



Off Menu – Ep134– Charlotte Church

Ed Gamble

Welcome to the Off Menu podcast, opening up the shell of the internet, plucking out the pearl of conversation and downing the sweet, salty, creamy oyster of humour, it's the Off Menu podcast.

James Acaster

How do you do it, Ed Gamble? You come up with a different thing each time, and that one was a very good one.

Ed Gamble

Thank you very much.

James Acaster

Yes, oysters.

Ed Gamble

Oysters, correct. Imagine if that was not what I was trying to do.

James Acaster

Yes. My name is James Acaster, and Ed and I own a dream restaurant. Ed's the maître D. I am a genie waiter. We invite a guest in every week, and we ask them their favourite ever starter, main course, dessert, side dish, and drink. And, this week, our guest is Charlotte Church.

Ed Gamble

Charlotte Church.

James Acaster

Charlotte.

Ed Gamble

Church. A wonderful singer, of course. A wonderful broadcaster. I'm going to say it, James.

James Acaster

Yes.

Ed Gamble

Is it another national trash situation?

James Acaster

I feel it's a national trash, here. I'm going to say, it's personally, for me, national trash, yes.

Ed Gamble

Look, we've grown up with Charlotte Church. She's grown up with us. You know, she's been through many different forms in her life and now she's finally here in her ultimate form on the Off Menu podcast.

James Acaster

Yes, this is where everyone comes at the end when they've fully formed and they're ready to do Off Menu.

Ed Gamble

Yes, exactly.



James Acaster

I am very excited but, as always, if Charlotte says the secret ingredient, an ingredient which we deem to be gross, then we will have to, with a heavy heart, kick her out of the dream restaurant. And, this week, the secret ingredient is rosemary.

Ed Gamble

Rosemary. Now, I didn't pick this.

James Acaster

I did.

Ed Gamble

I love rosemary. I've got a plant in my garden.

James Acaster

I made it very clear in the Tim Key episode that I do not like rosemary at all.

Ed Gamble

Yes.

James Acaster

I don't like it. I especially hate it if I bite into the rosemary itself. I feel like it's a very unpleasant perfume explosion.

Ed Gamble

Well, look, that's a tricky thing because, of course, rosemary is quite a hard leaf but I think when it's on things that have been fried or roasted, I actually think rosemary, when it's a bit more brittle and a bit more crispy, is slightly more delightful but the flavour it imparts, James. Are you not even a fan of the rosemary flavour?

James Acaster

No, I don't really care for it. I could live my whole life without having that flavour again. I don't really care about that flavour. It's too perfumy.

Ed Gamble

Too perfumy.

James Acaster

Yes, that's what I've decided.

Ed Gamble

Even on sheepy?

James Acaster

Huh?

Ed Gamble

Even on sheepy.

James Acaster

Even on sheepy, I don't like it. I don't like it in the sheepy, I don't like it in anything. I mean, definitely, you know, I think when I was a kid, there would be more, like, raw rosemary involved in some things. And then, definitely, that was been what I bit into the one time that has left me scarred



for life. But it was so unpleasant that I can't get over it, that even fried or roasted, it's repugnant to me.

Ed Gamble

How do you feel about this, James? Sometimes, and I've made something recently, a dessert might be infused with a rosemary flavour.

James Acaster

Oh, yes, well I'm then I'm choosing something else on the menu.

Ed Gamble

Well, what if you come over to my house, say, and I've made a wonderful, citrus polenta cake which is, like, you pour a syrup over it, an orange syrup, which has also been infused with rosemary. There's no actual leaves in it.

James Acaster

Look, I'd eat it. I may even enjoy it. But without the rosemary infusion, it would be better. So I would even enjoy that dish, I might even say, 'Woah, this is like nine out of ten.' But it would have been ten out of ten if the rosemary wasn't involved.

Ed Gamble

Right. Charlie won't eat that either.

James Acaster

No?

Ed Gamble

No. I made it once, took over to someone's house for a dinner party. I thought it would be nice to take a dessert over. And we arrived and they'd also made a dessert. It was a lemon tart and Charlie ate loads of the lemon tart. She didn't eat any of the thing I've made.

James Acaster

Well, okay. Well, for starters, I'm glad that you're over it now. Also, though, I'd say you got unlucky there because a lemon tart, you know, is kind of a bit of a trump card. Like-,

Ed Gamble

Well, it is for Charlie, especially. She loves lemon tart. When we first started going out, she kept saying she was going to write a lemon tart blog.

James Acaster

Really?

Ed Gamble

She went round and only had lemon tarts. All over the world, if she could, and write about the best lemon tarts.

James Acaster

I think, at some point, everyone has had that dream about a certain food. A different food for each person but everyone has thought, 'You know what I'm going to do?-'

Ed Gamble

Yes, you're going to write a blog.

James Acaster



'I would choose this drink, this food, and I have all the ones I could find and then write a blog about it.' In fact, I would like to know what the listeners' food items-, if they had to go around the world to try one food, be it a lemon tart-

Ed Gamble

And writing a blog about it.

James Acaster

Yes, write a blog about it. What would the food item be? Tweet at Off Menu official and let us know because I'd be very interested. I think it's a dream everyone has had.

Ed Gamble

One person out there is thinking, well, it's going to be rosemary, but I'm not going to write it now, talking about my rosemary blog.

James Acaster

Then we'll block you.

Ed Gamble

Yes.

James Acaster

If anything of you say a secret ingredient, you get blocked.

Ed Gamble

Yes, Rosemary's Bloggy, that's what I would call my rosemary blog.

James Acaster

Yes, yes, yes.

Ed Gamble

Yes? Great. Thank you.

James Acaster

Well, also what's really exciting is that Charlotte Church has a new TV series. It's already started. It's on Really and it's streamed on Discovery Plus. And it's Tuesdays at 9 p.m. and it's called 'Charlotte Church's Dream Build'.

Ed Gamble

Yes, and I'm sure she'll tell us a lot more about that, as well as telling us her dream menu.

James Acaster

Dream menu in the Dream Build, maybe.

Ed Gamble

I'm on tour, don't forget that. I'm on tour. Ed Gamble Electric, UK Tour, edgamble.co.uk for tickets. Check it out, I'm coming to a theatre near you. Now, it's time for the Off Menu menu of Charlotte Church.

Ed Gamble

Welcome, Charlotte, to the dream restaurant.

Charlotte Church

Thank you so much. It's exquisite.



James Acaster

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

Charlotte Church

Oh.

Ed Gamble

Here we are. So you say it's exquisite, Charlotte. That's always a good word to hear when someone walks into a restaurant. Do you have, in your mind, when you walk into your dream restaurant, do you know what it looks like? Your child's in the dream restaurant, that's lovely.

Charlotte Church

She is, sorry.

Ed Gamble: No, that's nice, Charlotte. A bit of atmosphere.

Charlotte Church: Absolutely. She's always with me, to be fair. And she also thinks that the décor is exquisite. It's, yes, I think that it's probably loads of beautiful, naturalistic materials like bamboo and big walls of stone. And, yes, there's an amazing restaurant in Iceland in Reykjavik called Grill Market which is, like, oh, it looks sort of like you're inside a volcano.

Ed Gamble

Wow.

James Acaster

Wow.

Charlotte Church

So something like that, you know. Something that looks like the Earth has birthed it.

James Acaster

Yes. What kind of food does Grill Market do? I'm interested in this place now.

Charlotte Church

They do all sorts of, like, really beautiful, amazing food. But they also do things like minke whale.

Ed Gamble

Minke whale?

Charlotte Church

Minke whale.

