



Off Menu – Ep122 – Meera Syal

Ed Gamble

Take a large podcast fish, remove the bones of bad vibes, and you get a lovely fillet of Off Menu with Ed Gamble and James Acaster. Hello James.

Ed Gamble

Welcome to the Off Menu podcast, where we take rock-solid frozen-cold chats, put them in the microwave of humour for five seconds, and get a perfect scoop of conversation. That was good, man.

James Acaster

I'm just thinking-, I think you've done a microwave one before, but then maybe not. Maybe-,

Ed Gamble

I don't think I have.

James Acaster

Maybe it's just that Benito uses the microwave sound effects for the episode.

Ed Gamble

I've not done the microwave one-,

James Acaster

It goes, mmmm.

Ed Gamble

I've definitely not done-, yes.

James Acaster

Bing.

Ed Gamble

Alright, mate. Don't show off you listened to another one.

James Acaster

Free now. I listen for free.

Ed Gamble

I've not used-, I don't think I've used the microwave before. Certainly not within the rock-solid-,

James Acaster

Yes.

Ed Gamble

Hard conversation-, because what I'm saying is, is sometimes conversations can be hard, but we use our microwaves of humour and we soften our guest, and then get a big old scoop of conversation out of them. And, I think that's actually one of the best ones I've ever done.

James Acaster

Yes, I guess so. I mean, I'm just trying to think, like, what you-, I don't know if I'd put someone in the microwave and then afterwards, it would be scoop-able. Like-,



Ed Gamble

No, no, no. You only put it in for five seconds, right?

James Acaster

Ice cream.

Ed Gamble

Yes.

James Acaster

Yes, okay. That's fair enough. I like a soft ice cream more than a rock-hard one.

Ed Gamble

Do you?

James Acaster

Yes.

Ed Gamble

But, you wouldn't put it in the microwave.

James Acaster

Yes, I would put it in the microwave. Yes, I would.

Ed Gamble

Alright. But, you just said you wouldn't.

James Acaster

I would. I relate to it 100%.

Ed Gamble

Right, okay. Thank you.

James Acaster

James Acaster here.

Ed Gamble

Ed Gamble here.

James Acaster

The Off Menu boys. We're welcoming you to the dream restaurant along with a special guest. We are asking their favourite ever starter, main course, dessert, side dish, and drink. Not in that order. And, this week, our special guest is Meera Syal.

Ed Gamble

Meera Syal, a wonderful writer-

James Acaster

Wow.

Ed Gamble

Comedian, performer, broadcaster.

James Acaster

National treasure.



Ed Gamble

National treasure. We've had a lot of national treasures on recently.

James Acaster

We've had quite a few national treasures. We better buy ourselves a national treasure chest.

Ed Gamble

Yes.

James Acaster

Do you know what I mean? People's national treasures in it.

Ed Gamble

Put them all in there, but give them plenty of room to stretch their legs because they deserve it. They deserve a first-class chest experience.

James Acaster

Yes, absolutely. First-class chest experience.

Ed Gamble

Yes.

James Acaster

Meera thought that was amazing. She's a hero of ours and we're very excited to have her on the podcast.

Ed Gamble

Yes.

James Acaster

But, if Meera chooses a secret ingredient, an ingredient, well, normally, traditionally it's an ingredient that we don't like, then we will kick her out of the dream restaurant. This week, it's a little tip of the-, tip of the cap to one of our favourite Goodness Gracious Me sketches. So, this week, the secret ingredient is an English.

Ed Gamble

If she picks an English, she will be removed from the restaurant.

James Acaster

Yes. No going out for an English, please, Meera, otherwise we'll have to kick you out. But, you know, the silver lining is we would get to discuss that sketch, which would be fun, wouldn't it? As two students of comedy.

Ed Gamble

When I was actually a student, we didn't do this, but I always wanted to pretend that I didn't know the point of going for an English and perform a sketch where we took going for an English and flipped it around. No one would let me do it, which is very sad.

James Acaster

Yes.

Ed Gamble

Yes.



James Acaster

I mean, it sounds good. I mean, who was in your sketch group again?

Ed Gamble

Nish.

James Acaster

Nish, yes. Nish, Tom Neenan.

Ed Gamble

Yes, Nish, Tom Neenan, Pete Riley, Annie Addy.

James Acaster

Yes.

Ed Gamble

Katie Barker.

James Acaster

The Durham review.

Ed Gamble

The Durham review. Classic stuff-,

James Acaster

Yes.

Ed Gamble

From some classic guys.

James Acaster

Yes, I never got to see the Durham review when you guys were all in it. Heard a lot of the sketches described by you lot and definitely sounds like I would find it hilarious, providing I knew you at the time.

Ed Gamble

That was very much the vibe. We'd do runs in Edinburgh and the shows that went down the best are the ones where all the people from Durham came.

James Acaster

Yes, yes.

Ed Gamble

Yes.

James Acaster

Because they're, like, oh, great. These guys have deliberately made this sketch-,

Ed Gamble

I know these guys.

James Acaster

Rubbish.



Ed Gamble

Yes. Nish playing, like, a film noir detective. That was a good one.

James Acaster

Yes.

Ed Gamble

Yes.

James Acaster

With a bad name, I'd imagine. All of your names, I remember hearing about Nish playing a Scottish person in an Edinburgh sketch and calling himself, was it Haggers McNish?

Ed Gamble

Haggers McNish. That wasn't in the Durham review. That was when we did a stand-up show and Nish would do his set and then I'd say, 'We want to make this stand-up show a little bit different, so we're going to send Nish out into Edinburgh and he's going to buy a disguise, and he's going to try to come back in here in disguise.' And, he'd go out and then he'd come back in ten minutes later with, like, a ginger wig on. One of those tourist hats, and pretend to be a man called Haggers McNish and I'd pretend that I'd fallen for it.

James Acaster

Imagine going to see that.

Ed Gamble

It was brilliant. He does similar stuff now, I've heard.

James Acaster

Yes, he does. Yes, he hasn't strayed far from that. We should probably start the episode.

Ed Gamble

Yes, please. I'm very much looking forward to having Meera in the dream restaurant. So, hopefully, she doesn't pick an English.

James Acaster

Yes, hopefully not, but also I hope that we get to chat to her about Code 404. New series of that is out on Sky Comedy, so I'm very excited. Hopefully, we can dig into that and talk about it. She's fantastic in it. She plays a right rotter.

Ed Gamble

She does play a right rotter, so we-, but, hopefully, she's not a right rotter in real life.

James Acaster

Fingers crossed.

Ed Gamble

This is the Off Menu menu of Meera Syal. Welcome, Meera to the dream restaurant.

Meera Syal

Thank you so much. Thanks for having me. It's very posh.

James Acaster

Welcome, Meera Syal to the dream restaurant. We've been expecting you for some time.



Ed Gamble

Here we go. Less posh now, unfortunately after the arrival of the Kettering genie, spoiling the atmosphere.

Meera Syal

Thanks for dressing up.

James Acaster

Thank you, mate. Thank you, yes. A pleasure. Can you tell-, explain to the listeners what I'm wearing because everyone sees the genie differently? People imagine the genie in different clothes. To you, what does your genie look like at this particular meal?

Ed Gamble

James is the genie in this. We should have explained that. It's quite a high concept at the beginning, but don't worry, it won't come up again.

Meera Syal

Yes, it is. Isn't it?

Ed Gamble

Yes.

Meera Syal

Oh my gosh. I would like you to be dressed in a very smart Nehru jacket.

James Acaster

Yes.

Meera Syal

And, billowy trousers, but not the curly shoes because I think that's going a bit far. It's a bit cliched.

James Acaster

No problem.

Ed Gamble

I now understand that you said billowy trousers there. Initially, I thought you said below-y trousers and I thought, what other type of trousers are there?

Meera Syal

There are uppy trousers.

Ed Gamble

Yes, there are uppy trousers.

Meera Syal

Also known as a wedgie.

Ed Gamble

Yes.

Meera Syal

Take your pick.

James Acaster

Whenever I wear a Nuhro collar, Nish Kumar tells me that I'm ripping him off, though. So, if you put



me in that, I've got one top that has that, kind of, collar and every time I wear it, Nish gets angry and says I'm stealing his thing and it's his thing.

Meera Syal

Oh, dear.

James Acaster

So, if you do put me in that top, I'm going to be in trouble with him.

Meera Syal

You are. You're going to be accused of cultural appropriation.

James Acaster

Maybe.

Ed Gamble

Yes.

Meera Syal

You can't win, really. Then it's an Iron Maiden t-shirt then, I suppose. Stick to your culture, mate. That's what I say.

Ed Gamble

Is that-, I mean, that was amazing in the moment. Was an Iron Maiden t-shirt the whitest thing you could think of?

Meera Syal

Yes.

Ed Gamble

Yes.

Meera Syal

Yes.

Ed Gamble

I think you nailed it. I think you absolutely-,

Meera Syal

abound.

Ed Gamble

I love Iron Maiden, just for the record.

James Acaster

Ed does love Iron Maiden.

Ed Gamble

I do love Iron Maiden.

Meera Syal

Do you love a bit of heavy metal?

Ed Gamble

I do.



Meera Syal

I just recently watched The Story of Anvil. Wow.

Ed Gamble

It's great, isn't it?

Meera Syal

And, you keep thinking, is it a spoof? But, it's not.

Ed Gamble

No, they're very real people and for a while, that band got quite good slots on festivals.

Meera Syal

Yes.

Ed Gamble

Because of that film. And now, I assume they're just back to whatever they started in the film again. But-

Meera Syal

But, the commitment. It's heartbreaking and also magnificent. I mean-

Ed Gamble

Yes.

Meera Syal

Great.

Ed Gamble

Absolutely.

Meera Syal

A great documentary.

