



# Off Menu – Ep179 – Yotam Ottolenghi

## **Ed Gamble**

Welcome to the Off Menu podcast, cracking open the coconut of conversation and pouring out the humour milk from within. Hello James.

## **James Acaster**

Hello Ed Gamble, my name is James Acaster, together we own the Dream Restaurant, we invite a guest in every single week and we ask them their favourite ever starter, main course, dessert, side dish and drink. This week our guest is Yotam Ottolenghi.

## **Ed Gamble**

Yotam Ottolenghi, a wonderful chef.

## **James Acaster**

Superstar chef.

## **Ed Gamble**

General chef and food superstar, right?

## **James Acaster**

Yes, absolutely. He has got so many-, I mean, there are people are massive Ottolenghi fans who will be very excited about this episode, people really fascinated with how he comes up with recipes. His restaurants are amazing as well, I'm sure a lot of people want to hear about that.

## **Ed Gamble**

His books.

## **James Acaster**

Yes.

## **Ed Gamble**

I read them like books James, like actual books.

## **James Acaster**

Like a novel.

## **Ed Gamble**

Like a novel, my God, the guy is fantastic.

## **James Acaster**

Speaking of which, he has got a new book out of course.



**Ed Gamble**

He has got a new book out, of course, the Ottolenghi Test Kitchen, Extra Good Things. It's the second in the series of the Ottolenghi Test Kitchen books. This is really interesting, I've had a look through it, it's incredible recipes like always, but then they've all got a condiment or a little extra twist that you can then take and use on other things.

**James Acaster**

This is great, because that gets you properly thinking like a chef, right?

**Ed Gamble**

It gets you thinking like a chef, there's some sprinkle stuff that you do, like an everything seasoning on one of the dishes, and then you can take that and put it on eggs.

**James Acaster**

Great, I've actually got some everything seasoning in the cupboard, and I don't know what to put it on.

**Ed Gamble**

I know the point of the book is you don't need to cook anything, you've just got it in your cupboard. I think he means you've got to do your own, in the book.

**James Acaster**

I still would like tips of what to put the one that I've got on.

**Ed Gamble**

You can put them on eggs. Is it the one from Halen Môn?

**James Acaster**

Yes.

**Ed Gamble**

Yes, I put it on some fried eggs, it was fucking delicious.

**James Acaster**

Great, I'm going to do that. Thank you Ed.

**Ed Gamble**

But you should absolutely go and get Ottolenghi's new book. It's the Ottolenghi Test Kitchen, so it's Yotam himself and Noor Murad and the rest of the Test Kitchen super team. I mean, look, smokey sweet nuts spooned onto oven fries and used to top humus the next day. It's all great, adaptable, flexible stuff.

**James Acaster**

I will definitely be asking Yotam more about the book in the episode as well. But, here's the thing, he better get that promo in pretty earlier because if he says the secret ingredient, an ingredient which we



deem to be unacceptable, we will throw Yotam Ottolenghi out of the dream restaurant. This week, the secret ingredient is, mild cheddar.

**Ed Gamble**

What is the point?

**James Acaster**

I want to taste it. Look, people know, people have seen me flip my lid about cheese on here, but that doesn't mean that I prefer mild cheeses, to strong cheese. I actually prefer the strong ones.

**Ed Gamble**

You've got to feel it.

**James Acaster**

Yes, what's the point of eating cheese if you can't even taste it and it's just the texture and that's it. It's not that the texture of cheddar is the best thing about it, is it?

**Ed Gamble**

Come on cheese, don't pat me on the cheek, pull my trousers down and put your finger up my butt.

**James Acaster**

Yes, please. That's all you want, put your cheesy finger up my-, well, I was going to say cheesy B. But I don't think my B is that cheesy.

**Ed Gamble**

B's not cheesy, the F is cheesy.

**James Acaster**

Yes.

**Ed Gamble**

Finger.

**James Acaster**

Yes, yes.

**Ed Gamble**

Benito looked confused and also devastated, by that entire riff.

**James Acaster**

Also, if Yotam Ottolenghi does choose mild cheddar, I guess we will have to say, 'Oh what? You want a cheesy finger up your B?'



**Ed Gamble**

Yes, you're telling me Yotam Ottolenghi, that you don't want a cheesy F, up your cheesy B.

**James Acaster**

Yes, what is your problem?

**Ed Gamble**

See ya later, Yotam becomes Gotam. Get out of here.

**James Acaster**

We will be forced to say that to him, and I don't want to.

**Ed Gamble**

No.

**James Acaster**

But if he uses mild cheddar.

**Ed Gamble**

More like Nottolenghi.

**James Acaster**

That's good. Gotam Nottolenghi.

**Ed Gamble**

Yes, I hope he does pick mild cheddar now.

**James Acaster**

Yes and we will have to say that.

**Ed Gamble**

Gareth Edwards picked mild cheddar and I completely agree with you Gareth Edwards.

**James Acaster**

I think Gareth Edwards has chosen ingredients in the past, it's just that we haven't turned his name into a chant or anything, because it's quite a normal name.

**Ed Gamble**

Quite a normal name.

**James Acaster**

Gareth Edwards, I've heard that before.



**Ed Gamble**

Cheers Gareth.

**James Acaster**

It's a nice name though.

**Ed Gamble**

Yes, lovely name.

**James Acaster**

World record breaker, Gareth Edwards, triple jump?

**Ed Gamble**

That's Jonathan Edwards. Gareth Edwards is a rugby player isn't he?

**James Acaster**

Oh, maybe.

**Ed Gamble**

No, I'm thinking of another one.

**James Acaster**

Maybe he broke a record or two, the rugby player.

**Ed Gamble**

So, without further ado, this is the Off Menu Menu of

**James Acaster**

Yotam Ottolenghi.

**Ed Gamble**

Welcome Yotam, to the Dream Restaurant.

**Yotam Ottolenghi**

Nice to be here.

**James Acaster**

Welcome Yotam Ottolenghi to the Dream Restaurant, we've been expecting you for some time.

**Ed Gamble**

Here we are.

**James Acaster**

I've just had lunch and my mouth doesn't work.



**Yotam Ottolenghi**  
What did you have?

**James Acaster**  
Have you heard of Farmer J Finsbury?

**Yotam Ottolenghi**  
No.

**James Acaster**  
Well, so got some Farmer grains, some chicken and some-, there's a little hispi cabbage and miso aubergine side that they do and a chickpea salad, in a little tray.