James Acaster

Minke whale? That sounds like something from In The Night Garden.

Charlotte Church

Yes, but it isn't, unfortunately. It's actually people eating whales, so.

James Acaster

Oh.

Charlotte Church

But, yes, it's a really beautiful-looking restaurant. I am thinking that this is the sort of setting that I'd like to set our scene.



Ed Gamble

It's very rare, Charlotte, that people come in and say they want their dream restaurant to look like the Earth has birthed it. That's not a phrase we've heard before on the podcast.

Charlotte Church

Great.

Ed Gamble

I like it. I love it very much.

James Acaster

Yes, it's very much a phrase that's, I think, even better in a Welsh accent. The Earth has birthed it.

Charlotte Church

I'm glad you like it, darling.

James Acaster

Good. Thank you, Charlotte. Are you much of a foodie? Would you call yourself a foodie or, like, how much are you thinking about food?

Charlotte Church

I am a lover of food. I'm not sure if I'm a foodie, necessarily, because I'm not like, you know, it doesn't, sort of, take up my every moment of thinking which, I think for foodies, it's like, you know, it's just all so important and sensory. My husband's an amazing cook. I'm really lucky to have that which means that I don't have to do a lot in order to experience really fabulous food. I'm very spoilt.

Ed Gamble

What's his signature dish? What's your favourite thing that he cooks?

James Acaster

Unless it's a spoiler. Have you got anything on your dream menu that your husband has made?

Charlotte Church

No, no, no.

James Acaster

Oh, in that case.

Ed Gamble: No, he's not that good.

Charlotte Church

Sorry, Jonny.

James Acaster

In that case, go ahead.

Charlotte Church

He does a really, really beautiful vegetarian roast dinner where it's like, it's jam-packed full of loads of different vegetables which are really tasty. So, yes, his vegetarian roast dinner is absolutely off the chain.

Ed Gamble

Are you a vegetarian household?



Charlotte Church

We're not a vegetarian household, however, we are trying to be mostly veggie with very occasional, ethically-sourced meat.

James Acaster

And whale.

Charlotte Church

No, no whale. No whale for us.

James Acaster

Of what I understand.

Ed Gamble

He does a beautiful minke whale on a Sunday, doesn't he?

Charlotte Church

No, no, that would be terrible.

James Acaster

The one exception is minke whale. Just all vegetables, we're very vegetarian but, occasionally, we do have a minke whale. Now, you're no stranger to dreams because your new series, is it all about dreams? I want to know more.

Charlotte Church

It's not about dreams. I mean, it is in a way, I suppose. It's called Charlotte Church's Dream Build and, essentially, I bought this amazing house in the heart of Wales. It's Laura Ashley's old house, actually, the designer. And I'm going to turn it into a healing retreat centre.

James Acaster

Oh.

Charlotte Church

Yes. So, I mean, it's a huge renovation. It's a massive project.

Ed Gamble

She hadn't done it up?

James Acaster

Yes, Laura Ashley-

Ed Gamble

You would have thought Laura Ashley might have done it up a little bit.

James Acaster

Yes.

Ed Gamble

Not a fan of the wallpaper?

James Acaster

She lived in an absolute dump, is that what you're saying?



Charlotte Church

No. She did it up beautifully but the last guy who owned it before me, he half did it, ripped out everything, and just left it a shell, basically. And, to be honest, that's the only reason I could afford it. Because he's left it in such a pickle, which is, you know, good for me.

James Acaster

What's a healing retreat centre for those who don't know, which includes me.

Charlotte Church

What I want it to be, it's going to be called the Dreaming.

James Acaster

Yes, lovely.

Charlotte Church

And it's a place that you can go, which helps you to reconnect with nature and the Earth with yourself and with other people. So I think that in the modern world, we're all a bit fried. Everything is going at such a rate, such a pace, that I think we're frying our nervous systems. And capitalism and consumerism doesn't make us happy. And there's a lot of people out there who are searching for a bit of joy and a bit of meaning. And so I'm hoping to create somewhere which is just chock-a-block full of magic and nature.

James Acaster

That sounds great. Do you think that, because of like, you were like a child star, your life was a hundred miles an hour way before all of like the internet kicked off and stuff like that. So you've had an earlier appreciation for this, and the need and the importance for decompressing?

Charlotte Church

I don't know, that's a great question.

Ed Gamble

It is. And, I'll be honest Charlotte, I'm very surprised. He doesn't normally ask those sorts of questions. He's really pulled that one out of somewhere. We've done over 130 episodes and he's never asked a question that good before.

James Acaster

I've surprised myself.

Charlotte Church

Really? And I'm not sure if I've ever been asked that. So, originally-,

Ed Gamble

This is incredible.

Charlotte Church

Well, very well done.

James Acaster

Thank you.

Charlotte Church

I don't know. Since I had kids, I just started becoming a bit obsessed with nature. And, also, you know, the impending apocalyptic situation with the climate and such, you know, really sort of focuses the mind as to what's important. And I think that we'd need to, sort of, reshape the narrative around. Instead of it being like, 'Oh my gosh, this is all so terrible and, you know, what are we going



to do? And you're responsible for this.' We need to view it, like, you know, the Marvel franchise. That we're all superheroes and what are you going to do? Like, what's your superpower going to be in terms of saving humanity? Because that's the size of the task so, you know, let's do our best to make it fun, and hopefully it works. And if it doesn't, you know, at least we've had a ball trying to fix the mess that's been made.

James Acaster

You know where I went recently? I had a similar experience, like, getting back to nature and just needing everything to slow down. I went to the Hundred Acre Wood.

Charlotte Church

Deep in the Hundred Acre Wood. Like Winnie-the-Pooh?

James Acaster

Yes. Like the place where A. A. Milne and Christopher Robin genuinely, like, lived near and went and played in. Ashdown forest, it's called. And it is incredible. I went there two days in a row, and it is so amazing.

Charlotte Church

That sounds glorious. Where is it?

James Acaster

Near Tunbridge Wells. My girlfriend drove so I wasn't really paying attention. I was in charge of choosing a car.

Ed Gamble

You were connecting with nature already, weren't you? Looking out of the window, connecting with nature.

James Acaster

Yes, and Spotify.

Ed Gamble

And Spotify.

James Acaster

I was maybe playing songs in the car. But then when we got there, it looked pretty amazing. I really recommend it to anyone who wants to, like, calm down, clear their head a bit. I went two days. It was so good. First day, I was like, one day is not enough. I'm going to go back again because I still haven't seen the Heffalump tree, and that's a real thing that's there.

Charlotte Church

Have you ever heard of shinrin yoku or 'forest bathing'?

James Acaster

No.

Charlotte Church

It's an idea that started in Japan where scientists started looking into the actual, physical benefits of being in the forest. And not just being in the forest, but sort of engaging all of your senses and staying there for much longer than just, like, a walk, like a quick walk. So, you know, whether you're going for half a day or a whole day, really submerging yourself. And, I mean, what they found, the benefits that it does for the body is insane. And also, even for mental health, the colour green, something to do with the colour green, really sort of soothes our minds. So, yes, and just, like, mother nature is where it's at. I don't think that, you know, saving the world has to be that difficult. I



just think that we have to refocus our attention to nature and all of her absolutely glorious spoils and abundance. And as soon as we start connecting with that, then we're going to want to do all of the good stuff that we need to do.

Ed Gamble

I don't like nature.

James Acaster

Oh, here we go. Here we go. Sorry about this.

Ed Gamble

An hour max. I can cope with nature for an hour max.

James Acaster

You haven't been to the Hundred Acre Wood, mate.