Ed Gamble

That's how James feels as a genie sometimes, isn't it, James?

James Acaster

Yes. I'm committed to it. I try really hard and still some people fail to recognise me as a genie. Sad life.

Meera Syal

Do you hang out in a lamp?

James Acaster

Yes, yes. I do hang out in a lamp.

Meera Syal

You do?

James Acaster

I burst out the lamp at the beginning of the podcast. You probably weren't looking, but, like, I was in a lamp and then I burst out of it.



Meera Syal

And, you burst out.

James Acaster

Yes, yes. So, you missed that-,

Meera Syal

I did miss that bit.

James Acaster

But, like, I was inside a lamp originally.

Ed Gamble

And then, he had to go back in the lamp very quickly and change his Nuhro collar for an Iron Maiden t-shirt.

James Acaster

Yes. Very quickly.

Meera Syal

Suits you, sir.

James Acaster

Thank you very much. Meera, would you consider yourself a foodie at all?

Meera Syal

Totally. Gosh, yes. I love food. Love it. Love it too much. Just mainly have over-eaten through most of my life, just because-, yes. There's so much to sample and taste. But, I'm not-, I can't say I'm an expert on fine dining, actually. I haven't been to a lot of the, you know, tick-list restaurants you're meant to go to. But, I do love sampling other people's home cooking. I do love that.

James Acaster

Who are some of the best cooks you know? Your friends who are, like, the top ones. Who, if you get an invite around their house, you're, like, oh, man. Can't wait.

Meera Syal

Oh, well, it has to be writer, Tanika Gupta who's one of my dear friends and lives up the road, luckily for me. She gives me doggy bags. But, honestly, everything she cooks, whether it's, you know, a curry from scratch or an amazing cake. She does it-, it's that effortless way that I really-, she, sort of, ambles around the kitchen talking to you and cracking jokes, and then all of a sudden, there's this amazing meal that she seems to have rustled up from half an onion and a bag of lentils. And, you go, 'I don't know how you did that.'

Ed Gamble

The effortless thing is always amazing to me.

Meera Syal

Yes.

Ed Gamble

Because when I cook something, if I'm really going for it, you know, there's going to be absolute anger and hatred poured into that meal. Every single last mouthful of that is going to be fuelled by my just rage. That's how I cook. How are you, Meera? When you cook, are you an angry cook? Are you a chilled cook? Somewhere in the middle?



Meera Syal

I think I'm quite a chilled cook because I cook a lot. I cook pretty much every night. We probably have a takeaway a week. And, because my mum lives with us, I often end up cooking Indian food because that's what she likes best. And now, I've got it down to a fine art. But, I find cooking meditative, actually and particularly baking. I don't know. When I want to learn my lines, I bake a cake.

Ed Gamble

Really?

Meera Syal

Because I find that, if I've got the lines sitting there, but I'm actually doing something else with another part of my brain, it goes in better and I can't tell you why, but it seems to.

James Acaster

Good tip.

Ed Gamble

That's great.

James Acaster

I find it impossible. Ed and I have auditions. Right, Ed?

Ed Gamble

Mm-hmm.

James Acaster

We don't get the parts.

Ed Gamble

No.

James Acaster

But, we do a lot of auditions, so we are familiar with trying to learn lines.

Ed Gamble

It's good to practise, though, Meera. You know, it's just good to practise. Keep practising for, you know, let's say, fifteen years. One day, the right audition will come along and I'll mess that up.

Meera Syal

I can't believe you have to audition. That's shocking. They should just be asking you.

James Acaster

Well, we're very bad actors, so that's the main reason.

Meera Syal

Is that why?

James Acaster

Yes, yes.

Ed Gamble

Very poor actors.



James Acaster

Very bad.

Meera Syal

Auditioning is just a pain at the moment, though because it's all on Zoom and, you know, so much is about, have you got the right equipment and are you lit nicely? Generally, that's a no on both counts because you're frazzled and you've got loads of lines to learn. And then-,

Ed Gamble

Yes.

Meera Syal

Sometimes, your teenage son or your mother reading in the other lines. The worst thing is, actually, what you can't do in a Zoom audition. And, I know we've had to do that because of the times we live in, is that you can only do one take on the part you're going up for. What you can't show the other people looking at you is that I could actually do this take five different ways, had I been in the room with the director.

Ed Gamble

Yes.

Meera Syal

But, I've got to make a decision now about the role and if it's the wrong one, if it's not how you saw it, then it's gone already. And, that's a bit frustrating, I think.

James Acaster

Yes.

Ed Gamble

You've baked a whole cake for that.

Meera Syal

And, I've baked a whole bloody cake. I do get the cake at the end, though, which is some consolation.

James Acaster

Every time Meera Syal auditions, she's always got crumbs around her mouth. Have you noticed? Her face is covered in crumbs and, like, buttercream. Have you noticed that? Oh god, it's just a choice she makes for the role. Like, yes. I'm not sure.

Ed Gamble

One day, the perfect part of a baker is going to come along, Meera, and you're going to smash that audition.

Meera Syal

I'm so waiting. I'm so waiting to be asked to go on, you know, Celebrity Bake Off thingy, whatever it is. Just because I actually like baking.

James Acaster

Steer clear.

Meera Syal

Is it too much hassle?



James Acaster

It's a waking nightmare. Steer clear of it. They stitch you up.

Meera Syal

Do they?

Ed Gamble

What I would say, Meera, is James's experience on Celeb Bake Off is not the experience I'd say anyone else has ever had on it.

Meera Syal

You fronted it out, James, which is all you can do.

James Acaster

Tried to front it out. I was spiralling. They don't help you. They just watch you drown in your own cake batter. Oh, yes. They loved it.

Meera Syal

Had you ever baked before that traumatic experience?

Ed Gamble

Good question.

James Acaster

Not really.

Meera Syal

Not really.

Ed Gamble

Really? It didn't show, mate.

James Acaster

I helped my mum as a kid sometimes because I wanted to eat the cake mix.

Meera Syal

Obviously.

James Acaster

And, I did one practice round in my flat just before going on Bake Off with my sister. It went really well, so I thought-, I thought that was the easiest thing I've ever had to do. Bake those flapjacks. So, I was, like, no more practising, then. That's fine. But, I turned up on the day and everyone else was, like, 'I've practised, you know, sixteen times or whatever.' And, I was, like, 'What?'

Meera Syal

Yes.

James Acaster

Must not be getting much work outside of that.

Meera Syal

You can tell some people have been in heavy training for weeks, though, can't you? You just can.

Ed Gamble

Yes.



James Acaster

Yes. And, because also, they enjoy baking at home, so they were, like, 'Yes, I've done all these different practises.' That's because they've loved it and I saw it as work and tried to avoid it. Turned up on the day and got my arse handed to me.

Meera Syal

No. Do you know what, but that's why people watch it. It's for the arse-handing bits. It's not for the expert cake bits.

Ed Gamble

It should be called Celebrity arse-handing, really, shouldn't it?

Meera Syal

It should-

James Acaster

Yes.

Meera Syal

Really. It's not as catchy, maybe. Yes.

Ed Gamble

Is there a specific cake that you like to make when you learn your lines or-

James Acaster

Good question.

Ed Gamble

Is it a whole range of cakes?

James Acaster

This is a good question.

Meera Syal

There are a couple of cakes I can do pretty much with my eyes closed. One is lemon drizzle and the other is brownies. Really nice, sticky, gooey brownies. So-

James Acaster

Oh, yes.

Meera Syal

Those I can-, I've got down to a fine art now.

James Acaster

Next question. What is your address?

Meera Syal

You're very welcome anytime. I'm that annoying actor that takes cakes to the rehearsal room, but I've found it's a really great way of breaking the ice.

Ed Gamble

I don't think that's annoying, Meera.



Meera Syal

I don't know. Do you remember Nigel Planer's book, I, An Actor?

James Acaster

No.

Meera Syal

Which is all about a poncy actor and he's got a recipe in there for rehearsal cheesecake to break the ice, which has got ingredients in it like squirrel skin and quince. But, I hope I'm not that actor, but I do find that there is nothing like feeding people to start everyone talking.

Ed Gamble

That's not annoying at all, Meera. I'd imagine you're the absolute toast of the town when you bring a lemon drizzle to a rehearsal room. That sounds incredible. I'm going to start working harder on my auditions if that's the sort of thing that happens when you get the part.

James Acaster

Yes, yes. I didn't know there was cake at the end of it. Does your mum like your cooking and your cakes, now that she lives with you?

Meera Syal

Yes. Yes, she loves a cake. She's got a really sweet tooth. I mean, I wasn't brought up with baking. It's not an Indian thing at all. In fact, for years, I thought the oven was a place you stored your pans. I didn't actually know it did anything because we just never baked. But, I grew up in this mining village, surrounded, and it was a bit, sort of, it's not quite Enid Blyton. Very working class Enid Blyton, but a bit, kind of, rurally and, you know, I had lots of old ladies living around me that always used to bake for the church fete. And, that's how I learnt. I learnt from little old ladies. So, my next door neighbour would be making a cake or jam tart from scratch, with blackberries she'd picked, and I'd stand by her and watch her and that's how I learnt. So, it was pretty good training, actually.

James Acaster

Good. Always stalk an old lady.

Ed Gamble

Because that's the only way to learn how to bake, really, isn't it? From old ladies, right?

Meera Syal

I think so.

Ed Gamble

So, how did the first person learn how to bake? Because was there just an old lady who was born and she knew how to bake straight away. Because there's got to be a time when there wasn't an old lady knocking around, right?

Meera Syal

Yes, you're very right. That's a very existential question.

Ed Gamble

Yes.

Meera Syal

Which I'm not sure I can answer.

Ed Gamble

Yes. What came first, the cake or the old lady?



Meera Syal

Yes.

