the guy to get on stage, and chose the reviewer and said, 'Sir, will you join me on stage.' And gave him a plank of wood to hold, he said, 'Right just hold that with both hands.' And then he kicked him in the balls.

Ainsley Harriott

My favourite bit is he used to say, 'In or out.' And we'd say, 'In or out.' And of course he'd do the joke with his testicles out or in, and they were massive, they looked like eggs. 'In or out.' He'd say, 'In or out, in or out?' 'Get them out, get them out.' And he'd take them out and he'd play a harmonica with his.

Ed Gamble

I'm just my God, and it's so bizarre, so weird, and this really, this is what comedy was all about. People talk about alternative comedy, that's what made alternative comedy, it was the bizarreness of it, you didn't know what was going to happen.

James Acaster

Yes, so when you did Calypso Twins, Ed there, he really loved it when you said, was it, 'He like a man going me and moussaka?'

Ainsley Harriott

Yes.

Ed Gamble

I love that.

James Acaster

Was that always the first big laugh of the set, would that always get a big one?

Ainsley Harriott

Well I think there was loads of different things, sometimes we'd just walkout onto the stage, and every crowd was different, and so you walk out there, and you just have a bit of fun. You wanted that first laugh, it's like everybody, it's like a footballer wanting that first touch to be assured, and then to lay it off,



or that rugby player to catch that ball perfectly, and be able to lay it on. Just little things, the first thing that you do, then you, kind of, feel a little bit, alright I'm up for this now. So that first laugh was important, and used to do various things, I'd walk out there and in the time everybody was still, sort of, putting the old gel, or the Brylcreem or something, and I'd go back and I'd look at a guy, 'I see you found more than one use for KY jelly.' And, you know, and they'd be a little bit shocked, but it would get a little bit of a laugh, and it would get us into the rhythm.

James Acaster

Dream drink.

Ed Gamble

Yes, dream drink, you've already hinted that you like a bit of wine, but rum's got a mention as well.

James Acaster

Rum yes.

Ainsley Harriott

I do like a Pinot noir, yes me like my rum and me like my whiskey. If I'm out with my agent, it's going to be a Martini, gin Martini, extra dry, and I didn't know what extra dry meant, you know. But what they actually do is they put the vermouth on top of the ice and they shake it, and then they pour the vermouth on, and then they put the gin onto the ice thing, and then they pour it out. (TC 00:50:00) It's really, really dry, it's just a hint of it, it's just touched it. I don't know what happens to that vermouth, but it doesn't matter, and it goes in there, four olives, no twist of lemon or anything, no lemon. Again, lemon is a killer, lemon with-

James Acaster

Yes, you hate lemon.

Ainsley Harriott

No, I love it, you know, it can fill in.

Ed Gamble

In the right context.

James Acaster

You've slagged it off twice.

Ainsley Harriott

You know, you talk about like a strawberry daiquiri or something like that, strawberry daq, what have you got? You've got your loads of ice, you've got your strawberry on top, you've got your lime juice, you know, two limes, one lemon squeezed on there. You've got your sugar on there, you've got your rum on there, a little bit of soda water on top, and you pour it out.



Ed Gamble

Oh was that the blender, I thought Donald Duck was making it?

Ainsley Harriott

I'll give you Donald Duck.

James Acaster

Cheeky boy.

Ainsley Harriott

No way, box him, box him, lick him one.

Ed Gamble

Martini's a great choice though.

Ainsley Harriott

Martini is, I think when you walk in and you want it, there's something very clean about a spirit drink, people who really like a drink, they're normally the spiriterers, they're not the beer and stuff like that, you can loads of pints, and, you know, you're just swelling up and going to loo all the time, and you don't know what you're weeing really, quite frankly. And nothing wrong with that, but the real drinkers and spirit drinkers, very steady, and quite often, they don't get completely plastered if you know what I mean. They're just, they're very steady with it, and I know a few people like that, even some family members. My uncle Allen who's still alive, uncle Allen who used to come around all Christmas, and birthdays and stuff, 'What would you like to drink?' He said, 'Vodka and orange, don't tell the wife.' And she thought he was drinking orange all the time, 'Vodka and orange, don't tell the wife.' And Aunt Penny went, 'Oh he's loving orange juice, oh yes, my Allen is drinking orange juice.' No wonder he was so thick, 'Don't tell the wife.' The amount of vodka was in there was unbelievable.