**Yotam Ottolenghi**  
All the nutrients you need.

**Ed Gamble**  
Yes, exactly. Yes, miso, aubergine, you know.

**Yotam Ottolenghi**  
Chickpeas you said?

**James Acaster**  
Yes, chickpeas lurking in a little-,

**Yotam Ottolenghi**  
What else do you need? It sounds good.

**James Acaster**  
With some peppers and some tomatoes in there.

**Yotam Ottolenghi**  
Sounds delicious

**Ed Gamble**  
We went light and healthy for lunch, because on these long record days if we go crazy at lunch then you can always tell in the episode.

**Yotam Ottolenghi**  
Actually, when I was telling you about the tour that I'm doing with Noor and one of the stops, I can't remember where it was, I thought, I decided we were going to have-, we had this big ramen bowl. And it wasn't the same, it was just not the same. If you eat something, I don't know, it just brings the energy down.



**Ed Gamble**

It massively does and yes, when you're touring around, you want to try places. You want to try new places. But it's so hard, that you-

**Yotam Ottolenghi**

It's hard to try, because you arrive, you're there, you do your sound check and all that, you do the thing, then it's like 10:30 or 11, and who wants to eat then, right? I have this thing, I did a tour in America recently and I had a different interviewer in every city and I just asked them where to eat at breakfast. I changed it before I left, so I'd show up at 9 o'clock in the morning in some obscure taco place and they'd go like-, they're scratching their eyes and getting the place ready and here I come, like ready. Because it says they open at 9:30, although nobody does.

**Ed Gamble**

That's a good thing to do in America though, particularly, the breakfast, you know that you're going to get some good stuff.

**Yotam Ottolenghi**

Also, a lot of places where they've got a community, like all the south American and Mexican and all that, often those places do great breakfasts and that's where you want to try, so I managed to do that.

**Ed Gamble**

In the UK, you're playing with fire breakfast wise, because you're going to rock up for the best breakfast, it's going to be one of those ones on a huge platter, where it has been on the front page of the Daily Mail for having 800,000 calories in it or something.

**James Acaster**

I find that the more that someone boasts about how good their full English is, the worst the full English is.

**Yotam Ottolenghi**

Really, it's just about the size, right?

**James Acaster**

Yes, if they go, 'Oh, you must've heard about it?' At a B&B or something, and they're like, 'Our full English breakfast is the best.' It's going to be horrendous.

**Yotam Ottolenghi**

Unless you make your own-, the beans always come from a can? How good can it get? Unless you go, you cook your own beans and do your own sour dough, etc, but that's not an English breakfast anymore.

**Ed Gamble**

Exactly, then you're talking posh brunch places.



**Yotam Ottolenghi**

Yes, so it's pretentious. I mean, there's a limit to how good it can get. I'm going to get cancelled for this.

**Ed Gamble**

I'll come down with you, because I completely agree.

**James Acaster**

We'll get cancelled for this. Your careers are over. We were saying, like, light and healthy, that's what I would associate with a lot of your restaurants and whenever I want something that makes me feel like I've just eaten a nice healthy meal, but delicious. I go to a lot of your places, is that one of the things you set out to do when you started opening restaurants?

**Yotam Ottolenghi**

No.

**Ed Gamble**

Great question James.

**James Acaster**

Points for the question.

**Yotam Ottolenghi**

No, I guess the thing is, I didn't set out to do anything, in a sense things just happened in a particular way. Then when you look back, it all makes sense. People eat more vegetables now, they want to eat more vegetables, they feel like it's the right thing to do for them, for the environment, for a whole load of reasons. Like for me, when Sammy and I started Ottolenghi, we're celebrating 20 years this year, we started in 2002.

**James Acaster**

Congratulations.

**Yotam Ottolenghi**

Thank you, it was just all about what we knew looked great, tasted great, kept well on the display, all these things that looked good. So, it was a little bit opportunistic, but also we loved cooking and eating back home in Jerusalem when we were growing up, it's a very vegetable focused kind of environment. It made a lot of sense, you're both nodding at me, like-

**Ed Gamble**

No, I'm loving it, I'm there.

**James Acaster**

Also, I was thinking about, so ROVI is one of my favourite restaurants, just full stop. I love going there.





**Yotam Ottolenghi**

Thank you.

**James Acaster**

I was just thinking about the chewy carrots.

**Yotam Ottolenghi**

The chewy carrots.

**James Acaster**

And how much I love the chewy carrots, when you said that, I was like, 'Yes, that makes sense, that makes sense because the chewy carrots were great.'

**Yotam Ottolenghi**

It's like the essence of carrots, isn't it, because it cooks for a long time. I think what I try to do, and even subconsciously is to try to really hone in on what makes that vegetable come to life. Whether it's a carrot or cauliflower, even things like swede and turnip. They're hard nuts to crack aren't they?

**James Acaster**

Yes, yes.

**Yotam Ottolenghi**

When you slow cook things, you distil the flavour, but also on the opposite, it's also true I guess if you kind of quickly chargrill and you leave everything inside and you come in with all your little tricks. Your salsas and your marinades and the sprinkles and all that. That also makes a huge difference.

**Ed Gamble**

That forms the heart of the new book, right? It's the little tricks.

**Yotam Ottolenghi**

Yes, extra good things, which comes to the Ottolenghi Test Kitchen. It is about wonderful condiments that you can add-, actually, no you extract them from cooking. Each recipe is a stand-alone, but it also has something you can take away. You can have a marinade or a sauce or a pickle or a sprinkle. That you take it with you to your next meal, so essentially we say, Noor Morad, who is my co-author, we say you can Ottolenghify anything, you can Ottolenghify a roast potato, you can Ottolenghify a plate of scrambled eggs by using all these condiments. I guess it came a little bit from lockdown, where we were all struggling to cook all the time and then the condiments became the kings of the fridge and the kitchen. You get those pickles and chilli sauces and chilli oils and things, so essentially you didn't need to cook a whole meal to get all that flavour, that's in a nutshell.

**James Acaster**

Have you always had a good instinct for what-, because I always think, I might have some sauces or some things left over from other dishes I've had. Then I get a real bright idea that I'm going to put it with



the thing that I've made. And because I don't have very good instincts, then it's pretty much always a bad combination.

**Yotam Ottolenghi**

Tell us about a few of them?

**Ed Gamble**

Yes, I'm going to need an example of this.