Ed Gamble

The old question.

James Acaster

Yes. Maybe there was a cake and an old lady burst out of it, you know, like a surprise. Like, a birthday.

Ed Gamble

Like a stag party surprise.

James Acaster

Yes, but they're, like, 'How long has she been in there?' She's so old. Did you bake a cake when learning your lines for Code 404 is the question?

Meera Syal

Oh, nice Segway.

James Acaster

Pretty good.

Meera Syal

Probably, I imagine I probably did, but I couldn't tell you what cake it was. Yes, yes. It would have been a bitter cake because I was playing a bitter character. It would have been something with dark chocolate and spikes in it I think. That was a really, really fun part. I don't get offered many, sort of, purely wrong-uns and it was just great to play someone who, you never knew what side of the law she was on because she's a lawyer that comes from a criminal family. So, she knows both worlds really intimately. And, I got to eyeball Stephen Graham in a very dead-eye, sharky way, which is very exciting. He won, obviously.

James Acaster

Oh, did he?

Ed Gamble

That's got to be one of the dreams, to dead-eye Stephen Graham. Just to have the opportunity to do that within a part because you know in real life, that's never going to happen for any of us, right?

Meera Syal

You just wouldn't dare, would you?

Ed Gamble

No, absolutely-,

Meera Syal

You wouldn't dare.

James Acaster

I would.

Ed Gamble

You wouldn't-,



Meera Syal

Would you dare?

James Acaster

Yes, I'd do it. I saw him on Jonathan Ross once, having a go at Ramesh, and I was, like, if I see him, if I ever see that guy, I'm going to dead-eye him, minimum.

Ed Gamble

What's your maximum with him though?

James Acaster

Punch him in the head. I would do it.

Ed Gamble

You wouldn't last a second, mate.

Meera Syal

You wouldn't.

James Acaster

Well, let's see. Let's see.

Meera Syal

Can I just tell you, he's completely ripped as well.

James Acaster

Yes. Well, he's going to be ripped to pieces.

Meera Syal

He's really ripped. We had to do a bit of a stunt that involved running and jumping and guns and helicopters, very exciting. And, he sprinted from one end of a runway to the other in about three seconds flat, without-,

James Acaster

Wow.

Meera Syal

Barely breathing. I was, like, my god.

James Acaster

He'll have to run quicker than that when I see him. He'll have to run quicker.

Meera Syal

It's not sounding very convincing-,

Ed Gamble

No.

Meera Syal

I have to tell you.

James Acaster

We'll see.



Meera Syal

We'll see.

Ed Gamble

I don't think we will.

Meera Syal

I'll pass the message on, shall I?

Ed Gamble

Yes, do.

James Acaster

Yes.

Ed Gamble

I mean, send him an email, please, Meera. That would be great. If you just say, 'James Acaster says he can tear you to pieces.' I believe-,

Meera Syal

Yes, I will do that.

James Acaster

Yes.

Ed Gamble

Was the phrase he used.

Meera Syal

You'll be hearing from him, I'm sure.

Ed Gamble

And, you'll have to run fast when you see him. That's what he said as well. Make sure to pass that on.

James Acaster

How many court room characters have you played now, Meera? Because, like, before we get into your main menu, I mean, you've played a judge, right?

Meera Syal

Yes. I've played a few. I played a judge in Broadchurch and I played a prosecuting barrister in Paddington 2. I had to prosecute Hugh Grant, which was just a career highlight frankly.

Ed Gamble

What a film.

Meera Syal

The man just improvises all the time. You can't stop him. And, every improvisation is bloody genius. I mean-,

James Acaster

Oh, really?

Meera Syal

He's just brilliant, yes.



Ed Gamble

I have a feeling though, on that film, Hugh Grant was having the absolute best time of his entire career though.

James Acaster

Yes.

Meera Syal

You could tell, couldn't you?

Ed Gamble

I'm not sure he's riffing on every job he's doing, but Paddington 2, he was absolutely losing his mind. He was so excited. You could tell.

James Acaster

Maybe for similar reasons to you on Code 404, where you got to play a baddy and quite enjoyed that, maybe. Is there something more cathartic about that? About playing a wrong-un.

Meera Syal

Oh, gosh. Yes, totally. It's really hard to play good and it's really hard to play glam. I mean, those are two things, nobody really asks me much about the glam bit now, but you think, 'Oh no, that's hours in make-up.' They're going to have to work really hard to make me look even vaguely glam. And, like everyone says, the devil has the best lines. You know, the most interesting complex characters are really flawed and unpredictable. So, of course we all want to play them.

James Acaster

That's like you, Ed.

Ed Gamble

What? Complex and flawed.

James Acaster

And, unpredictable. Yes.

Ed Gamble

I wouldn't say that's true at all. I'm a lovely good boy.

James Acaster

Okay.

Ed Gamble

No? If I was a cake, James, what would I be?

James Acaster

Flawed cake. Flawed and unpredictable cake.

Ed Gamble

One of your cakes from Bake Off.

James Acaster

Yes. You would be my flapjacks on Bake Off.

Ed Gamble

I'd be a liquid flapjack soup, would I?



James Acaster

Yes.

Ed Gamble

What a lovely compliment.

James Acaster

Yes, congratulations.

Ed Gamble

Bon appetite.

James Acaster

Would you like still or sparkling water, Meera?

Meera Syal

Sparkling, please.

Ed Gamble

Now, you say it's hard to be glam and yet, you've gone for the glammest water choice.

Meera Syal

Have I gone for the glammest water?

Ed Gamble

Oh, this is full of pizazz, the sparkling water.

Meera Syal

It's full of pizazz, although I read somewhere that sparkling water can give you cellulite. Is that true?

James Acaster

Tell us about this. I've not heard this.

Meera Syal

Yes. It's one of those random facts I remember reading. Saying, you know, if you have too much sparkling water, you'll get orange peel thighs. It's not stopped me though. I do enjoy it. It just makes me feel like I'm out because I wouldn't have it at home.

Ed Gamble

So, when you're out, you have sparkling water.

Meera Syal

I do.

Ed Gamble

Have you ever tried having it at home to give yourself the feeling of being out, even though you're at home?

Meera Syal

Well, of course, in lockdown, we were all doing that, weren't we? We had to pretend we were out, so yes. I think we cracked open a couple of bottles in the kitchen over lockdown. But, yes. It's not-, yes. Normally, I'm quite happy with tap water to be honest. But, yes. When I'm out, I do like a bit of sparkling water. Yes.



James Acaster

What are orange peel thighs?

Meera Syal

Orange peel thigh. Oh, god. Guys don't get cellulite, do you? Not really.

James Acaster

I guess not.

Meera Syal

You know that, kind of, looks like-

Ed Gamble

I understand the idea.

Meera Syal

You understand the concept. It's like cottage cheese-y, sort of, ripples on your flesh.

James Acaster

Uh-huh.

Ed Gamble

Although, I like cottage cheese and I like oranges, so if anything, I'm going to start slamming the sparkling water. Yes.

James Acaster

Sparkling water does that. Do you want anything in the sparkling water? Like, ice or some fruit?

Meera Syal

I would like some ice and a couple of thinly cut slices of lime, please.

Ed Gamble

You've got to be careful because if you have too much lime, you get lime peel thighs.

Meera Syal

Do you? Oh no.

Ed Gamble

Yes. You get green thighs-

Meera Syal

Green thighs.

Ed Gamble

Real bad stuff, actually. Yes.

Meera Syal

I really don't want that.

James Acaster

That's a good point. Imagine this, Meera. You wake up one morning and your thighs have been replaced with a citrus fruit. Which fruit would you choose of the citrus family? And, we're talking lemons, limes, grapefruits, oranges. What other ones are there?



Meera Syal

I'm going to surprise you now and say kumquat.

James Acaster

There we go.

Ed Gamble

Oh, yes.

Meera Syal

You weren't-,

Ed Gamble

Yes.

Meera Syal

You didn't predict that, did you?

James Acaster

Didn't predict it.

Ed Gamble

No.

Meera Syal

Yes.

Ed Gamble

I don't think we were even sure that was definitely a citrus fruit, so you've absolutely side-swiped us there, Meera. Why specifically the kumquat?

Meera Syal

Because they're small.

Ed Gamble

So, are you imagining yourself with just, instead of thighs, just two kumquats?

Meera Syal

Two very small kumquats, yes.

James Acaster

Yes.

Ed Gamble

Yes.

James Acaster

And, if your thighs were replaced with kumquats and you were doing exercises at home, you could do quat squats as well.

Meera Syal

You could do squat-,

James Acaster

I was-,



Meera Syal

I can't even say that. Very good.

Ed Gamble

I'm annoyed James got that in there because I had that-

James Acaster

You had that in your head as well.

Ed Gamble

I had-, no because I was going to say kum squats and that sounds way worse.

James Acaster

Yes.

Ed Gamble

So, I'm glad you went with quat squats.

James Acaster

Disgusting.

Ed Gamble

So, actually, I'm glad you did yours. Sorry, everyone.

James Acaster

Yes.

Meera Syal

It's alright. We'll edit that bit out. You're alright.

Ed Gamble

Yes, please.

Meera Syal

Yes.

Ed Gamble

Yes, if we can edit the kum squats out, that would be-

James Acaster

That could be the main bit. That's to be the main bit of the podcast. You deserve it. Poppadoms or bread? Poppadoms or bread, Meera Syal? Poppadoms or bread?

Meera Syal

Pob-nobs? Pob-nobs.

James Acaster

Poppadoms or bread?

Meera Syal

Oh, poppadoms or bread. Bread. Bread. I'm a bread freak. Bread of any kind.

James Acaster

Yes.



Meera Syal

Yes, please. The crustier the better.

Ed Gamble

Now, occasionally, Meera, the guest will mishear what James said there because he always shouts it.