Ed Gamble

I don't want to go to the Hundred Acre Wood. Like, whenever I end up sleeping somewhere that's quiet out in nature, I can't deal with it because there's no sirens or anything.

Charlotte Church

Interesting.

Ed Gamble

And that might reduce my blood pressure but the panic of my blood pressure reducing then ups my heart rate.

James Acaster

We grew up in Wimbledon.

Ed Gamble

But Wimbledon's not that noisy.

James Acaster

Wimbledon's rowdy.

Ed Gamble

It's not rowdy.

James Acaster

Compared to where me and Charlotte grew up, it is a rowdy place.

Charlotte Church

So you're a proper city mouse?

Ed Gamble

I'm a proper city mouse, yes.

James Acaster

City rat.

Ed Gamble

Whereas James is a country mouse and was also a mouse in the recent Cinderella film.



James Acaster

Yes, thank you.

Ed Gamble

So we're different mice but that's why we work well together.

Charlotte Church

Do you feel, like, wonder and awe when you're in the city then? Do you love culture?

Ed Gamble

No, I prefer to just stay on an even keel and feel no wonder or awe, whatsoever.

James Acaster

He, I would say-,

Ed Gamble

I like to feel fine all of the time.

James Acaster

He's selling himself short there. He loves culture.

Ed Gamble

I do love culture.

James Acaster

He loves restaurants, he loves going to see shows.

Ed Gamble

Yes.

James Acaster

I think, yes, you do love that, and then maybe out in the countryside, you're like, 'Why isn't anyone bringing me some food?'

Ed Gamble

Because all of the animals are just getting on with their own thing and everyone's ignoring me. And then it's really quiet at night and you can just hear a bird now and again whereas I prefer to hear a shooting, you know.

Charlotte Church

Oh, Christ.

James Acaster

We've all assumed our roles, it would appear, at the start of this podcast.

Charlotte Church

Oh, it's great. It's marvellous.

James Acaster

He's the baddie. Ed's the baddie.

Ed Gamble

I'm not the baddie. I'm a city mouse.



James Acaster

You're the baddie. Me and Charlotte are saving the world. Well, Charlotte is, and I'm listening to it and going, 'Yes, I should do that.' You're a baddie.

Ed Gamble

Okay, fine.

James Acaster

You're a baddie city rat.

Ed Gamble

I'll take it. I'm a mouse.

Charlotte Church

The origins of the word 'culture', though, when you take it far back, it basically is something to do with protector of nature. So even culture, actually, is essentially, if you go far enough back and deeper enough into the human psyche, it's about being a protector of nature. So she will come for you, I have no doubt.

James Acaster

Yes.

Ed Gamble

Alright.

James Acaster

She will come for you, and you would deserve everything you get when that happens. I'm not going to help you.

James Acaster

We always start the dream meal with still or sparkling water, Charlotte. What would you prefer?

Charlotte Church

I'm going to have still water because sparkling water is actually one of the only things in the entire world that makes me gag.

Ed Gamble: Really?

Charlotte Church

It just makes absolutely no sense to me or my taste buds or my stomach. In fact, it's almost invasive.

Ed Gamble

Do you drink fizzy drinks?

Charlotte Church

Yes.

Ed Gamble

I mean, you reacted to that like it was a stupid question, Charlotte. But I think it was fair enough to find out you could cope with fizzy drinks but not sparkling water. And, for some reason, that's invasive and it makes you gag.



Charlotte Church

It's not the bubbles. I think it's the carbonation and the water together is just, like, no, no, no. What is this? And it's been since forever, really.

James Acaster

Do you think it's a singers thing, as well? Like singers, you wouldn't drink fizzy water?

Charlotte Church

No.

James Acaster

You're asking for trouble.

Charlotte Church

Exactly. It's all a bit burpy. So, yes, I will have a nice big glass of still water, please.

James Acaster

I'm surprised you're not having, like, some fresh water from a spring, like, you know, I would think you'd want to go down to like a lovely, pure natural source.

Charlotte Church

I didn't know I was allowed to do that. Can I do that?

Ed Gamble

Someone has done that. I think Ross Kemp did that on the podcast.

Charlotte Church

Ross Kemp?

James Acaster

I might be wrong, but I think Ross Kemp requested.

Ed Gamble

That's the way everyone reacted when I told them we had Ross Kemp on here.

James Acaster

We were with Kemp.

Ed Gamble

Ross Kemp?

Charlotte Church

Actually, if I'm allowed to do that, then what I would love to do is go back to the Dreaming in mid-Wales, in the Heart of Wales, to the healing retreat centre. And, there, are two incredible waterfalls. So I am going to stand with a really fancy-looking goblet at the bottom of the waterfall, and I'm going to take this pristine, cool water right from the waterfall. Thank you very much.

James Acaster

And when you're there, are you out of the way of the waterfall and you're holding the goblet into the waterfall? Or are you just standing under the waterfall with a goblet and it's all just going all over you?

Charlotte Church

Okay, you clearly have a little fantasy going on there, my darling. This isn't a wet t-shirt competition. I'm standing next to the waterfall.



Ed Gamble

James looks absolutely gutted. Absolutely gutted that you called him out for that.

James Acaster

I've never been called a grubby little perv before on the podcast, but I feel like a grubby little perv right now.

Ed Gamble

Sorry about that, Charlotte. I do apologise for James.

Charlotte Church

Don't apologise at all but, no.

Ed Gamble

Calling Ed a rat.

Charlotte Church

I am dry and I am holding my goblet under the waterfall.

James Acaster

Yes, yes. Oh god.

Ed Gamble

James, Charlotte just wants to get on her with her dream meal. She doesn't need you peeking out of bushes, hoping she's going to get into the waterfall.

James Acaster

I swear I'm not peeking out of any bushes. I just felt that the logistics of holding the goblet into the waterfall, that's all. But, like, it's nice and clear now.

Charlotte Church

Versus getting completely submerged.

James Acaster

Yes.

Ed Gamble

Those are the two options.

James Acaster

I thought that was the two options. Poppadoms or bread. Poppadoms or bread, Charlotte Church? Poppadoms or bread?

Charlotte Church

Most certainly, I want a really diverse breadbasket. To be honest, I'm absolutely obsessed with bread. So what I would really love is, you know, when you go to posh restaurants, they do like flavoured bread. It might have, like, caraway seeds in or, like, roasted dill bread or-. And also they do, like, there are sometimes different flavoured butters as well. So I want quite an involved basket of bread, please.

James Acaster

That sounds good.



Ed Gamble

That sounds really good.

James Acaster

That's up your street, isn't it?

Ed Gamble

Oh, I love it. Absolutely love it. The selection of breads, fantastic. James, do you want to ask Charlotte if she'll be eating the bread in the waterfall, maybe?

James Acaster

Not going to ask that, actually. I was going to ask, do you want us to hand you the bread in the basket, or do you want to tip the bread rolls over you?

Charlotte Church

As you shower amongst the flowery.

James Acaster

Or the caraway seeds. Ah, man.

Ed Gamble

So do you have specific breads that are going to go in this basket? Do you have like a, your top-hit breads. A bread chart.

Charlotte Church

Okay, I would love some sort of Focaccia with like some sun-dried tomato and olive, potentially, within the bread. I'd love a bit of sourdough. I'm going to have something, like, quite seeded, and I'm going to have it with a butter with like that black volcanic salt. What's another fabulous butter that either of you have had?

James Acaster

I like whipped butters. Butters that have like-, here we go, here we go. I can't believe it. You're trying to make me the baddie.

Ed Gamble

Oh, no. And now you're the perv and it wasn't even me who called you the perv.