James Acaster

But talk about that generation and old people, I don't want to really let you go today without talking about hello Jill.

Ainsley Harriott

'Why hello Jill.'

Ed Gamble

Poor Jill has checked out now you know.

James Acaster

Oh okay, well I didn't know that, but fair enough.

Ainsley Harriott

And there was me and of course Alison, and then this little lady sitting in between us on the sofa, do you remember that scene? Oh my God, Greg James just wet himself laughing.



Ed Gamble

Not only do we remember it Ainsley, we talk about it I'd say at least three times a week.

James Acaster

It's my favourite thing to watch on YouTube, I love the way that you come into the room, and you sneak past the door like that, you close the door behind you, that's funny. Then, 'Hello Jill.'

Ainsley Harriott

And they gave her a brand new TV, she was so small wasn't she? There's me out in the kitchen, in Jill's kitchen, trying to make her this surprise meal and stuff, and I'm going for it. And every drawer that I open up, there's a packet of fags in there, or more importantly, there's about three or four packets that are empty. You know those people that just keep them then think, 'I might find something in there one day.' And they've got these empty packets. Every time I'm looking for something, 'No, no, okay this one.' I'll go to the bottom one, open it like that, and it will be, like, something like Sobranie or something, you know, weird fags that you only smoke at Christmas, bless her.

Ed Gamble

I love an old lady who smokes.

James Acaster

Yes, great.

Ed Gamble

My great-grandma, we bought her a nightie for her birthday once, and the next time we went over there, the nightie was on her bed and it had a massive fag hole burnt in it, and we didn't know she smoked. She's like, 'Oh yes.' She took it up when she was 75 and she'd have a cigarette in bed every night. Terrifying, the most dangerous time to have a cigarette. The only thing that would have made hello Jill better was if she was smoking when you came in and in the fag (talking over each other 54.13).

James Acaster

She did sneak off for a fag.

Ed Gamble

Did she?

James Acaster

She did, of course. She liked her little fag.

Ed Gamble

Petrified, needed to calm her nerves.



James Acaster

She went off in the garden, when, you know, there was a break, send it back to Eamonn and Ruth in the studio, she's off having a little fag and little brownie fingers, fantastic.

Ainsley Harriott

Why hello Jill.

James Acaster

Let's talk about that moment Ainsley, because like-

Ainsley Harriott

She's got four black (talking over each other 54.42).

James Acaster

Let's talk about that moment, because you're waiting to come into Jill's living room, they've handed you a frying pan. Did you know that you were going to deliver it like that?

Ainsley Harriott

I had no idea, I had no idea, because they're standing there now and then they're going, 'Wait, wait, wait, go, go.' Like that, all the signs, you know, you have with people standing on the side, then you go in, because now the camera's in the right position and I think Alison has got Jill to sit down. So, it's kind of, it gives me an entrance, and when I walk in, I want to piss myself laughing, because Alison's about four times the size of Jill. She's nearly disappearing, 'Why hello Jill.' And Alison's looking at me, and I'm looking at Al, this is a good gig.

James Acaster

Let's get on to the dream dessert, we're rounding off the meal, what are you thinking?

Ainsley Harriott

Do you know, hard to get to dessert, because I'm so, as we've explained throughout this, when you have all these interesting little bits that come with everything and more importantly, if you get the correct type of bread at the beginning of the meal, it really does, it's seduction time isn't it? You just give yourself over to it, because it's so, so beautiful. But if you do have room for a dessert, even though I do like a little bit of cheese, but we've already done the cracker thing.

Ed Gamble

But feel free, if you want cheese for dessert, Ainsley.

James Acaster

No, he's like I don't want to.

Ainsley Harriott

No, no, I do like a little bit of cheese normally. Cheese is one of those things that I nick from somebody else's plate, 'Oh I'll just have a little bit.' You know, the little bit of something, a little nugget.