Meera Syal

Does he?

Ed Gamble

But, I don't think anyone's heard pob-nobs before.

Meera Syal

I thought it was-,

James Acaster

Pob-nobs.

Meera Syal

I thought it was a cross between a poppadom and a Hob Nob.

James Acaster

Pop-nobs.

Ed Gamble

Not a bad idea.

Meera Syal

But, what kind of restaurant am I in? Some, kind of, weird fusion, culturally appropriated place. Get out of here.

Ed Gamble

Well, he's had his Nehru collar on. Now, he's trying to say you're a pop-nob.

Meera Syal

Appropriating poppadoms. It's just-, I'm going.

James Acaster

Walking around. Greeting people at the door. Welcome to pop-nobs and kum squats. Sit down. Have a table. What kind of bread would you like?

Meera Syal

I very much like crusty bread with a soft, yielding centre. So, you know, a really good French loaf or some of those lovely, slightly warm rolls that when you break them open, the steam comes out and then you can put the butter in it and the butter melts. That kind.

James Acaster

Have you had a French loaf in France?

Meera Syal

Yes. My gosh. They taste different, don't they?



Ed Gamble

They do.

Meera Syal

It's the water and the flour and everything else, isn't it? It does-,

Ed Gamble

It's the ambience.

Meera Syal

But also, I love the fact that everybody eats piles of bread and nobody cares. Nobody's going, 'Oh, carbs.' They just eat piles of bread.

Ed Gamble

Yes, and they drink wine in little glasses, walking around. Drinking wine, eating bread. Looking amazing. It's disgusting, really.

Meera Syal

Looking amazing.

Ed Gamble

Yes.

Meera Syal

Wearing a scarf in a million different ways, that you couldn't even begin to even do once. I mean, I don't know the innate sense of style that they have is there, but it is. Yes.

James Acaster

If you were staying in Paris and you lived above or on the same street as a bakery, and you could go down every morning and get yourself a baguette, do you think you could walk from the bakers back to your house without nibbling the baguette out the bag, if it was sticking out the top?

Meera Syal

Oh, no. I've even done that when I've brought things back from shopping. I've broken the end of the bread and eaten it in the car while I've been driving. That's just really bad, isn't it?

James Acaster

Would you ever do it before you've paid for it? Some people do that.

Ed Gamble

Oh, yes.

Meera Syal

Have I ever done that? I probably haven't, no.

James Acaster

What do you think of the people that do that?

Meera Syal

I respect their choices. As long as you pay for it, it's alright.

Ed Gamble

Because sometimes people do that with their kids, right? They'll pick something off the shelf in the supermarket. They'll give it to their kids and their kids will eat it when they're going around the shop.



And then, they'll make the person scan an empty bag. Yet, when you do it and you've got no kids, you get frowned upon.

Meera Syal

That's a very fair point. I think maybe they give concessions to under-fives, though.

Ed Gamble

Yes, they do let them get away with it.

Meera Syal

Yes.

Ed Gamble

But, I just wonder whether I could get away with going into the supermarket, eating a bag of crisps, and that's the only thing I take to the checkout. Where I essentially go and use it as a café. Whether that would fly.

Meera Syal

Not unless you've been threatening to have a tantrum unless you got the crisps because that's generally why people have given things to their kids in the aisles of Sainsbury's. Just to stop them melting down.

Ed Gamble

Well, in that scenario, I would have to go into the supermarket, out-loud threaten myself with a tantrum-

Meera Syal

Yes.

Ed Gamble

And then, give myself a bag of crisps, eat the crisps, and then check out the bag of crisps. So, I think I'd look insane, I'd say.

James Acaster

Not outside the realms of possibility.

Ed Gamble

That's true.

James Acaster

I bet Stephen Graham eats food when he walks around the supermarket.

Meera Syal

You wouldn't stop him, would you?

James Acaster

I would.

Meera Syal

You wouldn't.

James Acaster

I would stop him. I'd see him moving the food towards his mouth, I would grab his wrist and I'd say, 'Not so fast.'



Meera Syal

And then, he'd dead-eye you-,

James Acaster

Yes.

Meera Syal

And, you'd be very, very frightened.

James Acaster

It'd be the last thing he did if he tried that.

Ed Gamble

James, he would fold you up and put you in the bag of crisps and then put it back on the shelf.

James Acaster

Lovely. I'd love to be in a bag of crisps. Thank you very much. Done me a favour.

Meera Syal

You could live in a bag of crisps instead of a lamp.

James Acaster

That would be good, actually, wouldn't it?

Meera Syal

It would.

Ed Gamble

That would be very nice.

James Acaster

Pop out and all the crisps would go everywhere.

Meera Syal

Did you used to do that when you were a kid? When you had a bag of crisps and somebody wanted one. And then, you'd quickly smash them all up into little tiny pieces, so when you offered the bag, all they could take was a tiny crumb. Did you ever do that or was that just me?

James Acaster

No, but I love it.

Ed Gamble

Never did that. I absolutely love that. I wish I'd thought of that.

Meera Syal

Oh, it must be a Midland thing.

James Acaster

Well, I'm from the Midlands. I'm from Kettering, but we didn't do it there.

Meera Syal

You're from Kettering. You never did that. Maybe it's just a particular West Midland thing, then.

James Acaster

We just said no if you asked us. We weren't the most generous of kids in Kettering.



Ed Gamble

Do you think you could do that as an adult? Maybe, when you're in the pub, bringing a bag of crisps back, you know how people do the-, they tease it open and, like, splay it out like a little plate. Do you think instead of doing that, you just slam your fist on it, so it's just powder and then open it up and go, good luck?

Meera Syal

Yes, yes. That's quite a good pub game, actually, isn't it? Maybe we should give everyone a straw and see if they can suck the bits out through the straw.

James Acaster

Have you got a favourite flavour of crisps before we move on?

Meera Syal

Really boringly, I like a plain crisp, actually. I don't think you should embellish it too much.

James Acaster

I'm into that.

Meera Syal

Maybe a bit of black pepper on it. Black pepper-,

James Acaster

Yes.

Meera Syal

Crisps. Yes. I'm not into heavily flavoured, like, prawny, barbecue things.

James Acaster

Yes. More and more, I've got into-, I've really grown to appreciate the ready salted crisp.

Meera Syal

Oh, yes.

James Acaster

I used to be all about the whacky flavours. But, these days, yes. I keep gravitating towards the ready salted and going, 'Oh, there's a beauty to this.'

Meera Syal

I think it's a sign of age.

Ed Gamble

This is like being at a, like, a ration meeting in the 1940s. Going on here, both of you going, 'Well, no, this is the plain flavour, I'd like the potato to come through, actually.' Unbelievable. Doing the Midlands a disservice. I grew up in London. I like any-, I like truffle crisps, thank you.

James Acaster

Yes, he does.

Meera Syal

Actually, they are quite good, though, aren't they?

Ed Gamble

Thank you, Meera. Yes, they are.



Meera Syal

Yes.

Ed Gamble

The black truffle Torres crisps are the best-,

Meera Syal

Oh, yes.

Ed Gamble

Crisps in the world.

Meera Syal

They're like crack, aren't they? Just once you open it, that's it. You're done.

Ed Gamble

Yes, full, big bag.

Meera Syal

Full, big bag.

Ed Gamble

Done. During lockdown, I found out that the supermarket around the corner from me had them on Deliveroo, so quite often if I was hungover and I couldn't really be bothered to leave the house, I'd get a full Deliveroo shop, full of stuff I didn't need to justify buying a big bag of the crisps. Oh, down in one breath. Amazing.

Meera Syal

I hear you.

James Acaster

Get all upset about it and throw a wobbly in the middle of the supermarket. Let's move onto your dream meal proper and start with your dream starter.

Meera Syal

My dream starter would be an Indian street food dish called Chaat. C, h, double-a, t. And, there's various versions of it, like aloo papri chaat. Let me describe it to you. It's like bits of potato and chickpea mixed with fresh onion, coriander, ginger, garlic, some spices, and then on top of that, you have yoghurt and tamarind sauce. And then, right on top of that, you have these little crispy things, a bit like crisps, called papri. And, it's all together in a bowl of just fantastic layered flavours. And, it literally is street food. It's what you can grab from a stall on your way to work or on your way back. But, it's just one of my favourite things because there's just so many different sensations in one little bowl.

Ed Gamble

Oh, it does sound absolutely amazing. Straight-away.

Meera Syal

Oh, and mint chutney as well. Put that on top, too.

Ed Gamble

Oh.



Meera Syal

It's just delicious.

James Acaster

I've had a Mowgli, which is like a chain. There's one in Liverpool, one in Birmingham, and they go chaat bombs, which are almost, like-, is it called golgappas? The-,

Meera Syal

Very good. Golgappa, yes. Yes. So, the little flying saucers.

James Acaster

Yes. It's, like, a combination of the two. So, inside is the-,

Meera Syal

Yes.

James Acaster

Chaat. And, those are-, that was probably the first time I had anything that's like that.

Meera Syal

Did you like it?

James Acaster

I was really addicted to it. I was then, like, obsessed with where Mowgli's where around the UK because I was on tour at the time. So, I was, like, is there a Mowgli nearby? Go and get those bombs again. Lovely.

Meera Syal

You know, they're not difficult to make at home. Not the actual little golgappa. I buy those from, you know, you can buy them. But, the mixture that goes inside, you can make pretty easily. You just need chickpeas and boil up some potatoes, and then you buy the various spices and you're off.

James Acaster

Where is the best place that you've ever had this dish? Is there, like, if you wanted it from a specific place.

Ed Gamble

It could even be your own.