Charlotte Church

Just for you, I'll have the whipped butter which I will whip myself.

James Acaster

Oh, no.

Ed Gamble

And then would you like any spanked butter as well, Charlotte? No, that does sound absolutely delicious. I think there was a good addition of butters, James. Well done.

Charlotte Church

I think so. Well done, James, that was really, really, wonderfully suggested.

James Acaster

Let's get into your dream meal proper now and start with your starter, of course. Ed's a starter boy.

Ed Gamble

I love starters.



James Acaster

I'm a dessert boy.

Charlotte Church

Oh, yes.

James Acaster

Are you leaning more towards Ed's way of thinking. Is this an exciting course for you?

Charlotte Church

It's very difficult because, I mean, sometimes in restaurants, I don't even order a main course. I just order starters.

Ed Gamble

Yes, Charlotte.

James Acaster

Wow.

Charlotte Church

Because they're so tasty.

Ed Gamble

Correct.

Charlotte Church

But I also love a dessert so I often have both.

James Acaster

Great. I mean, I'm happy for mains to be the one that gets-

Ed Gamble

Yes, that's fine. That's what I like to hear. I don't think I've ever really been brave enough to just go in and just order starters. Also, I'm too greedy, I'd have to get a main as well.

Charlotte Church

Yes, but I'm going to go for a French onion soup which is served with Gruyère cheese and a massive crouton in the middle. And I'm going to have this sort of with a smattering of freshly-picked herbs from the garden. I'm really getting into growing vegetables and permaculture so the idea of, like, going outside and literally harvesting something super fresh and then putting it in straight in your meal is very appealing to me.

James Acaster

What is permaculture?

Charlotte Church

Permaculture is one of the best ways to grow vegetables, to grow food, basically. It's a whole system which is about being, rather than us, sort of, trying to control nature and growing things in neat little rows which, a lot of the time, depletes the soil. You're growing a lot of things together. So you're, sort of, really taking into account the interconnected nature of things. So, you know that if you've got chickens by fruit trees when the fruit season is over, then they're going to, sort of, peck the remainder of the fruit and break the pest cycle. But also that if you grow tomatoes and strawberries together, because of their colour, the strawberries will grow bigger and sweeter to compete with the tomatoes. So, there are all sorts of different plants which create different



chemicals which then will aid something else growing. So, you're just, sort of, growing things in a way that's really great for the entire ecosystem rather than just, like, for human food. So, yes, permaculture is awesome.

James Acaster

Wow, that's like me and you, Ed.

Ed Gamble

Is it?

James Acaster

Strawberries and tomatoes competing with each other and we both end up big and juicy.

Ed Gamble

Well, we definitely end up bigger, I tell you that one when we get together.

Charlotte Church

But what about sweeter? Do you end up sweeter?

James Acaster

I think so.

Ed Gamble

Well, it turns out, I'm very sweet and James is a bitter old perv.

James Acaster

Oh, oh dear.

Ed Gamble

This is the side of you I didn't know existed, Charlotte. This interest in growing things and nature and all of that. And this new show, I think, is great. It's wonderful.

Charlotte Church

Thanks.

James Acaster

Yes. We haven't had anyone talk about this sort of stuff on the podcast before. It's very exciting.

Charlotte Church

Oh, really? I am happy to be repping for nature and the Earth. I suppose for, like, for me, this interest is like as soon as you do get interested in it. And, you know, whether that's you love going to the beach, you love climbing mountains, you know, it can be in an extreme sports sort of way or it can be in like a, 'I just love hanging out in forests' or, 'I love animals' or whatever. There's so much variation. Like, there's endless diversity and complexity within nature that as soon as you actually start looking and your interest is peaked in one area, oh my God, it becomes such a soul-nourishing interest and hobby because it's never-ending. I absolutely love it.

Ed Gamble

There is something satisfying as well, like you were saying about getting the herbs from your garden and putting them on your food. They do taste better because of that, right?

Charlotte Church

Oh, absolutely, without a shadow of a doubt. When you grow and harvest your own vegetables. I think, you know, in part because you've been a part of the growing process, you know what the effort that's been put into making these things grow. But also so many commercially-grown crops



and stuff nowadays are like-, they've got about 20% of the nutrients that they should do. So, even in terms of, like, for nutrition, for health, it's really brilliant to grow your own vegetables, never mind, you know, all of the stuff it does for your mental health.

James Acaster

Now, if I may steer this back to our usual fare?

Charlotte Church

Of course.

James Acaster

This big crouton, is this big crouton the size of the whole bowl of soup and you lift it up like a lid?

Charlotte Church

Ooh.

Ed Gamble

Sounds like it's going to be.

Charlotte Church

Oh, that's nice. I think it's a circle within a circle. So, like, the bowl is one of those French ones with a lid, absolutely. But I think the crouton is like a little circle within the bowl, covered in Gruyère cheese.

Ed Gamble

And what's the technique? What's the tactics when you eat it? Are you seeing that crouton and the whole crouton is going in straight away? Or are you having a bit of the crouton, letting it soak into the soup, or is it crouton first then soup? Are you going down in layers or are you mixing it all up?

Charlotte Church

That's so, that's difficult. I'm just going to eat it bit by bit. I don't want it too soggy, you know. I don't want it too soggy so it is going to be one of the first things I have. But also I want to have a little bit of that cheese with every mouthful so, you know, I don't want to blow my load with eating all of the cheese straight away.

Ed Gamble

No, James. Stop it. I'll take this.

James Acaster

Shut up. I knew that was going to happen. I'm just trying to-, even when Charlotte said it, I saw a little glint in her eyes, like, I'd just teed Ed for that. Get ready for this.

Ed Gamble

Well, what we can do-,

James Acaster

I have a genuine question now and because you said that, my question that I genuinely want to ask sounds pervy, off the back of what you said.

Ed Gamble

Go on.

James Acaster

Charlotte said she wants a bit of cheese with each thing and I was going to ask if you are someone who, you have things like element by element or if you like an ultimate mouthful so you have all the



little elements together. So you get some of the onion soup, some of the cheese, and some of the crouton in each mouthful. That was what I was going to ask.

Ed Gamble

That's fine.

James Acaster: Yes, but I've had to really think about how I worded that.

Ed Gamble

What were you originally going to say?

James Acaster

Do you like to have a bit everything in each mouthful. I didn't want it to be flipped on me.

Charlotte Church

I am an ultimate mouthful sort of woman, James.

James Acaster

Yes. A bit of everything.

Charlotte Church

A little bit of everything with every bite, absolutely.

Ed Gamble

Yes.

James Acaster

Yes.

Ed Gamble

Fair enough.

James Acaster

Yes.

Ed Gamble

But what we could do, because it's the dream restaurant, and you obviously don't want to run out of cheese, we could put you a little bowl of cheese or a little bowl of melted cheese on the side so you can keep replenishing.

Charlotte Church

This is hilarious because, actually, the way in which I was brought up, right, was in a very nutritionally-deficient way. I was raised on, like, Turkey dinosaurs and microchips and spam, and my family are obsessed with cheese on a plate.

Ed Gamble

Love it.

Charlotte Church

So nothing else happened apart from it being melted cheese on a plate. That's it.

Ed Gamble

I mean, I've never heard of melted cheese on a plate as a side dish. I absolutely love this. Are they melting the cheese separately and then pouring it onto the plate or is it on the plate, you stick the whole plate under the grill?



Charlotte Church

The cheese is on a plate and it just goes straight under the grill. The cheese melts on the plate. That is considered a bit of tea.