**James Acaster**

Well, so what's a good example? A lot of the time, if I get a take away and I might, like, serve myself up whatever from the pot and I'll leave a lot of the sauce in there maybe, if I get all the chunks of chicken and some sauce there. But then I've left behind the curry sauce and then the next day, 'Oh, I've got this other thing I'm making. I'm going to chuck that curry sauce in the bolognese.' Let's see what that's like. Real bad.

**Yotam Ottolenghi**

Yes, I think enough said, right?

**Ed Gamble**

In the book, I'm fairly sure, having had a very quick look, very excited to cook from it, but you're not cooking a curry and then going straight in the sauce out and pour it all over your pudding? Or, whatever.

**Yotam Ottolenghi**

Which is maybe-,

**James Acaster**

It was a take away curry actually, that's very important.

**Ed Gamble**

I was immediately drawn to the blooming leeks recipe.

**Yotam Ottolenghi**

The blooming leeks, yes they're delicious.

**Ed Gamble**

I love blooming onion every time I go to the states, I have a blooming onion. But blooming leeks sounds fantastic.

**Yotam Ottolenghi**

Blooming onion, technically Noor was working on it for a while and it just didn't work. Then I said to her, 'Well, why don't you do the leeks.' They ended up looking like octopus, they're spread out like that and then with a batter, you fry them and they taste absolutely delicious. No, so I guess the sauces or the take outs are some things that-, we kind of spent quite a lot of time thinking what goes with what. Looking



through the book, so there are these sections at the beginning, like with eggs. You've got fresh chilli sauce, hot sauce, cortado, Kalbi butter, dukkah and all those things. There's a whole list of condiments that you can put on your eggs. So, essentially once you've cooked the dish and you've got that little jar on the side, you can go to those opening pages and decide what you want to use it for.

**Ed Gamble**

It's such a clever concept, that I've not seen before. It's rare to find a cook book that's a new, an actual new concept.

**Yotam Ottolenghi**

I think we didn't really have a concept, in the sense that we were looking for a long time to tell the story of Ottolenghi Test Kitchen, which we love spending time in and all the dynamics of what's going on there. The skills that we're developing and then the pandemic hit, and we realised actually that's the solution. Because all of a sudden it was about, first off the Test Kitchen book was called Shelf Love and it was about using up ingredients that you happen to have in your cupboards. Barley and chickpeas and polenta, and all that stuff that just sits there and you never touch it, or you go and buy yourself a fillet of cod or something. This book is all about the condiments, how do you create huge flavours for cooking. As I said, to save you from cooking from scratch, every single day, which is kind of a nightmare isn't it?

**Ed Gamble**

Yes.

**Yotam Ottolenghi**

Three times a day.

**Ed Gamble**

That ingredient thing as well, whenever I'll be like, 'I want to cook something.' And then it might be polenta in the dish or a spice that I don't have, I'll be like, 'Right, I'm going to go and do a big shop and buy all of these things.' Then I just know, I'm like, 'Right, I'm going to use that, I'm going to put that up there.' I'm never using that again. Bye-bye forever, see you at the back of the cupboard.

**James Acaster**

Until I move house. Then weirdly I'm going to make the decision to take you with me again.

**Yotam Ottolenghi**

Even though it has expired already, like 2 months ago.

**James Acaster**

I need a recipe that involves a lot of soy sauce, because every time I get a take away sushi, which I do quite a bit actually, there's not a box you can tick on Deliveroo that says, 'Please don't send another pot of soy sauce.'



**Yotam Ottolenghi**

First of all I think you should bring it up with Deliveroo, because I do agree that it's too much soy sauce sometimes. With every sushi delivery and you do get stuck with quite a lot.

**Ed Gamble**

Also, I worry that that's because I order so much sushi they assume there's maybe ten to twelve people there and you're having a sushi party. Because they also send eight pairs of chopsticks and you're like, 'No, that was for me unfortunately.'

**James Acaster**

They assume Ed runs a sushi restaurant.

**Ed Gamble**

I run a sushi restaurant that makes no profit whatsoever because i just order it from another sushi restaurant.

**Yotam Ottolenghi**

I think there's actually a solution to all your little sushi's, all your little soy sauce bottles. That is that you can almost throw it into almost anything, any stew or any-, even if you make a pasta sauce, a meaty pasta sauce, like a ragu style. You put some soy sauce in there and you get all that umami and you didn't throw it away. It's so basic, you know, people sometimes use stock cubes, right, to get all this MSG flavour, umami, soy does the same. Then you just throw it in there and you get the flavour.

**James Acaster**

Great.

**Ed Gamble**

Amazing.

**James Acaster**

Well, that's what I'll do.

**Ed Gamble**

There you go, solved, problem solved.

**James Acaster**

Yes, this is great, I can't wait to cook a stew now. Also, just because you were talking about leeks earlier, the leeks at ROVI with the pecorino, are one of my favourite things. Last time I went there, it wasn't on the menu though, so if you could have a word.

**Yotam Ottolenghi**

You know, there is something about changing menus. Chefs love to change menus and customers don't like changing menus. Where their worlds collide, like, I go to the chefs in my restaurants and we have these conversations often about menus. They go, like, 'This was on the menu for three weeks already,



it's so boring.' I said, 'Who goes into one restaurant more than twice in three weeks? What are the chances that someone will try that again?' In reality, it is a bit of an issue, because I think sometimes things that should stay longer and are a classic in a customer's eye, it's not really for the chefs, the chefs want to push again. In my restaurant, in our restaurant I should say, the chefs have creative freedom to do those things. I mean, ROVI, Neil does an amazing job and he loves to change the menu all the time. We had that, when we just opened ROVI, which was five years ago, we had these corn ribs on the menu, you know what they are, right? Just for the audience, for the listeners, you take a whole corn cob and you cut length ways through the core, twice, so you get quartered but lengthways. Then when you deep fry them, they bend and they turn into what looks like a rib, and we put it on our menu, when we just started, we had some kind of seaweed butter. Neither Neil or I invented, I saw it from Momofuku, they were doing it in New York at the time. David Chang, not him, but one of his chefs, and I said, like, 'Let's do it.' And it became a huge hit and then later on in the year, it was like October and the corn was not that nice anymore. So, we took it off the menu, and people just called to cancel their reservations. They go, 'We heard the corn is not on. Okay, so I'm going to cancel.' I'm like, my God, this is mad, you're literally not going to give us a chance just because we don't have corn on the menu.

**James Acaster**

We don't believe you could do it again with a different dish.