Meera Syal

I do my own. I do make a very good aloo papri chaat, I have to say. But, Dishoom. Dishoom do great chaat. But also, surprisingly, when you-, you know you go to these little off-piste places in places like Wembley or Southall or Green Street in the East End. These are all London places. But, generally, you will always find, you know, a little family-run restaurant that does the best chaat, if you're willing to just be a little bit adventurous. But, Dishoom is very, very good chaat. Yes. They do lots of things very well, actually.

James Acaster

You mentioned a lot of London places there.

Meera Syal

Yes.



James Acaster

Jess Philips, elected MP Jess Philips, has been on the podcast and she claimed there was no good curry places in London at all. What would you say to that?

Meera Syal

Goodness, that's a big challenge.

James Acaster

Yes. She's from Birmingham.

Meera Syal

I know and I know what she means.

Ed Gamble

She was really flying the flag for Birmingham.

Meera Syal

Oh, yes. No, Birmingham has got some of the-, she's right. Some of the best curry houses, I would say, worldwide, never mind Britain-wide. That's true. But, there's a particularly famous, sort of, area around about Soho Road and Sparkbrook, around there, which do balti-, it literally means bucket. But, you don't eat out of a bucket, don't worry. But, they do really amazing, very quickly cooked different curries in, sort of, large-, they look like woks, really. And, the secret is that you cook everything quite quickly still and you get these giant naans. They're called naans and you can get one that is literally-, you can't see my hands. But, literally the size of the dining table. And, you will share it and it's just like being with a bunch of caterpillars. Everybody just gets an end and just munches their way to the middle. It's such a-, it's the communal experience of eating that, that is so much fun and it breaks loads of barriers when you go along. So, yes. The curry houses around there are amazing. But, yes, she's right. It's a very good place to eat Indian food.

Ed Gamble

I don't think I would have a good time eating that naan with everyone else because I'm very greedy and I immediately want to know what bit of the food is mine, so I can get it all. So, what I would do is I would start eating that naan and I'd try and go the fastest out of everyone. And, I'd be across the other side of the table before anyone else had taken a bite.

Meera Syal

Some people do that because-,

Ed Gamble

Yes.

Meera Syal

They're frightened it's going to-, yes, it's going to run out. Do you come from a big family? Is that why? Did you have to fight for food at the table?

Ed Gamble

No, I'm an only child.

Meera Syal

Oh my god-,

James Acaster

There you go.



Meera Syal

Well, that makes no sense then.

James Acaster

I think it explains everything, Meera.

Ed Gamble

I have a half-brother and half-sister, but I didn't grow up with them. So, yes. Only child.

James Acaster

They were full brothers and full sisters, but Ed ate them.

Ed Gamble

Yes.

James Acaster

Ed ate half of them.

Ed Gamble

Yes. That's why they're a half-brother and half-sister. I ate the top of my sister and the bottom of my brother. Is there a chance, Meera, when everyone's nibbling on the naan from all different sides-

Meera Syal

The giant naan, yes.

Ed Gamble

The giant naan. That they would all meet in the middle and accidentally Lady and the Tramp at the end of the meal?

Meera Syal

Oh, that would be romantic, wouldn't it?

Ed Gamble

It depends who you're with, I suppose.

Meera Syal

It does depend who you're with, yes. It's a little awkward if it's, you know, your brother-in-law.

Ed Gamble

Family, yes.

Meera Syal

Yes, exactly.

Ed Gamble

Yes.

Meera Syal

You know, it's never happened to me, but then I think, you know, it's descended into a free for all before we've reached that point. But, no. But, generally, the great thing about an eating experience like this is the food is in the middle of the table in the pans. You know, there's no formalities. So, nobody worries that there isn't enough and I've only got this little bit of nouveau cuisine on my plate. It just doesn't work like that. It's, like, there's a load of food. You eat with your fingers. It's a sensual experience. Just get stuck in there and ask for more if you want it. And, that's how I-



Ed Gamble

That's good.

Meera Syal

I like that. That's how I like eating, actually.

Ed Gamble

I always worry that, what if there's not enough and what if this is the last time I ever eat this food? So, I have to go for it.

Meera Syal

Are you a survivalist? Have you got a secret bunker with lots of tinned food?

Ed Gamble

No. I think in an apocalyptic situation, I think I might be the first one to die because if I did have any tins, I'd eat all my tins, day one. And then, I'd be too full when the zombies came. I'm assuming it's zombies. Yes.

James Acaster

Yes.

Meera Syal

See, I'm the opposite because, like, the biggest fear that anybody has in my culture is to not have enough food. It's a ridiculous thing and you completely overfeed people. And then, you get offended when they say, 'I'm full,' after eating for three hours. You go, 'You're full? You're full?' It's just the first course. And, this is how over much I cater that when the lockdown was, sort of, first coming and everyone was panic-buying, a friend was around and she went, 'Oh, I see you've stocked up already, wow, look at that.' And, I went, 'No, this is my usual cupboard.' I have 36 tins of tinned tomatoes because I will need them in the week. I have 50 toilet rolls because I will need them. So, yes. Bulk buying all the way.

James Acaster

Your dream main, then. Is it something that would be, like, you know, a shared dish or is this just for you?

Meera Syal

Yes, I had a real difficulty with this, but I thought, what is the thing I've most enjoyed eating over the last couple of years and I'm going to say paella. Or, paella because I had the best paella I've ever had in Barcelona a couple of years ago and I still think about it. Is that sad? But, I actually-,

James Acaster

That's great.

Meera Syal

Enjoy remembering-,

James Acaster

Yes.

Meera Syal

Eating that paella. And, maybe because of where it was. It was, you know, on the beach. It was a restaurant right next to the beach in Barcelona. Barcelona friends had taken us there and said, 'You will never eat better paella.' And, you go, 'Yes, yes, yes.' And, they were right. It was just amazing. And, it had the little Sofrito bit at the bottom, you know, that, sort of, crackly bit that forms at the bottom of the pan.



James Acaster

Yes.

Meera Syal

I can't remember how much I ate, but I had to be rolled out of there. But, I couldn't stop eating it. Every single layer of flavour was just amazing and, of course, all the, you know, it was a fish one because I don't eat meat. So, it was chock full of the best seafood because it was all fresh and probably caught this morning. And, yes. It will be that, please.

Ed Gamble

That is the first shout-out we've had for paella on the podcast. Would you-,

Meera Syal

Is it?

Ed Gamble

Believe it, after 100 and something episodes. And, what a good choice.

James Acaster

Yes.

Ed Gamble

I've not had paella in ages.

James Acaster

I have it all the time.

Ed Gamble

You don't have it all the time, mate.

James Acaster

I do.

Ed Gamble

What are you talking about?

James Acaster

My girlfriend, all the way through lockdown, has been perfecting her paella. That is true.

Meera Syal

Wow.

Ed Gamble

You didn't tell me this.

James Acaster

Yes. And, we've had it pretty regularly. Keeps getting better. Delicious.

Meera Syal

That's amazing.

James Acaster

Eat it out the pan while watching TV. Sharing it together from the pan.



Ed Gamble

Does she get the crispy bit on the bottom?

James Acaster

Yes, absolutely.

Meera Syal

What do you have in yours?

James Acaster

Chicken and prawns. Actually, no. Chicken and then I've realised that I've imagined the prawns. But, chicken and, like, loads of-, I think I'm thinking of how the red peppers are cut. They look like prawns. There's loads of red peppers in there.

Ed Gamble

She's absolutely fooled you, mate.

James Acaster

Yes. She's tricked me.

Meera Syal

And, has she got a proper paella pan?

James Acaster

Yes. Yes. Well, kind of. Yes. It is, like, a beginner's one, I'd say.

Meera Syal

Yes, me too. I've only got a beginner's one. It's huge, though. You have to have four full gas rings on. Some keep moving it around so it cooks properly.

James Acaster

But, yes. I love hearing the shout-out for the paella. I know we've definitely mentioned paella before on the podcast because I said about how I was really obsessed with the Tesco paella that you could buy for a while.

Ed Gamble

Oh, yes.

James Acaster

I would regularly eat that when I was, like, when I first moved to London. I'd get that. It's probably the best ready meal I've ever had and I would have it pretty regularly-,

Meera Syal

Wow.

James Acaster

Because it was delicious. But, I couldn't remember if it was Tesco or Sainsbury's and, you know what, I was told this was boring the first time I said it on the podcast.

Ed Gamble

How big was the pan that they made the paella in when you saw it-,

James Acaster

Oh, yes.



Ed Gamble

Because they get pretty damn big.

Meera Syal

Huge. I mean, there was four of us. Five of us around the table. Six of us maybe, even and we all, you know, we couldn't finish it.

Ed Gamble

So again, this is something else that you're all sat around and you're just eating-,

Meera Syal

Yes.

Ed Gamble

Your way towards the middle. It's another communal eating experience, right?

Meera Syal

Well, yes because I think that's what food is about. You know, food is just better when it's shared, and I think food brings us all together and I think food is also-, it's soul food because the recipes that I-, you know, the Indian food I make, the recipes I have, are things that my mum made for me and her mum made for her. And, I feel that I'm really linked to my past and all those flavours are part of who I am. And so, eating that food and making that food is more than just, oh, it's fuel. It's loads of other things as well.

Ed Gamble

When you make things for your mum that your mum in the past made for you, do you ever put any little twists in? Do you ever put your own stamp on it or would she be angry about that?

Meera Syal

Oh, no. You adapt all the time. I mean, particularly because, you know, a lot of traditional Indian dishes, if you follow the traditional recipe, you are literally there for four hours stirring and who's got the time to do that? So, I do loads of shortcuts. Sometimes she doesn't know. Sometimes she really does and she'll, sort of, go, 'Mm-hmm.' She'll still eat it, though. But, yes. I mean, we just don't have the time that our mothers did nor the inclination, frankly. I mean, I don't want to spend half my life in a kitchen. I want to be able to make the food as quickly and as well as I can, and then sit and eat it with my friends and enjoy it. So, gone are those days when the mums used to stand at the stove and basically serve everybody else and then sit down on their own afterwards. That does not happen anymore in my house or anybody else's, I hope.