Ed Gamble

I know you're miming that, but I'm just going to move my cheese away.

Ainsley Harriott

Yes, exactly, exactly.

James Acaster

Oh I love a little bit, nibble, I love a little cheese nibble.

Ainsley Harriott

And I think for me, it's probably bread and butter pudding.

James Acaster

Oh lovely.

Ainsley Harriott

The late, great Gary Rhodes, he probably did the finest bread and butter pudding ever. It was unique, I think he was one of the early chefs that cooked it in a bath. So it was, you know, it's got a bath of water, so you sit down.

Ed Gamble

That's not what James was imagining by the way.

James Acaster

Yes, I was imagining a bathtub, but like, also, I'm pretty sure I saw on TV Gary Rhodes making a bread and butter pudding. Like when you said that just then, it really triggered quite a vivid memory of watching it on TV, and it looking so good that I could taste it watching it. Like Gary Rhodes was one of the first TV chefs that I watched, and really found engaging, I loved the way he used to speak, and just the tone of his voice, ASMR in a way, Gary Rhodes.

Ed Gamble

Don't reduce it to your perverted stuff.

James Acaster

But yes bread and butter pudding, yes.

Ainsley Harriott

And he had a hand, and he said, 'You put that in there, and the flavour and all that.' And he used to give it all that, and I think he's one of the first, sort of, young chefs that came onto TV that inspired the youth out there, think, 'Oh I've got spiky hair, I could do that.' Do you know what I mean? It wasn't that set thing, and he didn't have that straight chef's hat on, he, kind of, just took us in another direction and he was enormous, and his agent Borrow (ph 58.08) who's a friend of mine, you know, we often talk about him, and Gary just set standards which was unbelievable. I think just towards the end it became



a little bit like, food started to change so much, and people became a lot more relaxed, it wasn't all about that ideal presentation, the casualness of it, but if the produce was good and the flavours were right, it really didn't matter. But his bread and butter pudding was to absolutely die for, little bit of crème anglaise, I don't mind if it's just your straightforward old British custard, but a crème anglaise kind of complemented it I think. Lovely infusion of vanilla going through it, and, you know, nice creamy rich texture, but did you need it, I don't know if you needed it, because That bread and butter pudding with a little bit of, slight brush of apricot glaze on top there was just, like, it was just sublime. I don't know about you, I find it really satisfying, the idea of a hot pud, don't you? And then when I was doing my Food we Love series, one of the most popular things on there was my strawberry, coconut sponge. You know how you got at school, you got that sponge and they put the strawberry jam on top of it. Excuse me. And then sprinkled it with the coconut. You just have a wedge of that with a bit of custard, and it's just so satisfying, especially in winter, do you know what I mean? But Gary's BB pudding was just, like, 'Pfff.'

Ed Gamble

You've gone somewhere else while you're thinking about that, I can hear you-

Ainsley Harriott

Yes, I'm getting emotional now, he was a mate. And he was a bloody fine chef. Yes, we, kind of, miss him. He went too early and the company that I'm working for now and were actually filming with him at the time when he checked out, went to his hotel room and had that bit of tragedy but (TC 01:00:00), and I did the lovely thing, you know, the farewell. I voiced over the, you know, I narrated that show just to say, 'Thanks mate,' because he was special. Even though he supported Man United. Yes, I'm a gooner, I know you play better football, I don't care.

James Acaster

With those TV chefs at the time, would you go round each other's houses for meals then?

Ainsley Harriott

Occasionally. It's quite difficult because, you know, the industry, especially when we're all up our pom (ph 01.00.35), Ready Steady Cook stuff. Running restaurants, we're doing stuff. We're going from one place to another. When do you have it? The only time you do it is when you go to their restaurant. And at the end they come out and they sit round with you when most people have gone home. I remember something like, when I'd go down Reigate to see my mate, The Dining Room. Tony Tobin, who was a mate, still a pal of mine. We'd go there and I remember George Best being in the corner because he lived in the area, having his thing and he'd be the last one staying in there and we'd go over and have drinks with him, late. That's the time you got to see them. That's the time they could actually switch off. To actually go to their homes, I think on one occasion I went to Gino's house. Gino D'Acampo's house. Even though Gordon Ramsay's my neighbour, he literally lives across the road. I don't think Gordon's there very much, he's made such a success of his life in the States that he goes out there. I went out for meals with Gary, we went out, you know, you're used to cooking all the time. You want to go out and let somebody else do it.