**Ed Gamble**

Now the corn ribs are everywhere, right?

**James Acaster**

Yes, they're big. I was making those all the way through lockdown at home. I was just chopping up corn.

**Yotam Ottolenghi**

It's hard isn't it?

**James Acaster**

I was burning myself, all the time, sure. All the oil spitting all over me, but it was worth it every time.

**Yotam Ottolenghi**

Seriously, it has become phenomenally popular within a very short amount of time, to the extent that I've seen it on Sainsbury's ads.

**James Acaster**

Yes.

**Yotam Ottolenghi**

In big stations, they always follow the trend and put the things on. You know something has become completely commonplace once Sainsbury's had put one of these big ads in the train stations.

**Ed Gamble**

They look beautiful as well.



**Yotam Ottolenghi**

They do look great, they look great.

**James Acaster**

Would you say the celeriac shawarma is one of those dishes now at ROVI, if you took that off people would kick off?

**Yotam Ottolenghi**

Yes, celeriac shawarma is definitely something that we can't take off. Also, that we've got the Jerusalem mixed grill and I remember when we did the celeriac shawarma. We wanted to do that when Neil was working in the Test Kitchen, working on the menu. We thought, 'It's a vegetable really.' It's kind of a vegetable restaurant, or at least mostly vegetables. We want to get these intense flavours of the shawarma. Each person added something, we cooked it slowly, we added the spices and the killer ingredient was something called pkaila which is a north African, Tunisian, mostly condiment which involves spinach or chard, cooked for a very, very long time in olive oil. I'm talking like hours until it becomes black and like the essence of spinach. It's traditional, they used to have it in jars on the side of the cooker, that would be the condiment of choice. When we added that to the sour cream and the chilli sauce, etc, it just turned everything around. We had all the components that we needed and I'm just mentioning that because it's just this whole notion that goes back to extra good things. I'm not doing it to sell the book, but I'm just saying cultures have a condiment, you know, like we have mayonnaise and ketchup that we have- buy from Hellmann's but actually they used to have, like, home made condiments that were always there even before refrigeration. That's, like, what's sauerkraut is all about or kimchi, and that is the flavour of the culture, you know, that's the thing that they put in and it's, like, always there, it keeps and it's so flavoursome.

**James Acaster**

We always start with still or sparkling water.

**Yotam Ottolenghi**

Oh, I always have sparkling water. I almost can't drink still water.

**Ed Gamble**

Really?

**Yotam Ottolenghi**

I do, but I love sparkling water. I get it from my dad, like, in the old days, so, I'm in my 50s so you can imagine how far we go, he used to have that siphon thing, you know, like, with-

**Ed Gamble**

Like with the little tap on it, or?



**Yotam Ottolenghi**

Yes, with the little-, you get these, kind of, metal siphon bottles of gas and you put them on and then you, sort of-, he had for whipped cream kind of thing, yes. So, we had that at home and my dad as well and I'm the same, like, would only drink sparkling water. He would rather go to the desert, no water, parched, but he'd have sparkling water was just his thing, and here I go get still water from you guys.

**Ed Gamble**

Yes no, we don't even offer it in real life in the studio. So, even first thing in the morning?

**Yotam Ottolenghi**

I don't drink first thing in the morning, but I do love sparkling water, yes, it's like just a thing. It just feels alive. I know some people say even on your show people said, 'Oh, it's got this, kind of, not a water flavour, right, like it doesn't taste like pure water.' I don't have that problem, I just like to drink sparkling water.

**James Acaster**

What does still water taste like to you?

**Yotam Ottolenghi**

It's, like, you know before you get your first electric toothbrush and then you have to go back to manual toothbrush and it just doesn't do the thing?

**James Acaster**

Yes.

**Yotam Ottolenghi**

Yes, that's the difference

**Ed Gamble**

Yeah, oh that's so funny

**Yotam Ottolenghi**

That's what it feels like.

**Ed Gamble**

Particularly potent for me because I went away for the weekend and I didn't take my electric so I had to buy a manual.

**James Acaster**

How was that?

**Ed Gamble**

Well, it was like I was going back to still water.



**James Acaster**

Well, isn't it, you feel like you just haven't even cleaned your teeth, it's, like, 'What's the point in this?'

**Ed Gamble**

So, why doesn't my hand vibrate up and down?

**James Acaster**

And yet my mouth is bleeding.

**Yotam Ottolenghi**

It doesn't do the thing does it?

**Ed Gamble**

No.

**Yotam Ottolenghi**

It just doesn't do it.

**Ed Gamble**

You need the thing. And I like that the electric toothbrush tells me when to move onto the next bit, when it goes brr, brr.

**Yotam Ottolenghi**

Yes.

**James Acaster**

Yes.

**Ed Gamble**

Time to move on.

**James Acaster**

That's good. Yes, no, well, that makes sense now. Maybe now that's it. I'm just going to have sparkling water forever. I'll just feel-,

**Yotam Ottolenghi**

Yes.

**Ed Gamble**

Well, you had a similar thing with coke of course.

**James Acaster**

I did have a similar thing with coke.





**Yotam Ottolenghi**

What was it?

**James Acaster**

Well, I used to drink Coca-Cola one night and then I just quit caffeine completely and for five years just didn't drink anything with any caffeine in it at all, and then after those five years I started drinking Diet Coke, and actually now because it's been so long since I've had a normal full fat coke, Diet Coke just tastes like full fat Coca-Cola.

**Yotam Ottolenghi**

Perfect.

**Ed Gamble**

There you go.

**Yotam Ottolenghi**

Yes. No sugar.

**James Acaster**

Good story.

**Ed Gamble**

It's another good story from you.

**James Acaster**

It's a pretty good story from me.

**Yotam Ottolenghi**

Yes, and you did need to take a long break though.

**James Acaster**

Yes, yes.

**Yotam Ottolenghi**

Those were hard times weren't they?

**James Acaster**

Yes, I mean, I think if I was taking that break knowing that what I was trying to achieve was to make Diet Coke taste like Coca-Cola it would have been harder to do the five year break.

**Ed Gamble**

Yes.



**James Acaster**

But as it was I was, like, you know, I just want to stop drinking caffeine for a bit because it's staining my teeth too much is what my dentist told me.

**Ed Gamble**

Oh really?

**Yotam Ottolenghi**

So, you did it for you teeth?