James Acaster

So must the plate must be, like, boiling hot. So you can't touch the plate, you're going to burn yourself. So have you all got a fork and you're getting yourself a bit of cheese and eating it? Or what's going on? I can't even picture. In my head, it's this flat bit of cheese.

Charlotte Church

Yes.

James Acaster

Are you grating it? I imagine the cheese is getting grated onto the plate, then grilled. Or is it just a block of cheese on the plate and then that melts.

Charlotte Church

It's just a block of cheese on the plate.

James Acaster: A block, yes.

Charlotte Church

And it gets melted. You often will just, like, put a tea towel under the plate so it's bearable and then crack on with the melted cheese.

James Acaster

It just-,

Ed Gamble

It's just Welsh fondue, basically, isn't it?

Charlotte Church

Yes, totally. Cheese on a plate, babes. Working-class Welsh fair.

James Acaster

Cheddar? Is it cheddar? Is that what we're talking, here?

Charlotte Church

Oh, it's probably been a Cathedral city. It's nothing posh, you know.

James Acaster

Yes, yes. Wow. Right.

Ed Gamble

So you can have some working-class Welsh cheese on a plate, babes, on the side.

Charlotte Church

Yes, why not?

James Acaster

Let's go onto your main course then. More natural ingredients, more permaculture? A word that I've learnt today, getting involved.



Charlotte Church

Now I'm going for experience because, as I've said, like, I often get a bit bored of main course. Like, I love the variation and the tastiness of, like, the starters and, sort of, little plates. So, actually, for my main, I need a little bit of entertainment. And I don't think anything is as entertaining, food-wise, as a Japanese teppanyaki grill.

James Acaster

Yes.

Charlotte Church

Have you been to one of these places?

James Acaster

I have.

Ed Gamble

No, I've never been to one of these places but I've seen it on so many different TV shows and it looks so fun where the chef's doing all tricks and stuff.

James Acaster

Benny Harner.

Charlotte Church

Exactly. Like Benny Harner. And there aren't many of them in the UK so, basically, you all sit around. So there's lots of, like, seats maybe. 15 people, let's say. So you're all sat around this massive hot plate and there's a chef in front of you who is like making this incredibly tasty Japanese food but is doing loads of tricks and chucking eggs about and doing all sorts of fast cutting. And it's just really entertaining. Sometimes, like, there's one thing that they do in Benny Harner, at least, which is they make, like, this onion volcano.

Ed Gamble

Another volcano?

Charlotte Church

And then they pour some oil in it and then set fire to it and it's like it's this big volcano. It's loads of fun.

James Acaster

And just to be clear, when you say hot plate, you don't mean the kind of hot plate that you would put cheese under the grill and then you bring it back and it would be on a tea towel?

Charlotte Church

Absolutely not. No. It's not cheese-on-a-plate hot plate but a big, massive, stainless steel hot plate. And so the sort of things that you might have at a teppanyaki grill is, you know, if you had different meats, it would be like teriyaki chicken, or sort of different Japanese flavours with a meat, and then your rice, your, sort of, garlic-fried rice, or egg-fried rice. And then they do loads of vegetables but just, sort of, really tasty, fried, lush.

Ed Gamble

It's a very clever selection for the Off Menu dream restaurant as well because you've essentially picked one main course that is loads of different foods.

Charlotte Church

Absolutely. So I can have, like, a little bit of all sorts of tasty, dreamy morsels. But I'm also being really entertained. I am titillated at the dinner table.



Ed Gamble

Who would you most like to be your chef? If anyone could cook this, who would entertain you the most while doing the cooking?

Charlotte Church

Oh, that's interesting. I think Stewart Lee would be really fuming to be cooking for me. But that might be really funny.

Ed Gamble

I mean, I think you've absolutely picked the best person you could've picked there.

Charlotte Church

Either Stewart Lee or Mariah Carey.

Ed Gamble

Two sides of the same coin.

James Acaster

People always have their choose between the two of them. It's quite hard.

Charlotte Church

I just think that, I think she would be so mad and fun. She's just amazing. So, yes, I mean, if Stewart Lee and Mariah Carey could come and, you know, do a sort of back-to-back teppanyaki.

Ed Gamble

I feel like they'd get on really well.

James Acaster

Yes.

Charlotte Church

Match made in heaven.

James Acaster

Peas in a pod.

Ed Gamble

I'm not sure Stewart Lee, necessarily, and deliberately so, has the, sort of, zingy energy needed to be a teppanyaki chef.

Charlotte Church

Yes.

Ed Gamble

He takes his time over things, doesn't he? He likes to take his time, he teases things out over a long period of time. You're basically looking at a man cook the same piece of stake over and over again to make a point.

James Acaster

He likes repetition.

Charlotte Church

Iteration.



Ed Gamble

Yes.

James Acaster

Yes.

Charlotte Church

But, mind you, I mean, if you're a chef at a teppanyaki grill for an evening, that's what it is. It's iteration. It's over and over again so maybe it's perfect. Maybe I'll suggest it to him. But also, like, he would be so withering towards the idea of being entertained whilst you ate would probably be like, he would find, you know, infuriating, which I sort of agree with. The food itself should be entertainment enough but, alas. But also I think that Mariah would really balance him out.

James Acaster

Yes.

Ed Gamble

Yes.

Charlotte Church

I love Stewart Lee's comedy. I think that it's so purposeful and I think him and Mariah would just be delightful together.

Ed Gamble

Maybe they should tour together. I'd love that.

James Acaster

There's no one that wouldn't go. There's something for everyone there.

Charlotte Church

That's so funny. I'm just trying to-, imagine the poster, I'm trying to think about how that would actually work.

James Acaster

Especially if there's teppanyaki grill involved. That's the holy trinity.

Ed Gamble

The first half, you have Stewart Lee doing comedy, Mariah does a few songs. Second half, they're both on stage doing teppanyaki grill.

James Acaster

Yes, yes.

Charlotte Church

And tricks. And amazing tricks.

Ed Gamble

It's nice to speak to somebody who's really using the dream restaurant to the full potential. So, you know, we're in a restaurant that's been birthed by the Earth, you're having water out of a spring, and you're having Japanese grill cooked by Stewart Lee and Mariah Carey.

James Acaster

The water is from the waterfall and it's very civilised.



Ed Gamble

Yes, it's normal.

Charlotte Church

Thank you.

Ed Gamble

Just the cup straight under and everyone's normal.

James Acaster

Yes.

Charlotte Church

So normal. So very normal. Don't panic. Everything's fine.

James Acaster

It's alright.

James Acaster

Let's go onto the dream side, then. So this is like you've got loads of little bits for that main course there.

Charlotte Church

I'm going to have some really delicious leaves just because, I mean, I was going to go with just like a bowl of steamed vegetables because, a lot of the time, we don't eat enough vegetables, you know. And, actually, just like some al dente nice steamed vegetables is absolutely what's required. But one of the best things that you can eat is green leaves. Because, like, the energy that they, sort of, draw in from the sun, it's basically just one of the best things that humans can eat, is green leaves.

Ed Gamble

But you want chips, right?

Charlotte Church

I mean, that's the other thing I was thinking. Yes, go on, I'll have some chips. Ah, that's so funny.

Ed Gamble

Look, you sold nature to us already. We love the idea of the healing retreat centre. We've had all of that. We should get closer to nature but, come on. Chips is nature?

Charlotte Church

But really salty chips as well.

Ed Gamble

Yes, of course, yes, yes.

Charlotte Church

They're like, it's like as you're eating them you're just like this is not okay, the amount of salt on these chips. But I'm having such a lovely time.