James Acaster

So, did Gary make the bread and butter pudding himself or you got it from his restaurant?

Ainsley Harriott

No. I had to go to his restaurant. I never actually went round to his amazing house in Kent. He had this fantastic house in Kent but then he went to live in Dubai. Anyway. Let's end on a positive note, yes, his dessert, his food was fantastic. I'm just trying to think. Yes, I do. There were a chefs I'd go to their house but some of them you wouldn't probably know. I did go to Antony Worrall Thompson's house. Yes, I did go to his house on many occasions. (Talking over each other 01.02.16)

James Acaster

See, I imagine that to be quite a small house, like a hobbit's house. Little circular door.

Ed Gamble

Because he's small, yes.

James Acaster

And Ainsley's got to stoop to get in like Gandalf.

Ed Gamble

Here's a question, who's bigger? Antony Worrall Thompson or Jill?

James Acaster

Yes, good question. Very good question.

Ainsley Harriott

Bigger is definitely AWT.

Ed Gamble

Bigger than Jill.

Ainsley Harriott

Bigger than Jill. I mean, Jill was tiny.

James Acaster

She was tiny but.

Ainsley Harriott

Two of these six foot four black people sitting on the sofa with her, she just disappeared, do you know what I mean? It was like, what's that commercial on TV but it was based on a film where you just go down the back of a sofa and disappear down the back of a sofa.



Ed Gamble

Yes, Ainsley, there is an advert where someone slides down the back of the sofa and it's for a second hand car app called Kazoo. Don't want you to be star struck Ainsley, but I do the voice-over for that.

James Acaster

Say it for Ainsley.

Ed Gamble

Kazoo, yes you can.

Ainsley Harriott

We love you.

James Acaster

Recognise that?

Ainsley Harriott

We love you. I do recognise it.

Ed Gamble

Yes, there you go. You're welcome.

Ainsley Harriott

Kazoo you can.

James Acaster

See, you can. In your face, Ed.

Ainsley Harriott

Lovely.

James Acaster

Kazoo you can.

Ed Gamble

Don't say it too much Ainsley otherwise they'll hire you instead.

Ainsley Harriott

I know, I know.

James Acaster

Ainsley, I'm going to read your menu back to you, see how you feel about it. You want still water in a beautiful glass, no lemon, no cucumber, no nothing in it. Popadums or bread, you would like a warm bread selection with olive oil and rock salt.



Ed Gamble

Say rock salt properly. Robin rock salt.

James Acaster

Robin rock salt. Rock, rock. Rock, rock.

Ainsley Harriott

I'm just doing the Gelman.

James Acaster

Gelman. Starter, tuna tartare. Caviar. Diced avocado, caramelised chilli ring from the Four Seasons. Main, slow cooked lamb. You're going to get the anchovies and the garlic in there. Side, cauliflower cheese. Drink, a gin martini, four olives, extra dry and dessert, Gary Rhodes's bread and butter pudding.

Ainsley Harriott

Oh yes.

Ed Gamble

That sounds fantastic.

James Acaster

Ainsley, look. We've been doing this podcast for a while now and we've done, like, over a hundred episodes. We've been interviewed about it every now and again and people ask us who our dream guest is. Every time we've said you.

Ed Gamble

Every single time.

James Acaster

Every single time we have said Ainsley Harriott is our dream guest. I think I can speak for all three of us, we were quite nervous going into this because we were like, 'This is the big one. We've built it up.' And also.

Ainsley Harriott

There's the alarm.

James Acaster

Have we over built it in our heads? You have exceeded our expectations.

Ed Gamble

Absolutely.