**James Acaster**

Yes, yes. My dentist was, like, 'You've got to stop this.' But also I accidentally gave it up because we ran out of, like, coffee and tea in the house and I just-

**Ed Gamble**

For five years?

**James Acaster**

For a month.

**Ed Gamble**

Right.

**James Acaster**

And I just didn't both replacing it. And then I realised, 'Oh, I've gone a month without having it.' So, I thought, 'In for a penny.'

**Ed Gamble**

So, are you drinking so much coke that your dentist had to-

**James Acaster**

Not coke, it was cups of tea.

**Yotam Ottolenghi**

Coffee and tea.

**Ed Gamble**

Oh right.

**James Acaster**

Cups of tea all the time, and she was, like, 'Just stop this.'



**Yotam Ottolenghi**

And what about the red wine? Did you give up the red wine because that is supposed to have that same effect, right?

**Ed Gamble**

Yes.

**James Acaster**

I don't really drink red wine that much so luckily that wasn't as much of an issue. So, whenever I did have that that was okay. But, you know, also, like, yes, obviously curries. We talk about the big old stainers.

**Ed Gamble**

Yes, turmeric I guess is-

**James Acaster**

Oh man, turmeric, don't get me started on turmeric man. The other day I was really giving myself a hard time, being, like, 'You're so unhealthy James. You need to start eating healthier.' And I was, like, 'I'm going to go into the shop and get something healthy.' Got a turmeric shot. Great, this is the new me. I drank the turmeric shot all the way down, glug, glug, glug. And I completely drained it, and then I went to put the lid back on the turmeric shot bottle, fumbled it, the empty bottle goes down, bounces off the pavement and all the excess turmeric sprays up my leg and completely stains my trousers yellow and I look like a Jackass. So, that's what you get for trying to do something good.

**Yotam Ottolenghi**

Oh-,

**Ed Gamble**

Well, that jumper used to be white.

**James Acaster**

Yes, I'm wearing a yellow jumper for the listeners.

**Yotam Ottolenghi**

I'm just saying, he's wearing a turmeric coloured jumper.

**James Acaster**

Exactly, that's what happened.

**Yotam Ottolenghi**

You turmeric proofed your jumper.

**James Acaster**

Yes, yes, that is all I can wear now is turmeric coloured stuff so that I don't get punked again.



**Ed Gamble**

That's got to be the-,

**James Acaster**

Never try and do a good thing because-,

**Ed Gamble**

That's got to be the worst stain, right? Turmeric's got to be the most staining spice-,

**Yotam Ottolenghi**

It does not come off, yes. Turmeric is bad, I think. Well, beetroot famously doesn't really come off and pomegranate. Like, we used to have pomegranates and I've told this story before but my mum-, and I had a younger brother, she would make us go naked to the garden to eat our pomegranates. I mean, just imagine that. Ages, like, five and three, we'd go out to the garden with pomegranates, eat them, come back to the house.

**James Acaster**

Yes.

**Ed Gamble**

That's sensible. That's just sensible. That's good, sort of, economy of staining.

**Yotam Ottolenghi**

But it's a good image isn't it?

**James Acaster**

Yes, yes, to be completely naked. I think I'd at least want to buy some pomegranate pants.

**Ed Gamble**

Yes.

**James Acaster**

I'd be, like, 'Just at least buy me some pomegranate coloured pants mum.'

**Ed Gamble**

Yes.

**James Acaster**

So that I can have them for my pomegranate garden trips.

**Yotam Ottolenghi**

That's right.



**Ed Gamble**

It would make you think twice about wanting a pomegranate as well though wouldn't it? You'd be, like, 'I want a pomegranate but I want to keep my clothes on.'

**James Acaster**

Yes.

**Yotam Ottolenghi**

Yes, I mean, these days, you know, often you buy a pomegranate already, like, the seeds taken out in a little tub in the supermarket, that's pretty safe.

**James Acaster**

Yes. That would be a good-, if anyone's, you know, wanting to look for some sort of new diet fad, it might be good to be, like, 'The rule is every time you want to eat something you have to eat it naked in the garden.' And people would consider, 'How much do I want this?'

**Ed Gamble**

Yes, it's true.

**Yotam Ottolenghi**

Yes, actually it is true, and you don't always want to join them do you, necessarily.

**James Acaster**

No.

**Yotam Ottolenghi**

I mean, people would be eating on their own a lot.

**Ed Gamble**

Yes, in the garden, naked, alone.

**Yotam Ottolenghi**

I mean, most people.

**James Acaster**

Yes. Poppadoms or bread? Poppadoms or bread Yotam Ottolenghi? Poppadoms or bread?

**Yotam Ottolenghi**

I didn't know that you were going to ask this question. Of course bread, who eats poppadoms?

**James Acaster**

Well, a few people have chosen poppadoms in the past.



**Yotam Ottolenghi**

Really?

**Ed Gamble**

Yes, they're pretty popular, yes.

**James Acaster**

Yes, or just-, you know, or sometimes just whatever.

**Yotam Ottolenghi**

You have to grow up in this country to choose poppadoms and bread.

**Ed Gamble**

I guess so. I guess it's-, yes.

**Yotam Ottolenghi**

And maybe when bread was absolutely dreadful and anything with a bit of texture that you could get would be poppadoms then-,

**James Acaster**

Yes.

**Yotam Ottolenghi**

And that's the second time I slag off the local cuisine. I don't know. This is, like-, oh god, no, I get them but they are just, like, something you have once in a while when you go to an Indian restaurant. I mean, bread is just-, there is such a range of options.

**Ed Gamble**

Yes.

**James Acaster**

Would there be a dream bread you would have for your dream meal?

**Yotam Ottolenghi**

Well, I'm going to be very predictable. I do love a really really good sourdough bread with all the thing and people have slagged it off recently and said, 'Oh, sourdough is full of holes you can't put any spreads on it. It's not practical and it's poncy.' And all the rest. I think it just has so much flavour and, like, really really good ones. I'll give a shout out to The Dusty Knuckle that we get our sourdough bread from and I just love how sour it is, and I just love that sour flavour.

**Ed Gamble**

I guess it's so widespread now the sourdough thing, I think that's-, you know, it's just the nature of success that, you know, people are going to start turning against it.



**James Acaster**

Always some backlash.

**Ed Gamble**

Yes, there's always backlash.

**Yotam Ottolenghi**

Yes, no, backlash I'm fine. I mean, you know, we don't want too many tall poppies around. I mean, if sourdough's had it's day, now we can-

**James Acaster**

Yes, yes.