Ed Gamble

Salt is part of nature as well. So salt and potatoes, you can't get much more natural, Charlotte.



Charlotte Church

Exactly. Quite right. I totally agree. Yes, so, I mean, I have had quite a variation of things at this juncture. This is a crazy meal.

James Acaster

I want to know more about these green leaves, though. So what leaves-, they're not like from trees? They're not like from a sycamore tree or anything like that, are they? The green leaves?

Ed Gamble

What are you talking about?

James Acaster

Well, there's loads of different leaves in the world.

Charlotte Church

Well no, some of those would be very poisonous, I imagine. You know, things like all sorts of different, like, lettuce leaves. It isn't just iceberg lettuce. There's so many edible leaves that we can eat. Spinach. There's loads. It's sort of the foundation, the basis for all life on Earth, that process of photosynthesis and the actual matter that green leaves are made of is exceptionally good for human beings. So, yes, it's really great. If you can change one thing about your diet, add loads of green leaves.

Ed Gamble

Are you not eating green leaves on the reg, James?

James Acaster

Not on the reg enough, no, definitely not. You know, I'll make sure I have some veggies and stuff but, green leaves, I find them quite boring.

Charlotte Church

I think that it's about changing your perspective towards them because if you actually, next time you look at some spinach, or some lettuce or whatever that you think, 'Oh gosh, whatever.' Just think about the process of what that's taken to grow and stuff and the amount of sunlight it has taken in and as soon as you start thinking in those terms, then all of a sudden, you're just like 'ah, yes'. It feels so, like, nourishing and vital that you're just, like, absolutely put it in my face.

James Acaster

But if you think about the process of making chips, it kinds of puts you off. Now, imagine them going into the fryer. 'No, thank you, actually.'

Charlotte Church

Yes, especially, like, if it's the good shit that oil's been used for months. Like my nanny used to do it. She'd leave the chip oil just-, I don't know how long.

James Acaster

Get a plate of bunch of chips, lob it in the oil, bring the plate out, deep-fried.

Ed Gamble

She might not change chip oil but she was washing the cheese plate, right?

James Acaster

Yes, come on.



Charlotte Church

Absolutely washing the cheese plate. She also used to cut the potatoes into chips and then leave them in water and all the starch would come out. But it's something that's, I never really see people doing that. And then, as a kid, I think I was so vegetable-deficient that I just used to eat the raw potatoes. The raw chipped potatoes.

Ed Gamble

Do you think that's why now you're so into vegetables, is you're just trying to make up for the fact you never had any as a kid?

Charlotte Church

Potentially. Potentially, I'm making up for lost nutrition.

James Acaster

How about for your dream meal, as your side, would you have, like, a bowl of green leaves, a bowl of chips and just alternate between the two. I find that probably balance my guilt out for having all the chips. It would just be all balanced. I feel quite normal by the end.

Charlotte Church

To be honest, at this juncture, considering that I've had this incredibly rich French onion soup, I've had loads of Japanese food cooked by Stewart Lee and Mariah Carey, why not add some salty chips and some green leaves?

Ed Gamble: Yes.

Charlotte Church

Yes, totally. Makes total sense.

Ed Gamble

James, when you asked about the leaves, you said they're not just leaves off trees, right?

James Acaster

Yes.

Ed Gamble

Did you mean that? Do you think that-, were you worried that Charlotte was eating leaves directly off trees. And do you think that when you walk past trees, you could eat the leaves and, follow up question, have you been eating any leaves off trees?

James Acaster

Okay, I'll answer the last question first. No. I wasn't worried because I'm so ignorant about the subject that I didn't know it would be bad for you or not. Charlotte is really into connecting with nature and I thought maybe Charlotte has found some leaves off trees that are edible, that you're allowed to eat, and is really enjoying them? I mean, I hate to say, it was a genuine question. I genuinely was sitting there, thinking, 'Well, I'm not sure here. Green leaves could mean anything.' Let's make sure-, yes, I was thinking about nature so much, that's what my head went to first, was leaves off the trees.

Ed Gamble

So, I think, broadly, don't eat any leaves, even off the bush that you're hiding behind.

James Acaster

I've not been hiding in a bush. I'm not a little perv.



Charlotte Church

You just keep telling yourself that, James.

James Acaster

Ah, I'm hiding in the waterfall. That's where I'm hiding. Let them come to me.

Ed Gamble

Are you having any dressing on these leaves or are they just the green leaves in their pure, natural state?

Charlotte Church

I think they're just the green leaves, to be honest. I've already got so many flavours going on. I can't possibly add a dressing.

James Acaster

I don't like dressing. I've told you this before.

Ed Gamble

No, you like everything undressed, don't you?

James Acaster

Oh, I can't believe it. I can't believe it. I saw it. As soon as I said, I realised, 'oh no'. Here we go. Can't believe this has gone this way.

Charlotte Church

Well, sweetheart.

James Acaster

Let's get onto your dream drink.

Charlotte Church

I think I'm going to have a glass of Cloudy Bay.

Ed Gamble

Sauvignon Blanc? Is that right?

Charlotte Church

Yes, it's a New Zealand Sauvignon Blanc. And I think it was, like, really popular probably back in the 90s. And I don't drink it very often because it's expensive but it's lush.

Ed Gamble

I never used to really like white wine but I've had some New Zealand Sauvignon Blanc that is just really good.

James Acaster

Yes, I think wine comes up a lot on the pod for dream drink. But I think reds are heavily outweighing the whites. So it's nice to see someone repping the whites.

Charlotte Church

Yes, repping the white wine and destroying the stomach lining. I had to train myself to drink wine, though. When I started drinking as a teenager, all I could drink was, like, vodka in a mixer. You know, it was, like, I didn't really like the taste of alcohol, and particularly wine. Like it was just baffling to me how anybody would drink wine.



Ed Gamble

You're one of our only guests who's been responsible for introducing a new drink to the public consciousness as well, Charlotte.

James Acaster

What drink was that?

Ed Gamble

Do you not remember? Cheeky Vimto.

Charlotte Church

The Cheeky Vimto.

James Acaster

Oh, was that you? I mean, I know I've heard of a Cheeky Vimto. I didn't know you were the origin of that. Did you invent that?

Charlotte Church

I didn't invent it. I learnt it off a builder. A builder. He was staying at my mum and dad's hotel and he taught me about the Cheeky Vimto. I was just enamoured for a good few years with the Cheeky Vimto, mainly because I've got the palette of a four-year-old who doesn't eat very well. Essentially, the Cheeky Vimto was all about, if you were hungover and you had to do a second day of drinking, at a festival or something like that, then a few Cheeky Vimtos is just life-changing.

James Acaster

Remind me of the ingredients.

Charlotte Church

So it's Ruby Port, not Tawny Port. None of that bullshit. It's Ruby Port and a WKD blue. And it actually tastes like Vimto and it's like rocket fuel. But it gets you into, like, a phase of drunkenness where you're like, 'Yes, let's go' From being, like, 'I can't do it. I feel a bit sick and I really want to go home now.'

Ed Gamble

I think people graduate from that sort of stuff from when they're teenagers, right? Because, as a proper teen, I used to drink Turbo Shandies and things like that. You know, the Smirnoff ice and the lager. And then we convince ourselves we're much more grown-up now. And you see people in their thirties drinking Espresso Martinez. It's just the same thing.

Charlotte Church

Yes, absolutely. I totally agree. It's nonsense, really, we all just want to go back to the Turbo Shandy, Cheeky Vimto days.

James Acaster

Did that follow you around a bit, the Cheeky Vimto? Would you turn up at bars sometimes and they'll just make you one without you asking?