James Acaster

This has been exactly what we always hoped it would be. Thank you so much for that because we've really enjoyed ourselves.

Ainsley Harriott

That's so nice of you guys. Coffee's still shit.

Ed Gamble

Well, there we are. The off menu menu of Ainsley Harriott. Everything we could have hoped for, James.

James Acaster

Man. I mean, talk about all your Christmasses coming at once. I feel so happy. I've got everything that I wanted out of that. Absolutely everything.

Ed Gamble

It was brilliant. He was wonderful. He was really good fun. He talked to us for ages, what a guy. It was in person, for the first time in a year and a bit.

James Acaster

In person as per his request. And, you know, I was a little nervous boy going into it. Hadn't seen anyone in person for ten years and he was so great. He bullied Benito immediately, said his food was shit. And I was like, 'This guy.'

Ed Gamble

'This guy gets it.'

James Acaster

I knew it, 'This guy gets it.' He really did get it. He didn't say, 'Sammy sardines,' we didn't have to kick him out of the dream restaurant. He said, 'Anchovies.'

Ed Gamble

Close, but anchovies are fine because those bones melt.

James Acaster

Yes, those bones melt and that's what I like.

Ed Gamble

What an episode. It's up there for me. When we recorded it, afterwards I thought, 'That's up there for me.'

James Acaster

I was giddy. Up there for me too. There's a few there that are up there on the Mount Rushmore of Off Menu.



Ed Gamble

Yes, get the chisel, we're putting a new face on.

James Acaster

Yes, I'm trying to think what Mount Rushmore's made of. Meringue. Chisel meringue, it's just going to shatter, isn't it.

Ed Gamble

Cheese.

James Acaster

Yes, cheese. I'll actually let you have that one.

Ed Gamble

Ainsley's book, 'Good Mood Food', or 'Good Mood Food' or 'Good Mood Food', depending on how you pronounce it is out on September 9th. Go and get it, that guy's a legend.

James Acaster

Go and get it. You've got to go and get it and listen to this episode every time you cook something from it.

Ed Gamble

Yes. Listen to all the songs.

James Acaster

Yes, all of the songs, man. The songs, the stories of Ready Steady Cook, hello Jill.

Ed Gamble

I feel like we should start doing the old calypso twins double act but replace things with, like, I like cheese and he likes desserts. It's not as good as moussaka and mango, is it?

James Acaster

Yes, let's just keep the original lyrics.

Ed Gamble

Yes, okay. They make less sense.

James Acaster

Or I did think afterwards the only person I know who is of Jamaican and Greek descent is Jamali Maddox.

Ed Gamble

That's true.



James Acaster

I think we could contact Jamali and ask him if he would just like that song, and he'd just sing it on his own.

Ed Gamble

He'd just do it himself.

James Acaster

Yes.

Ed Gamble

What, I like moussaka and I like mango.

James Acaster

Yes, I like both of them. They're nice.

Ed Gamble

I actually do like both of them but there's no sort of.

James Acaster

I like both of them. But I'm from Kettering.

Ed Gamble

There's no, sort of, heritage reasons for me to sing about it, really.

James Acaster

Yes, bit of a way into it, material wise.

Ed Gamble

It wouldn't really make sense for you to go on. Well, actually, people would definitely buy that off you. You could go on. I like mango and I love moussaka. People would be like, 'He's a genius. This guy's a genius.' Cold moussaka, hate myself, 1999.

James Acaster

No. Cold moussaka, hate myself, mango, mango, mango.

Ed Gamble

That's not a show that James is touring but I am touring a show called Electric. And who knows, I may do that song at the end. Come and see me. Check out my website, edgamble.co.uk, for tickets. It starts in February 2022.

James Acaster

Amazing. We've got merch, Off Menu merch on the Off Menu website, which is offmenupodcast.co.uk.



Ed Gamble

Yes, it is. Well done, James. Yes, go and grab a little tee, a little tote bag. So, thanks for listening to today. We had such a blast. Do come back next week for another episode of the Off Menu podcast.

James Acaster

See you later. Keep your tums full and your mouth open.