**Ed Gamble**

Also still enjoy.

**Yotam Ottolenghi**

Take it down and bring in the white bread.

**James Acaster**

Yes.

**Yotam Ottolenghi**

White slice of market bread.

**Ed Gamble**

The Dusty Knuckle man, they've got a van that they drive round-

**Yotam Ottolenghi**

That's right.

**Ed Gamble**

And enough people on your road have to ask them to come to your road and they still, they wouldn't come to our road.

**Yotam Ottolenghi**

Really – did a lot of people ask?

**Ed Gamble**

A lot of people asked but I think it might just be outside there area, so-, but, yes, there was a big chat on the road WhatsApp group about it. They were, like, 'We've really been trying to get The Dusty Knuckle to come by, but they wouldn't come by.'



**James Acaster**

Wow, that's a very specific type of WhatsApp group. Everyone's, like, 'We really need to get The Dusty Knuckle here.'

**Yotam Ottolenghi**

Yes. Also tells a lot about the street.

**Ed Gamble**

Yes, absolutely. Yes.

**James Acaster**

Most of, you know, street WhatsApp groups are stuff, like, 'Guys, we need to sort out this problems with the bin men. It's very bad. Is anyone else having problems with the music from the local pub at night? It's too loud. Guys, we haven't got enough sourdough being delivered directly to our doors, specifically from The Dusty Knuckle.'

**Ed Gamble**

To be fair, most of the rest of the time it's shots from people's Ring doorbells going, like, 'Were these the people who scratched the car?' Like, people get really angry about it. Yes.

**James Acaster**

Oh, yes, yes.

**Ed Gamble**

It's good.

**James Acaster**

Imagine if The Dusty Knuckle drove down and scratched all the cars.

**Ed Gamble**

Oh my god.

**Yotam Ottolenghi**

That would be a problem, right, wouldn't it?

**Ed Gamble**

Yes, but it's good sourdough right?

**Yotam Ottolenghi**

I mean, you want sourdough or you want nice cars? I mean, it's, like, you go sourdough right?

**Ed Gamble**

Some sourdough loaves you could scratch a bloody car with.





**Yotam Ottolenghi**

There we go. Sourdough haters again.

**Ed Gamble**

I love it. I love it. I love the stuff.

**James Acaster**

You want a lovely sourdough from Dusty Knuckle? Would you like some butter with that? Do you want some olive oil?

**Yotam Ottolenghi**

Yes, butter or olive oil. I prefer butter to spread on the bread, but then olive oil to cook with, and I also love the combination of butter and olive oil. So, some things are just nice when you have both. So, you start off with the olive oil and then we get a little bit more body add butter and it's, like, it's nice together. You don't have to choose-,

**Ed Gamble**

Do you get it, what, like, whipped up together or just-,

**Yotam Ottolenghi**

No, no, when cooking, when cooking.

**Ed Gamble**

Yes, when cooking, yes.

**Yotam Ottolenghi**

Yes, but for The Dusty Knuckle sourdough I'll have butter.

**James Acaster**

Lovely. With some salt in the butter?

**Yotam Ottolenghi**

Yes, salt in the butter. But not any of that whipped butter business.

**Ed Gamble**

No.

**James Acaster**

Oh.

**Yotam Ottolenghi**

That is just so pointless in my eye.



**James Acaster**

Really?

**Yotam Ottolenghi**

Yes, yes. Whipped butter I just don't get it. What's the point of, like-, when it's at room temperature it's the perfect texture and when you whip it up it's not the perfect texture for butter. It's good for whipped cream, but it's not good for butter. It's just lies.

**James Acaster**

Maybe I've been duped here because I get excited when I see whipped butter. I guess I couldn't tell you why so maybe I'm just a-, I've been tricked.

**Yotam Ottolenghi**

I think if you'd given us a slice of sourdough, your favourite bread, right?

**James Acaster**

Yes.

**Yotam Ottolenghi**

With whipped as opposed to just normal really good solid butter, I think, like, when you're blind tasting you'd prefer the proper normal butter.

**Ed Gamble**

I like just normal, just thick, properly spread it on thick.

**James Acaster**

Ed likes getting each bite-, he's breaks the bread up into bits and he butters each individual bit and then eats it with something.

**Yotam Ottolenghi**

I mean, you want to make sure you have more butter then?

**Ed Gamble**

More butter, yes, yes.

**Yotam Ottolenghi**

From every side?

**Ed Gamble**

Yes, yes, exactly. Everything needs to be covered in butter.

**James Acaster**

Yes.



**Ed Gamble**

I just never understand it when-, and most people do this I think, at a restaurant you get a big bit of bread and then they literally butter the whole thing and then eat it like a whole bit. No, I want to break it up with my hands and put a little bit of butter on.

**Yotam Ottolenghi**

Yes, you want to feel it.

**Ed Gamble**

Yes.

**Yotam Ottolenghi**

You want to feel it, I get that. Yes, no, everything is okay.

**James Acaster**

Hey, I'm not trying to get him in trouble here.

**Yotam Ottolenghi**

So, why did you bring it up?

**James Acaster**

Your dream starter?

**Yotam Ottolenghi**

So, yes, I was actually thinking about that before I came here and I went for my grandmother-, my grandmother on my father's side, she was Italian. They came to Israel just before the Second World War but they just felt like they've never left Italy. You know, like, they kept on eating and living that kind of life, even though it was really not the right environment for it. And she used to make semolina gnocchi, which essentially is, like, cooked down semolina and cookies you cut circles with when you spread it out, and then you put those slightly overlapping on a tray and you put butter on it and some cheese Parmesan, and maybe another cheese, slightly maybe blueish cheese like a Gorgonzola, but essentially it's Parmesan, semolina, under the grill. So, it's, like, pure melted cheese sensation. And she used to-, you like the idea, right?

**James Acaster**

Yes, yes, I like it. I like it a lot. I'm going somewhere. I'm visualising all of this and just going along.

**Yotam Ottolenghi**

Yes. And I think maybe a grating of nutmeg, nutmeg as well, and that's it, like, cheese, nutmeg, semolina. It's just so comforting. It's like pure comforting, there's no challenge in that dish. It's like the opposite of sourdough to spread,- it's, like, so soft-,

**Ed Gamble**

Soft and warming. Yes, that's amazing.



**Yotam Ottolenghi**

Yes, and you don't need anything else. So, for a very long time I tried to make it like she does, and I really don't think I've managed. In one of my books there is a recipe for it which I think is pretty good, but it's just not as good as the way she used to do it.