James Acaster

If you were in a situation where you and your friends are all sat around either a big, round naan bread or a big paella and you're all eating from the outside, and you meet in the middle and do a big Lady and the Tramp, all of you at the same time, who would be the people that you would most like to do that with? Minimum three other people, but you can add more if you want to.

Meera Syal

Oh, okay. So, Frida Kahlo-,

James Acaster

Yes.

Ed Gamble

Nice.



Meera Syal

Who I blooming love and still on my bucket list, I was meant to go this year, but for obvious reasons I didn't, is to visit her house in Mexico. Joni Mitchell, who is my favourite musician. Nina Simone because I think she'd just be fascinating and I could get her to sing to everyone and that would be amazing. Can I have those three, please?

James Acaster

I mean, that's some very strong characters. Yes. I'd absolutely love to be at that meal. And, you're all Lady and the Tramping at the end, remember.

Meera Syal

Was that a question?

James Acaster

No, just making sure you remember it.

Meera Syal

Oh, I see.

James Acaster

Are you sure you remember that this-,

Ed Gamble

James is giving you another-, because you've picked very strong characters who'd be wonderful to have a conversation with, but I think James is just reminding you that you're all going to have a big kiss in the middle of a paella at the end of the evening.

Meera Syal

Oh, I don't mind kissing any of those women.

Ed Gamble

Alright. Yes.

James Acaster

It could be lovely.

Meera Syal

I would like Frida Kahlo's moustache to tickle my lips. It would be very exciting.

James Acaster

Yes.

Meera Syal

And, I could stroke her monobrow and that would also be very exciting.

James Acaster

Frida getting a lot of attention there in the Lady and the Tramp kiss. The other two getting a bit jealous and Nina Simone would not stand for that.

Meera Syal

She would not. She'd be stamping her foot.

James Acaster

Yes.



Ed Gamble

Interesting, though coming onto the side dish, though, isn't it? Because-

Meera Syal

Yes.

Ed Gamble

Because the paella is one of those dishes that is its own thing. Completely all-encompassing meal. You don't really need a side dish with paella necessarily. But, of course, this is the dream restaurant, so you can have whatever you damn please, Meera.

Meera Syal

I would like samphire.

Ed Gamble

Oh, yes.

Meera Syal

And, I think that would go very well with paella.

Ed Gamble

Yes.

James Acaster

Yes.

Meera Syal

And, I've only discovered samphire recently because, you know, I didn't eat a prawn until I was eighteen. I was very slow to a lot of culinary things because you just didn't eat them in the Midlands. I remember my first prawn, it was at the Acropolis Greek restaurant in Walsall near the bus station. And, I thought, I've arrived.

Ed Gamble

Yes.

Meera Syal

Prawn. So, samphire I only discovered-, oh, gosh, really recently. Maybe about eight or nine years ago. In Brighton, someone took me to this amazing fish restaurant and said-, and they ordered some. I said, 'What is that?' And, they went, 'Darling, you don't know what samphire is?' I said, 'No.' And, I ate it and I thought, I'm eating the sea. This just tastes of the sea in the nicest way. Not in a gritty, you know, mussel-ly way. But, just the freshness and the crispness and you hardly need to cook it. You just, sort of, tickle it a bit in hot oil and a bit of lemon juice and garlic, and you're off. And, it's just the best flavour and it's fresh. It just always-, it's full of iron. It's good for you.

Ed Gamble

It feels like it's good for you-

Meera Syal

Yes.

Ed Gamble

Doesn't it, when you eat it? You're, like, this is-

Meera Syal

Yes.



Ed Gamble

This is delicious but also feels like it's doing me some good.

Meera Syal

Yes.

Ed Gamble

It feels like I've been for a swim.

Meera Syal

Yes, exactly and I love swimming. So, yes. So, I think it would go well with paella as well, actually.

Ed Gamble

Yes.

James Acaster

Yes.

Ed Gamble

Sure.

Meera Syal

The fishy theme, yes.

James Acaster

Oh, I love it. Really, the main place that I have samphire is cricket. We go to cricket sometimes and they do this, like, deep-fried, kind of, samphire. It's very nice, but it doesn't really taste of the sea because they deep-fry it and, like, it comes with some sauce and stuff. But, I had some proper nice fresh-tasting stuff at Shrimpster before we did our Off Menu live shows at the Royal Festival Hall. There was some food market outside and there was a place called Shrimpster that did all, like, shrimp stuff and I got the Shrimpster burger that had, like, a bunch of deep-fried shrimp in it and then loads of samphire in a burger. It was so delicious. Really tasty.

Meera Syal

That sounds amazing.

James Acaster

With some, I think the sauce had, like, sriracha, kind of, mayo sauce. It was amazing and Ed got-, what did you get, Ed? Sex in a pot or something.

Ed Gamble

It wasn't called sex in a pot, no. I think there was sex in the name, but it was just the deep-fried shrimp that were in a pot-,

James Acaster

It was called a Shrimpster sex pot, I think.

Ed Gamble

It wasn't called sex in a pot, though, which was your initial guess. So, I just wanted to make-,

James Acaster

Yes. But, it was called something similar. It had the words sex and pot in it.



Ed Gamble

I just wanted to let Meera know that I didn't specifically pick a dish called sex in a pot, which sounds awful.

Meera Syal

I was wondering. Did you have to put your car keys in a bowl before you chose it?

Ed Gamble

It was in the pot, yes. It was a big pot in the middle of the food market. Yes, I had some sex in a pot, but then also I had another dinner as well. So, I double-dinnered that night.

James Acaster

He double-dinnered because he got something else and then he came and met me outside Shrimpster, and went, 'Oh, that looks nice, actually.'

Ed Gamble

Yes.

James Acaster

And, he got jealous, so then he ordered himself a second dinner and then he really regretted it before he'd even eaten either one of them. Oh, no, why have I done this? And then, ate both of them.

Ed Gamble

Yes.

Meera Syal

Yes, food envy is horrible though, isn't it? I hate food envy.

Ed Gamble

Yes, it really is.

Meera Syal

When you order something and someone else's dish comes. You go, 'Oh no, I've made a terrible mistake.'

Ed Gamble

Which I guess is the other joy of the big communal foods, is that you've all got the same thing, so you can't have food envy unless someone's got, like, too many mussels on their side of the paella, which is annoying me already just imagining it.

James Acaster

Oh, that's a point. Are there mussels in this paella?

Meera Syal

I mean, I'm not mega keen on mussels, I have to say.

James Acaster

There's too much hassle. Mussels aren't worth the hassle.

Meera Syal

Yes, I don't think so. And, it's horrible when they're sandy. It just ruins everything. Just get grit under your teeth. I don't like it. But, obviously, there's amazing big gambas. Those incredible, huge Mediterranean prawns you get. A lot of that. I love squid. Throw some squid. I'd enjoy that, too. I do, I used to like octopus, but I can't eat it anymore.



James Acaster

Why not?

Meera Syal

Because since that film, My Octopus Teacher.

James Acaster

Oh, yes.

Meera Syal

I just couldn't eat an octopus now.

James Acaster

I liked that film.

Meera Syal

They're just really too intelligent. It's a bit like eating a dolphin. I just couldn't do it.

Ed Gamble

What if a film came out tomorrow on Netflix about a prawn that's got a degree?

Meera Syal

Do you know, that would probably stop me eating prawns as well.

Ed Gamble

Yes.

Meera Syal

God damn it.

Ed Gamble

By the end, this is just going to be a rice paella, isn't it?

Meera Syal

Isn't it?

Ed Gamble

And, just praying that it doesn't turn out that rice is clever.

Meera Syal

Yes.

James Acaster

You know what the weird thing about that octopus film was?

Meera Syal

Yes.

James Acaster

Is that at the end, when the octopus-, spoiler alert if you've not seen My Octopus Teacher. At the end, the octopus gets killed by some baddie fish or whatever. A shark or something. And, the guy just watches it and lets it happen because that's the code of, like, documentarians. You have to just watch it. Let it happen. Don't interfere. But, for the whole film, he is hanging out with that octopus. Like, interacting with it constantly and interfere-, like, his whole-, when he gets something out of it



and it's his friendship with the octopus and he loves it, makes him feel good, he's hanging out with the octopus. He's touching the octopus and letting the octopus latch onto his arm. Swimming around with it. Playing with the octopus. Doing all this stuff. Then, the octopus gets eaten by a shark and he's, like, 'Well, I mustn't interfere.' No, you're scared of a shark, mate. That's what's going on and you're letting your friend get ripped to shreds. And, now you're going to win an Academy Award for it. If I met him, I'd punch him in the head.

Ed Gamble

Very aggressive today, James.

Meera Syal

Yes.

James Acaster

Yes because you mentioned Stephen Graham earlier on-

Ed Gamble

Yes.

James Acaster

That's why.

Meera Syal

You're not hangry. Are you hangry?

James Acaster

Maybe I'm a little bit hangry, but also, I remembered Stephen Graham slamming Romesh on Jonathan Ross and I remembered, I owe him a piece of my mind.

Ed Gamble

I think you and Stephen Graham need to go for a big paella, James, and just eyeball each other for the whole thing while you're eating your way into the middle and then have a lovely old big kiss in the middle.

James Acaster

Oh, there'd be some mussels in that paella, pretty quickly because we'd both be swimming around in it, having a big old fight. These muscles. These guns. They'd be all in amongst the paella.

Ed Gamble

Yes. We knew what you meant. When you said the mussels thing, we knew what you were talking about.

James Acaster

Huh?