Charlotte Church

No, no. Everybody was like, 'She's got loads of money. I'm not giving her any free drinks.' Like Ed used to get drinks bought for me. I mean, I was ridiculous. I used to buy everybody drinks all the time, like whole bars full of people, drinks. But, I mean, it was loads of fun.

James Acaster

There was a moment there you said 'I used to buy people drinks all the time, whole bars full of people drinks' and then your eyes just suddenly, you had a faraway look in your eyes and you



weren't looking at us anymore. And I could tell you were someone else and then you returned to, 'Yes, but it was a lot of fun.'

Charlotte Church

It was, it was loads of fun. I loved that, sort of, carefree party, I suppose. And then, for me, as I've gotten older, I've got three kids now. And so, you know, your life becomes just more responsibility-laden. And that doesn't mean, like, I can still party and if I choose to go for it, then, I can party hard. But it's just so much less now than it used to be, which is great, obviously, but I did absolutely love those days of just, like, just dancing with wild abandon whilst having one shoe on and somebody's-. I was just wild, chaos and loads of fun.

Ed Gamble

Do you think when your kids start turning 18, will you sit them down and there'll be ceremonial handing-down of the Cheeky Vimto recipe?

James Acaster

Yes. 'You'll be needing this.'

Charlotte Church

I mean, it's sort of, yes, absolutely. I think it's sort of terrifying when you think about it in terms of your own kids and all of that. But, undoubtedly, they're definitely going to be a chip off the old block.

Ed Gamble

Yes, these are all phases we have to go through, I think. But you come out the other side and you end up with a lovely glass of Cloudy Bay.

Charlotte Church

Exactly.

James Acaster

And you got a treatment centre now so, like, you know, all the people-, do you ever stand there at the doors and you're watching people coming in and going, 'I think I bought this entire room of people drinks one night.' I'm the reason they're here.

James Acaster

So we arrive at your dream dessert. I'm excited, you said you have a sweet tooth as well as liking starters. So, I know I'm in good hands here.

Charlotte Church

I mean, again, I change this because, firstly, I thought I was going to go for a chocolate fondant with a pistachio ice cream because, you know, a well-made fondant, I mean, you really can't beat it. But then again, I went on the experiential side and I thought about, I've set up a learning community in Cardiff called the Awen project. And they do a lot of outdoor cooking and stuff. And we will often roast marshmallows on the fire and so there's just something so delightful and communal and comforting, I think. There's something deeply comforting about roasting marshmallows on a fire with potentially, like, some chocolate. Some melted chocolate to dip those into, with some really well-made hot chocolate. Potentially, some other bits and bobs of fruit. Obviously, fruit that we've grown ourselves. Berries and, you know, nice things we've grown ourselves that we can also dip in the chocolate. But, again, I've gone for something that's less of just, sort of, solid, what food I would go for and something more that, like, has a feeling to it, that's experiential. So roasted marshmallows around an open fire with hot chocolate, melted chocolate dipping sauce with berries that we've grown ourselves.



Ed Gamble

Yes.

James Acaster

100% behind every single bit of that. I absolutely love it. I was delighted with everything you were saying. I could have listened to that forever. I love it. I love toasted marshmallows. It was the highlight of every Acaster family barbecue, is that we do it at the end. They were going to get the marshmallows out, we got the big jumbo-sized marshmallows, obviously, and we put them on a fork each and just roast them over. Again, I really took my time with it. I'd toast them for a long time. I want them even-toasted all the way around.

Charlotte Church

Me too.

Ed Gamble

Your dad just eating raw marshmallows and putting his head over the fire.

James Acaster

Yes, my dad just putting it over his head like a feed bag and 'Oh'. Making undignified noises as he eats all the marshmallows out of the bag. But, like, I'd love it when you get that really crisp skin of the marshmallow and you can sometimes just pull it off of the whole marshmallow and, underneath it, it's this really, almost liquid, marshmallow that you got on its own. And really gooey and, oh, yes. I love this.

Charlotte Church

And you can just go for it again. You take that skin off and you can go for it again. But there's also, I think, a sense of achievement that comes with it because if you've taken your time, it's not caught fire, you've not been, you know, impatient enough that you've put it in the open flame. It's beautifully golden. I mean, it's incomparable.

James Acaster

Yes.

Ed Gamble

It sounds lovely and it sounds like a lovely, social interaction and hangout.

James Acaster

I don't like your tie. I do think

Ed Gamble

It's not my sort of thing. It's because my wife went through a phase of doing marshmallows over a candle in our sitting room.

Charlotte Church

Wow.

James Acaster

That's great.

Ed Gamble

No, it stinks. It absolutely stinks. It's horrible doing individual marshmallows over a scented candle.

James Acaster

That's very weird.



Charlotte Church

I've definitely done it on the gas hob. But I think that's sort of brilliant. Did it work, over a candle?

Ed Gamble

Yes, you've got to really take your time. So if you're okay with taking your time, you've got to really, to get every single bit covered, you can do it.

Charlotte Church

I think that's genius. And I wonder, if it is a scented candle then, would it have-, do you infuse the marshmallow a little bit. That's excellent. She's a wise woman.

Ed Gamble

No, she's a disgusting animal.

James Acaster

A chocolate-scented candle, maybe? Infuse it with the smell of the candle.

Ed Gamble

Well, you two, feel free to move into my house and you can all do marshmallows over candles and I'll go out to a city restaurant.

James Acaster

When you say it was a phase, how long did it last for?

Ed Gamble

A couple of months.

James Acaster

That's great, yes. Regularly doing that. Brilliant. I love hot chocolate as well. That's very exciting. I've got a velvetiser at home, regularly have hot chocolates.

Charlotte Church

What is that? What's a velvetiser?

James Acaster

It's like a pot that you put milk in it and then a hot chocolate sachet, but it's basically just ground up chocolate. And then you put that on an element of some sort, put a lid on it, press the 'on' button, and then it just basically heats the whole thing and churns it so that it-, you get a really velvety hot chocolate. So smooth, pristine.

Ed Gamble

That was the worst thing anyone could have ever bought you. To have hot chocolates that regularly.

Charlotte Church

I think that's amazing. You've just changed my life, James. That's like, I'm getting a velvetiser.

James Acaster

You're welcome. And put booze in there, if you like to have yourself a boozy hot chocolate.

Charlotte Church

Oh, wow. Wonderful. Thank you so much for sharing.

James Acaster

You're welcome. I love that you got the chocolate dip in as well with the fruits. I love dipping grapes, bananas, and strawberries into chocolate. They'll be my top three.



Charlotte Church

What sort of chocolate, though? Because I'm just a bit of a Cadbury's girl. Like, it's basic. It's not big, it's not clever. It's just some Cadbury's which should probably be their new slogan.

Ed Gamble

Yes.

James Acaster

I think, yes, brand-wise, I'm not picky. But I reckon melting a mixture of, like, I'd say, 70% of the chocolate that you're putting in is milk chocolate, and the other 30% is dark chocolate. Makes it really nice if it's melted chocolate.

Ed Gamble

You thought about this, I like it.

James Acaster

Yes, that's my tip.

Ed Gamble

But you actually can't mess with dairy milk, though. Really, like, it sounds basic but dairy milk melted or otherwise is pretty much up there, isn't it? But I also do like the proper dark stuff as well.

James Acaster

Yes, I really like dark chocolate. Actually, you know what, I like them all. I'm not even going to pretend like.

Charlotte Church

But also, like, there's crazy health benefits, isn't it, when you get, like, 70% cacao and up. It's like super good for your health.