**Ed Gamble**

Yes, what is that, when, you know, because you would have thought you would have been able to capture all of the-, it sounds like relatively simple. Like, it's semolina and cheese and a bit of nutmeg.

**Yotam Ottolenghi**

Yes, technically it's super simple.

**Ed Gamble**

So, you should be able to recreate it perfectly but it's just whether it's the environment or the way you remember it tasting, or just-,

**Yotam Ottolenghi**

Yes, I think your mind plays tricks on you, right, like, it's like having something on holiday and then coming home and saying, 'I'm going to make that. It's just going to be so good.' And then it's just never really that good is it.

**Ed Gamble**

Or even buying a bottle of booze from holiday, like when you have a wine, you know-,

**Yotam Ottolenghi**

Or all these araks and rakis and stuff, that you have them, like, in Turkey and then you come back and it's just awful. You know, it's like you have to have it with all the oily food and everything and, like, the whole environment needs to be specific. Then you have it here and you go, 'I'll have a little shot.' And it's, like, oh, it just burns your throat.

**Ed Gamble**

Because also you're just not relaxed like you are on holiday, or, you're not sitting in the sun and then you-

**Yotam Ottolenghi**

That's right.

**Ed Gamble**

Taste it at home in winter in the UK and, like, oh, god, it's just so sad.

**James Acaster**

Yes. Also I think if anyone-, I often find if someone tells me, 'This dish is amazing. You've got to have this, it's so good.'



**Ed Gamble**

Yes.

**James Acaster**

And I try not to say that to people about things that I like. I might order the dish that I think is the best on the menu but I'll try my best not to tell them this is the best because-

**Yotam Ottolenghi**

So, you keep, like, a poker face. They don't know what you're feeling.

**James Acaster**

Yes.

**Yotam Ottolenghi**

Whether you're hating it or loving it?

**James Acaster**

Yes, well, I just don't want them to-, I want them to really enjoy the dish as much as I do, but I feel like if I amp it up and go, 'This is so amazing. You've got to have this, it's so good.' Then they might be, like, 'That's alright. It's pretty good.' So, like, 'You got me ready for the best thing in my life.'

**Ed Gamble**

But you know you do that on this podcast every single week to millions of people?

**James Acaster**

Yes, and I worry. That gives me anxiety. I worry that everyone's going to these places, going, 'Ah, James-';

**Ed Gamble**

So, even today you've mentioned about three dishes at ROVI.

**James Acaster**

Yes, so, I'm worried people are going to ROVI now and go, 'What's James

**Yotam Ottolenghi**

That gives me anxiety.

**Ed Gamble**

Yes, exactly. Now you're worried about it.

**James Acaster**

Yes.



**Yotam Ottolenghi**

I mean, you can build up expectations and I often think it's, like, with everything, like with books and films and all that, you build up the expectations. You want to build enough expectations to get people to go and watch it or try it, but not too much so they are bound to be disappointed. I mean, it's just food at the end of the day. I mean, it's not, like-, and that's coming from me, but you can build up your expectations so much that you are going to, kind of, go, like, 'Oh, really.'

**Ed Gamble**

Yes, of course, yes.

**James Acaster**

There's a dish that I want Ed to try somewhere in the country.

**Ed Gamble**

But you're not even going to give me any details about where?

**James Acaster**

No. But-,

**Yotam Ottolenghi**

Go find it.

**Ed Gamble**

Somewhere in the country right?

**James Acaster**

I know you'll love it and I will sort it out one day that Ed will try it.

**Ed Gamble**

Okay.

**James Acaster**

And I know in my mind he will love it. It will become his new favourite thing, but-,

**Yotam Ottolenghi**

You don't want to build it up.

**James Acaster**

I have to not ramp it up.

**Yotam Ottolenghi**

Yes.



**Ed Gamble**

Yes, because that would be huge if you told me, 'This is your new favourite thing.'

**James Acaster**

It's your new favourite thing, but I think it will be.

**Ed Gamble**

Yes.

**Yotam Ottolenghi**

What if you do the reverse psychology and just tell him it's just awful.

**James Acaster**

Then I would worry that I'd be too good at that, and that I'd get it in his head that it's disgusting, 'No, Ed, it was delicious, please.'

**Ed Gamble**

But also I'm quite contrary, so, I'd probably eat that and go, 'You're wrong.'

**James Acaster**

Yes, yes, to be fair.

**Ed Gamble**

So, it might work.

**James Acaster**

It could work.

**Ed Gamble**

Do you want to narrow it down geographically for me?

**James Acaster**

North.

**Ed Gamble**

Okay cool. I am going to the north soon.

**Yotam Ottolenghi**

North of where?

**Ed Gamble**

Yes, good point.



**Yotam Ottolenghi**

North of the River Thames? North of the River Thames.

**James Acaster**

Yes, north of a few rivers.

**Ed Gamble**

Is it in Manchester?

**James Acaster**

Yes.

**Ed Gamble**

Is it at The French?

**James Acaster**

Yes.

**Ed Gamble**

Yes. He's obsessed with this place. You've probably even told me about the dish before.

**James Acaster**

Yes, it was my phone background for a while. He would have seen it.

**Yotam Ottolenghi**

So, what is it?

**Ed Gamble**

What was the dish?

**Yotam Ottolenghi**

Come on, you can tell us?

**Ed Gamble**

Yes.

**Yotam Ottolenghi**

Amongst friends.

**James Acaster**

Okay, Benito you've got to edit this out.

**Ed Gamble**

No.





**James Acaster**

This is a big moment.

**Ed Gamble**

Yes, but you can't edit out that you recommending a dish on a food podcast.

**James Acaster**

Well, it's because it will-, the-,

**Ed Gamble**

Do you think it's going to blow up the spot?

**James Acaster**

It won't blow up the spot but the listeners will be, like, 'This makes no sense with the man we know.'

**Ed Gamble**

Oh, it's cheese based?

**James Acaster**

Yes, it's the cheese course at The French is one of my favourite dishes in the entire world.

**Ed Gamble**

Oh my goodness.

**Yotam Ottolenghi**

It's the cheese course. So, it's just a cheese selection?

**James Acaster**

So, it's between-, it's going from the savouries to the desserts is where it sits in the menu, and it's a drunken prune, slice of St James cheese on top of that, a walnut cracker and a scoop of honeycomb, and it says bite, and it's incredible.