Ed Gamble

But, thanks for-, we knew what you meant, but thanks for-,

James Acaster

Well.

Ed Gamble

Thanks for flagging it up.



James Acaster

Well, I wasn't getting the support that I thought I was going to get from it. If Stephen Graham ever comes on this podcast, I'm going to let him do his menu. I'm going to say, 'You're not having any of that.' I'll tell you what you're having for dinner, a knuckle sandwich, mate.

Meera Syal

He is going to hear this, you know.

Ed Gamble

Yes. He's never coming on this podcast.

James Acaster

I hope he does hear it.

Meera Syal

He's the sweetest man. He really is.

James Acaster

Well, I'll tell you what, we'll see. We'll see how sweet he is when I'm finished with him.

Ed Gamble

This first prawn that you had at the Acropolis in Walsall-

Meera Syal

Yes.

Ed Gamble

Near the bus station-

Meera Syal

In Walsall.

Ed Gamble

Meera.

Meera Syal

Yes.

Ed Gamble

Why did you pick the prawn? Did you think, I've never had a prawn before, this is going to be my big moment to-

Meera Syal

Yes.

Ed Gamble

Have a prawn. And, do you remember how the first prawn tasted and how it was prepared?

Meera Syal

It was a prawn cocktail because it was, you know, the 80s. So, of course, it was a prawn cocktail. You know, hanging out the jar with a little bit of pink mayonnaise and bits of lettuce.

Ed Gamble

Yes.



Meera Syal

And, I just thought, it's time. I'm eighteen. I've really got to do this. I've got to eat a prawn. I mean, they were probably, you know, frozen prawns that had just been defrosted, but didn't matter to me. I just thought-, because I hardly ate any fish growing up. We had fish fingers, but, you know, you tend to cook the food that your mum cooks and that is influenced by the region you grew up in. So, my friends that lived in bits of India by the sea ate loads of fish. Like, South Indians, but I'm North Indian Punjabi. Landlocked. And so, a lot of our food was vegetarian, actually. Occasional bit of chicken, but never fish. So, fish was an unknown thing to me and I don't know, maybe that's why it's one of my favourite things now because I feel I have a lot of fish years to catch up on.

Ed Gamble

And, I guess, the cuisine is from a landlocked place, so not a lot of fish. And then, of course, then you're living in the Midlands.

Meera Syal

Even more landlocked.

Ed Gamble

Also landlocked as well. Even more landlocked.

Meera Syal

I know.

Ed Gamble

So, you're not going to get fresh prawns unless they've come straight off the bus.

Meera Syal

Into Walsall.

Ed Gamble

Yes.

Meera Syal

Well, we were in the station, so it was probably quite convenient.

Ed Gamble

Right next to where the prawns were coming in.

James Acaster

Yes.

Meera Syal

I've just got this image of all these prawns getting off the bus. Ready for a night out in Walsall.

James Acaster

Your dream drink.

Meera Syal

I'm going to be really boring and not choose an alcoholic drink, but I will choose the drink-, and I love this drink because it's like a pudding. It's rose lassi. Rose-flavoured lassi and you get it at Dishoom. Sorry, I'm giving them a name check again, but whenever I go to Dishoom, that's what I have. Now, you probably know what lassi is. It's a yoghurt-based drink and you can have the healthy version, which is without sugar and flavouring and it's just, sort of, you know, actually salty. Yoghurt mixed with water. This is the naughty version, which has yummy things in it. I love rose flavour anyway. It's a very particular thing. Some people can't stand it. Turkish delight, kind of,



flavour. I love it. And, there's something about this lassi that they make. It's just gorgeous and very filling, so I order it, but I, sort of, have it as a pudding even though it's a drink because it's really filling.

Ed Gamble

And, would you like it in a giant fishbowl, and then everyone sits around with a big straw and you all drink it down? Because I feel like everything else is communal now, right?

Meera Syal

You're right, but I might draw the line at my lassi.

Ed Gamble

Okay.

Meera Syal

Yes. I might get a bit territorial about that.

James Acaster

Joni's looking a bit offended.

Ed Gamble

Yes, Joni's not happy.

James Acaster

Like, what?

Meera Syal

I forgot about Joni. Joni will be having a whiskey, for god's sake.

James Acaster

Now, we had-, one of our earlier episodes, series one. Years ago now, Krishnan Guru-Murthy was our guest and he chose a mango lassi. And, Ed and I were, like, 'Oh, yes, yes, we love mango lassis.' And, he was like, you pronounce it lassi. That's the way it's pronounced. And then, since then, Ed, it's more of a question for you almost, Ed.

Ed Gamble

Yes.

James Acaster

I don't know if you-, so then, throughout my life now, since then, I say lassi and sometimes, it's become one of those things where if ever I'm talking to friends or at a restaurant and someone says, 'I might get a mango lassi, actually.' I do that passive-aggressive thing, where I go, 'Yes, I also might get a lassi.' Like, I really enjoy it.

Ed Gamble

Yes. So now, all your friends go, 'Did you notice James always repeats it and changes the way he says it, and then he never orders one?' He never wants one, he just always says he might get one, specifically to correct me and then never gets one. I don't think I've said lassi out loud since that episode. I've never ordered one still.

James Acaster

Really?

Ed Gamble

I can't believe it.



Meera Syal

My gosh, you should try it. It's really nice.

James Acaster

What's the matter with you?

Ed Gamble

Yes, it sounds so delicious. Rose lassi sounds really good. I'm going to tell my girlfriend about that. She wouldn't have it because she loves rose stuff, but get this, Meera, she's scared of yoghurt.

Meera Syal

How can you be scared of yoghurt?

Ed Gamble

I've got no idea.

James Acaster

I forgot this.

Ed Gamble

Petrified of it. Absolutely petrified of yoghurt.

Meera Syal

The look of it, the smell of it?

Ed Gamble

The smell of it, the look of it. Just the way it is. The texture of it.

Meera Syal

Would she know that a lassi was made of yoghurt?

Ed Gamble

Yes, I think she would-

Meera Syal

She would.

Ed Gamble

Know. Yes.

Meera Syal

Even though it's a bit like a milkshake, really when you get it? You couldn't tell it was yoghurt.

Ed Gamble

Yes. She knows. She knows when yoghurt is hiding around the corner, yes. She can sense yoghurt.

Meera Syal

My goodness. I know how she feels, though. I'm a bit like that about skin. The skin on things.

Ed Gamble

Oh, that must be awful every morning when you wake up and-

Meera Syal

I like my skin. The skin on top of boiled milk or a custard actually makes me heave. I can't bear-



Ed Gamble

Yes.

Meera Syal

How it looks.

James Acaster

I love custard skin.

Meera Syal

Oh, scared about the taste. I wouldn't let it anywhere near me.

James Acaster

I could eat a whole bag. I could eat a whole bag of custard skins if you gave it to me.

Meera Syal

No.

James Acaster

Like-,

Meera Syal

Oh no.

James Acaster

Little bits of custard skin like crisps. I'd just eat it.

Ed Gamble

That's what you'd do, isn't it? If Stephen Graham was looking you right in the eye, you'd just-, to freak him out, you'd just eat a whole bag of custard skin.

James Acaster

Yes, I'd eat a whole bag of custard skin. I'd go, 'Problem?'

Meera Syal

How can you-, oh. The texture. It's, oh god.

Ed Gamble

Yes, I'm with you, Meera. I'm not on board with that because it just means it's been sitting there for a while, right? The custard.

Meera Syal

Yes.

Ed Gamble

Yes. That's just a sign that it should have been dealt with.

James Acaster

I've just remembered the last time I had a lassi, actually. It was in lockdown and I ordered a takeaway and I ordered a lassi. I was feeling in the mood. But, what was annoying about that is that just me in my flat, I didn't get the chance to say it and show that I knew how to say it. So, when the delivery guy dropped it round, I-,



Ed Gamble

Oh no, James.

James Acaster

I got it off him and I said, 'Just to check, the lassi is in here, right?' And, he was, like, 'Yes.' I was, like, 'Good, just checking that the lassi was in here, goodbye.'

Ed Gamble

It's not impressive. Well, it's not impressive for a start and then it's even less impressive when there's no one there saying it wrong. So-,

James Acaster

Yes.

Ed Gamble

You would have needed someone else there to say, 'Is the lassi in there?' You go, 'I'll check if the lassi is in there, sorry about them.'

James Acaster

Yes, I should have called my girlfriend to say, 'When he comes, I want you to shout from the living room, make sure he's remembered the lassi.' And, I'll say, 'She means the lassi.'

Ed Gamble

And, I'm imagining you wearing a Nuhro collar when-,

James Acaster

Yes.

Ed Gamble

I know it's called lassi. She loves Iron Maiden, if you know what I mean.

James Acaster

I haven't had a rose one ever. Is it rose or rosé one?

Ed Gamble

It's not a rosé one.

Meera Syal

Rose, rose.

James Acaster

Imagine a rosé lassi. Would you turn that down?

Meera Syal

I think I would. I don't think wine and yoghurt mix. Call me old-fashioned, but-,

James Acaster

No.

Meera Syal

I think maybe not.

Ed Gamble

I think I'm with you, Meera. I agree that wine and yoghurt don't mix.



James Acaster

Disagreed over here. If someone started releasing wine-flavoured yoghurts, I would eat-, I would try one at least.

Meera Syal

Would you?

James Acaster

Yes. In all the different types of wine and all that. A Malbec yoghurt, a Shiraz yoghurt. I would give it a go. I mean-,

Ed Gamble

Champagne yog I'd probably give a go.

James Acaster

Meera, champagne yoghurt?

Ed Gamble

Would you have a champagne yog?

Meera Syal

Cherry liquor yoghurt-,

James Acaster

Yes.

Meera Syal

Might be nice.

Ed Gamble

Yes, yes. That's good.