Ed Gamble

But I think that's always predicated when people say, 'And if you have like an 80% dark chocolate, you won't want a lot of it. You can just have a couple of squares then you can just leave it.' Nope, not true. The whole bar, down, just as bad as milk chocolate.

James Acaster

Yes, just chomp it all down.

Ed Gamble

Yes.

James Acaster

It's chocolate. Are those the fruits that you're going to have, that you're going to dip in the chocolate, by the way?

Charlotte Church

Yes, absolutely, why not?

James Acaster

Well don't let me sway you, I'm just saying, I really want to shout out. Also, I have one other question about this dessert but I'll let you do the fruits first.



Ed Gamble

I'll just quickly say, Charlotte did say that she wanted to have fruits that they've grown themselves. And I'm not sure, however good their land is there, I'm not sure they're growing bananas.

Charlotte Church

We could grow bananas.

James Acaster

Aha, so fuck you Ed.

Ed Gamble

Bananas?

Charlotte Church

Yes, absolutely. You just need-, yes, we can grow bananas if we had, like, a polytunnel. Maybe you keep it at a certain temperature, but you can do that. You can grow all sorts of fabulous things. We can definitely grow some lovely wild strawberries. We could probably, if we've got some slightly heated polytunnels, grow some bananas. We can definitely grow some grapes. I love growing raspberries. Raspberries are super easy to grow. And then, if you've planted them in the ground, they spread. They go all over the place and then you've got an abundance of raspberries which is always great. Yes, and I think we'll have some blueberries as well because blueberries are so good. So they're all the fruits that would be on offer for dipping.

James Acaster

Wonderful. Final question. For toasting the marshmallows, would you like to go back to that volcano with the stream of lava, and toast the marshmallows over the lava?

Charlotte Church

No, because I've got everything I need right there at the campfire.

James Acaster

Sure.

Ed Gamble

That's great. One of my favourite things is when James offers up a flight of fancy and a guest just goes, 'Come on mate'.

Charlotte Church

Not only is there too much sulphur in the air there, and I've just left all of my loved ones behind who are singing songs and storytelling.

James Acaster

Well, a really long stick.

Ed Gamble

Yes, you have to explain to your family that you've got to go to a volcano now because the waterfall creep wants you to go there.

James Acaster

That one, that guy who was encouraging me to get under the waterfall wants me to go near a volcano now, for some reason.

Charlotte Church

Ah, you're funny bunnies.



James Acaster

Thank you. So this is, I mean, I'm going to read you back your menu now.

Charlotte Church

Amazing.

James Acaster

And see how you feel about it. Water, you wanted a goblet held under a waterfall. The less said about that, the better. Poppadoms or bread, you want a diverse breadbasket. Focaccia, sourdough seeded, and butter with black volcanic salt. Also, you agreed to whipped butter. Starter, you would like a French onion soup with Gruyère and a massive crouton and your fresh herbs.

Ed Gamble

Oh, man. You're panicking so much. It's great.

James Acaster

And you would like the cheese plate on the side. Main course, teppanyaki grill cooked by Stewart Lee and Mariah Carey. Side dish, green leaves and really salty chips back and forth. Drink, a glass of Cloudy Bay Sauvignon Blanc. And, dessert, toasted marshmallows with hot chocolate, melted chocolate dip, and home-grown fruit, around the campfire with your loved ones.

Charlotte Church

Yes, I mean, Stewart and Mariah are quite welcome to join us. I'm sure they have loads of great stories and, you know, Mariah will be great for the kumbaya that will inevitably come.

Ed Gamble

Amazing.

James Acaster

That would be good. I'd like to see Mariah Carey sing kumbaya.

Ed Gamble

That's great. That would be lovely.

Charlotte Church

But I'm happy with that. That is actually, even though, I mean, it's a real journey, that meal, isn't it?

Ed Gamble

Yes, that's what we like though. You've transported us to so many different places, we're connecting with nature, we've got stuff from your past, stuff from your present. It's lovely. I think it's a beautiful menu.

James Acaster

Yes.

Charlotte Church

Great.

James Acaster

And it is popping up little guests.

Ed Gamble

It's a real shame what James did quite earlier on in the episode but, apart from that, I think.



James Acaster

I would like to apologise, actually, before you go. Charlotte, I would like to apologise. I am trying to work on it. I'm a randy little boy and I sometimes act out on the podcast or when I'm feeling frustrated and-

Charlotte Church

Oh, sweetheart.

James Acaster

So I apologise so much for all the grubby things I've said.

Charlotte Church

Oh, I think we've pushed them onto you, to be fair, sweet pea.

James Acaster

Yes.

Ed Gamble

Well, you say that, I saw earlier he's got his trunks on under his brief.

James Acaster

I've not got my trunks on. I'm not under a waterfall.

Ed Gamble

Charlotte, you've been absolutely brilliant. Thank you so much for coming to the dream restaurant.

Charlotte Church

Ah, it has been absolutely wonderful. Thank you.

Ed Gamble

Well, there we are. What a wonderful menu. So nice to meet Charlotte Church. What a lot of fun she was and thank god, she's finally exposed your true character, James.

James Acaster

I can't believe it. This is the episode that does it, I guess. That's what I've to be like for more episodes from now on. I've got to adopt the persona of the grubby perv with anyone that we interview.

Ed Gamble

That was such a fun episode. And she didn't say rosemary, James.

James Acaster

Didn't say rosemary? She gets to stay in the dream restaurant.

Ed Gamble

Which is, you know. I wouldn't have wanted to.

James Acaster

And I was actually a bit worried because, you know, rosemary actually is, most people like it. And so I was a bit worried that, actually, what have I done there? Am I about to kick Charlotte Church out?

Ed Gamble

And she did mention getting some fresh herbs from her garden. So we came pretty close there.



James Acaster

There's a lot of fresh herbs in the garden. Yes, I mean, some people might think, 'Oh, you guys didn't drill down into what the fresh herbs were.' But it was going on top of a French soup.

Ed Gamble

You wouldn't put a rosemary on French onion soup.

James Acaster

Are you kidding me?

Ed Gamble

And you wouldn't have them in green leaves or anything as well. So she wouldn't even dip them in chocolate. Chill out.

James Acaster

Yes, and they're not teppanyaki grill.

Ed Gamble

No, they're not teppanyaki grill. Exactly. Charlotte Church got to stay in the dream restaurant and she got to stay in her Dream Build.

James Acaster

Yes, a very exciting TV show. Really, Tuesdays 9 p.m. Charlotte Church's Dream Build. And you can stream it on Discovery Plus.

Ed Gamble

Yes, you can. Well done, James, great plug.

James Acaster

Yes.

Ed Gamble

Speaking of plugs.

James Acaster

Yes?

Ed Gamble

If you are listening to this on the day it came out, tomorrow, my tour starts. Ed Gamble Electric. edgamble.co.uk for tickets. I'm in Leicester tomorrow then I go to Birmingham then I go to Margate then I go to Bexhill and then we go everywhere else.

James Acaster

He's a funny bunny.

Ed Gamble

I'm a funny bunny. That was my favourite moment in the whole recording, James.

James Acaster

Yes.

Ed Gamble

She said, 'You two are funny bunnies.' And you went, 'Thank you.' It was very polite. It was nice of you.



James Acaster

Yes, I've been polite.

Ed Gamble

Anything you want to plug. James?

James Acaster

No, well, not really. Not at the minute.

Ed Gamble

No, James hasn't anything to plug.

James Acaster

Nothing.

Ed Gamble

Thank you very much for listening and we will see you next week.

James Acaster

Bye.