Meera Syal

It would curdle, though.

Ed Gamble

Yes.

Meera Syal

How could you keep it from curdling?

Ed Gamble

I guess, you'd have to maybe store it like a fruit corner. Have the cherry liquor in the little corner-,

James Acaster

Oh, yes.

Meera Syal

Oh, yes.

Ed Gamble

And then, the yoghurt-,

Meera Syal

And then, mix it.



Ed Gamble

Tip it in at the last minute.

Meera Syal

But then, it would curdle in your stomach.

Ed Gamble

Yes, I guess-,

Meera Syal

Which is even worse.

James Acaster

Is it worse?

Ed Gamble

But, I guess, food is doing all sorts of stuff in our stomachs after we eat it, right?

Meera Syal

And then, you'd poo cheese.

James Acaster

That's true.

Ed Gamble

That might be, you know, in an apocalyptic situation.

Meera Syal

That's just the logical-, that's how it would go, right?

James Acaster

If Ed pooped cheese, he'd thought he had died and gone to heaven.

Ed Gamble

Yes.

James Acaster

He would absolutely love it.

Ed Gamble

Like the ultimate PEZ dispenser. I'd love that.

James Acaster

Yes, he'd poo it straight onto a cracker.

Ed Gamble

Yes. I'd do all the different types. Blue poo.

James Acaster

Yes.

Ed Gamble

I'd do-, yes. It would be great. I'd love it.



James Acaster

Smokey poo.

Ed Gamble

Honestly, if I could guarantee that it was just pure 100% cheese.

James Acaster

Yes.

Ed Gamble

I think that's my dream superpower.

James Acaster

Yes, of course it is.

Meera Syal

I'm so glad we had this conversation.

James Acaster

You said poo cheese, hey.

Meera Syal

I did, didn't I?

James Acaster

Can't blame two little boys-

Meera Syal

I blame myself.

James Acaster

For getting carried away.

Meera Syal

Yes, I know. I should really not have done that.

James Acaster

Well, let's move onto your dessert now that I'm sure you feel like you'd really like to imagine a pudding now after that chat.

Ed Gamble

Yes.

Meera Syal

Yes.

Ed Gamble

And, do feel free, Meera, if you don't want anything sweet, you can have a poo board.

Meera Syal

I can have a poo board.

James Acaster

Might as well.



Meera Syal

I think I'll go for the dessert. Yes, this is easy because I do have a favourite dessert and it's an Eton Mess.

Ed Gamble

Oh, yes.

Meera Syal

I love meringue. Oh my gosh. But, I hate dry meringue. I will not eat a dry-, if it's floury or dry, forget it, it's not meringue. It's got to have that chewy, not quite cooked centre. Thank you.

James Acaster

Absolutely.

Meera Syal

And then, I wouldn't want too much cream and I'm very-, I've had really nice Eton Mess without cream. I've had it with yoghurt, weirdly enough. Like, vanilla yoghurt because you can make a healthy version. And then, really nice summer fruits. And, what's really nice in an Eton Mess is a bit of passion-fruit because it's a bit tart and it mixes well with the sweetness of the meringue. My mouth is watering.

James Acaster

Yes, lovely.

Meera Syal

I really love that pudding.

James Acaster

Do you know, Eton Mess was invented when someone had a pavlova in the Midlands and someone asked for a bite of it, and they went, 'Yes, here you go.' And then, they smashed it all up and went, 'Here you go, help yourself.' Help yourself to some. True story.

Ed Gamble

Yes.

Meera Syal

That is quite brilliant rounding up. You waited. You cued it up and you went for it. And-,

Ed Gamble

Yes.

Meera Syal

Hats off, sir.

James Acaster

Thank you very-, not enough people, not enough people come on this podcast and, you know, give credit where it's due and recognise the greatness.

Ed Gamble

Yes.

Meera Syal

I do.



Ed Gamble

It is good you saved it after the whole poo cheese thing. I glad you brought it back round.

James Acaster

Yes.

Ed Gamble

That would have been an awful taste to leave in the mouth.

James Acaster

Yes. It's an awful image for people to imagine you pooing directly onto a cheese board. But, yes. The Eton Mess is nice. I think for me, so Eton Mess is delicious and people have chosen it on the podcast before. And, it often gets, you know, people tee it up by saying, 'It's just objectively the best dessert as well.' It's one of the ones that, people who love it just see it as, why would you ever choose anything else? For me, I wish that it didn't have the word Eton in it because it just reminds me of the worst people in the world. So-

Meera Syal

Yes.

James Acaster

I would like to change the name. I think we should lobby to have the name changed. That would be good.

Ed Gamble

Yes.

Meera Syal

Which area or institution would you like to call it?

James Acaster

Yes. Maybe Kettering.

Meera Syal

Kettering Mess.

James Acaster

Well, yes. A Kettering-

Ed Gamble

The thing is the Mess, really. Wherever you change it to, the Mess seems like an insult now, doesn't it?

James Acaster

Yes because Eton Mess is just, like, you know, a posh kid who's a bit scruffy being, like, 'What am I like?'

Ed Gamble

Yes.

James Acaster

I'm a right mess today. Whereas, yes, call anyone else a mess, it's, like, 'You fucking-, what you saying about-.'



Ed Gamble

Is this you throwing down the gloves? Are you going to call it a Stephen Graham Mess?

James Acaster

He would be in a mess when I'm finished with him. I tell you what-

Meera Syal

I'm telling you, it's going to get back to him. I'm just telling you.

James Acaster

I hope it does. Do you know what, I am delivering this first-class to him. That's what you get when you make fun of Ramesh on Jonathan Ross.

Meera Syal

We could call it a Ro Mess.

James Acaster

Oh, lovely.

Ed Gamble

Yes, I like that.

James Acaster

Lovely.

Meera Syal

Couldn't we?

James Acaster

I would love to call it that, definitely.

Meera Syal

And then, it becomes something nice.

James Acaster

Yes, absolutely.

Ed Gamble

Would you like to put any mango in it because then we can call it a Ro-Mess Mangonathan?

James Acaster

Oh, yes.

Meera Syal

Yes, I would. Just because of that. But also, I have had mango in Eton Mess and it's great.

Ed Gamble

Oh, good. Well, that's perfect then. I'm glad the pun and the dish works.

Meera Syal

Look what we've done.

James Acaster

Oh, what a lovely-, that's a lovely meal. I want to read back your menu to you now and-,



Meera Syal

Yes, go on.

James Acaster

And, we'll see how you feel about it. Always nice to hear it back. Water, you want sparkling water with ice and thinly cut slices of lime. Poppadoms or bread, you chose a warm crusty roll or a French baguette. Starter, chaat from Dishoom. Main course, seafood paella from the Barcelona beach restaurant. Side of samphire and drink, rose lassi-, fuck. Fuck. I said lassi. I can't believe it. I can't believe this.

Meera Syal

You did.

James Acaster

I can't believe it.

Meera Syal

You did.

James Acaster

Oh, definitely want to edit that out because it makes me look like an idiot. I'm dead.

Ed Gamble

So sorry, James. Yes, lassi. I believe it's called lassi.

James Acaster

Oh, thank you, Ed.

Ed Gamble

No worries. At least you know now.

James Acaster

Rose lassi from Dishoom. Dessert, you want a Ro-Mess Mangonathan with some passion-fruit as well.

Ed Gamble

Yes.

Meera Syal

Yes, very happy with that menu.

Ed Gamble

Oh-,

James Acaster

Yes.

Ed Gamble

That sounds absolutely delicious.

James Acaster

It does sound amazing.

Ed Gamble

That is a great menu. Meera, thank you so much for coming to the dream restaurant. That's a



wonderful menu. Thank you very much for talking to us and I can't apologise enough about the poo board.

Meera Syal

What a note to end on.

Ed Gamble

Cheers, Meera. Well, there we are. A wonderful menu from Meera. Lovely to listen to you absolutely sign your death warrant over the course of the podcast.

James Acaster

As if, I will sign it a death warrant, not my own.

Ed Gamble

It's yours, mate.

James Acaster

I think you know who's death warrant I just signed.

Ed Gamble

You're going down.

James Acaster

Yes.

Ed Gamble

He's going to eat you.

James Acaster

Oh-,

Ed Gamble

He's going to take you down and eat you.

James Acaster

Oh, best of luck. If he eats me, I'm going to beat him up from the inside, from the stomach.

Ed Gamble

We will all look forward to watching that, of course. Thank you very much, Meera for coming to the dream restaurant. Wonderful stuff.

James Acaster

Thank you so much.

Ed Gamble

Very delicious menu. I do want to eat that now.

James Acaster

Yes, really delicious and everyone, make sure you watch series two of Code 404, a Sky Original, all episodes available from the 1st of September, which means that it's already out.

Ed Gamble

Yes.



James Acaster

On Sky Comedy and on Now.

Ed Gamble

It's available now on Now.

James Acaster

Yes, very clever that they called it that, actually.

Ed Gamble

It's worked out quite well for them, actually.

James Acaster

Yes.

Ed Gamble

Do we have anything else to say, James? She didn't pick an English, I suppose.

James Acaster

Yes. Thank you for not picking an English, Meera.

Ed Gamble

Yes. It would have been a shock if she had, though.

James Acaster

Imagine she just, like, for a laugh, gone, my main course is a nod to one of my most famous sketches that I did with Goodness Gracious Me.

Ed Gamble

Yes.

James Acaster

Maybe, like, okay.

Ed Gamble

Could I have the blandest thing on the menu, please?

James Acaster

Yes.

Ed Gamble

We'd be, like, that's a lovely call-back, Meera, but you do now have to leave. Thank you very much for listening to Off Menu. We will be back next week with another hot steaming podcast.

James Acaster

Wash your plates.

Ed Gamble

Bye.