**Ed Gamble**

I don't think that surprise-, I don't think the listeners will be annoyed about that. That sounds like the way you should be consuming cheese.

**James Acaster**

Yes.

**Ed Gamble**

With a scoop of honeycomb on the top.



**James Acaster**

With a scoop of honeycomb on top of it.

**Yotam Ottolenghi**

Because you're famous for not liking cheese?

**Ed Gamble**

Yes, he gets angry if people pick cheese.

**James Acaster**

This is a cheeseboard.

**Yotam Ottolenghi**

I'll quickly adjust my selection.

**James Acaster**

I like cheese, but not for a dessert. When people say a cheeseboard for dessert, I flip my lid.

**Yotam Ottolenghi**

No, I get that, because you're so cheated if you get a cheeseboard for dessert, because dessert is dessert isn't it?

**James Acaster**

Yes, thank you. Thank you.

**Ed Gamble**

Well, I enjoy it. Now and again I'll get the cheeseboard.

**James Acaster**

But this one is the perfect-,

**Yotam Ottolenghi**

But then you have to have dessert?

**Ed Gamble**

Well, yes, quite often I will also have dessert, but if I'm eating dinner with James and I feel like annoying him I'll get a cheeseboard instead of dessert.

**James Acaster**

But I went back to The French and they did that course-, but basically they'd switched the prune for something else, I think it was, like, a jam kind of thing, a jelly, and they switched the cheese for a different type of cheese. But it was still-,



**Ed Gamble**

Still good.

**James Acaster**

Amazing. So, that's why I want to get Ed there, to have that bite because I'm pretty sure it will be up his street. But now I've bigged it up. He knows about it, and now I dread-

**Ed Gamble**

I'll love it still.

**James Acaster**

Yes, I think you'll love it.

**Yotam Ottolenghi**

Yes, I think, from the way you describe it I think it's good enough to stand even that terrible test of you bigging it up, dreaming about it all night, waking in the morning, making the train he doesn't want to take to Manchester, going there, eating it and loving it.

**James Acaster**

Yes.

**Ed Gamble**

I went out for dinner the other night at Rules, James wasn't there, but I had cheese for dessert.

**James Acaster**

Oh dear me.

**Ed Gamble**

I had Stilton. They bring the big Stilton and scoop it out, and there's a picture of me while they're scooping the Stilton out and I look like a little child getting his favourite toy. So, excited.

**James Acaster**

I bet you do.

**Ed Gamble**

Yes.

**James Acaster**

Well, that's, like, a lovely starter. A ratatouille starter. Back to the childhood.

**Ed Gamble**

Yes.



**Yotam Ottolenghi**

Yes, no, it's back to child-, I actually, I went for childhood things because I thought in some ways because I'm constantly surrounded by food, you know, with the restaurant and the book, I feel like I've touched on so many things that I don't want to choose from any of those, I want to go back to, like, the initial old experience of food before it was a profession.

**James Acaster**

Is your main course also from a similar-,

**Yotam Ottolenghi**

Yes, my main course is also from a similar. Do you want me to reveal it?

**James Acaster**

I would love it. Also, one of my favourite main courses I've ever had, I never shout out to you, I was on Sunday Brunch and one of your chefs was their via Zoom, so, it wasn't like-, and I can't remember her name because it was quite a few years ago.

**Yotam Ottolenghi**

Ixta?

**James Acaster**

Might have been. She did a-, it was a lasagne but with prawns in it.

**Yotam Ottolenghi**

I think it might have been Ixta, yes.

**James Acaster**

Incredible. Definitely the best thing I've ever eaten on Sunday Brunch.

**Ed Gamble**

Yes?

**James Acaster**

I'll tell you that much.

**Yotam Ottolenghi**

So, you were there?

**James Acaster**

I was there in the studio and we got to try this prawn lasagne and I completely-, normally you just have a bite and then you move onto the next thing. I completely finished it and then polished off anyone else's who hadn't finished their prawn lasagne, because I was, like, that was one of the best things I've ever had.



**Yotam Ottolenghi**

It's a really good sign when people keep on eating and coming back.

**Ed Gamble**

Yes, yes.

**James Acaster**

Do you know the exact dish I'm talking about?

**Yotam Ottolenghi**

Yes, I do know it.

**James Acaster**

So good.

**Yotam Ottolenghi**

I do know it.

**James Acaster**

Where can I get that?

**Yotam Ottolenghi**

You know, you could make it if-,

**James Acaster**

No.

**Yotam Ottolenghi**

No? You should have told me, I would have brought-,

**Ed Gamble**

Yes, brought a prawn lasagne just in your backpack.

**Yotam Ottolenghi**

In my bag, through Borough Market with my prawn lasagne, yes.

**Ed Gamble**

Which book is it in? I'll make that.

**Yotam Ottolenghi**

I don't think it's in a book. I think it's in one of my Guardian columns. I'll have to have a look (talking over each other 40.30).



**Ed Gamble**

I'm sure we can dig out a recipe.

**Yotam Ottolenghi**

We can dig it out.

**James Acaster**

So good.

**Yotam Ottolenghi**

Yes, we can dig it out.

**James Acaster**

Oh, my word.

**Ed Gamble**

I'll make it for you.

**James Acaster**

Thank you Ed.

**Ed Gamble**

I want to do some cooking.

**James Acaster**

Yes. Yes. You can cook the prawn lasagne-

**Ed Gamble**

Yes.

**James Acaster**

And we'll get Simon Rimmer and Tim Lovejoy to stand there as well.

**Ed Gamble**

No.

**James Acaster**

So that I feel like I'm back on Sunday Brunch.

**Ed Gamble**

No, I'd like a nice relaxing meal please.

**James Acaster**

The dream main course.



**Yotam Ottolenghi**

So, the main course. So, I went for something-, again it's not a restaurant food, it's a shawarma in pitta which I love. You know, so, I need to explain it a little bit. So, you know, there are so many versions of it, you know, the Doner kebab and the shawarmas and stuff, and for me they're all good, but they rely-, the real thing that is really important is the side dish, my side dish, and that's the chips. So, when I was growing up in Jerusalem we used to go to-, there is a bunch of places and what they all had in common is these big shawarma rotate rotisseries things, and you'd have a lamb one and a chicken or turkey one, so that would depend. And they were fully of fat, like, kind of, literally as you cut through there's all this extra fat added there and they'd put it in a fluffy pitta for you and you'd get, like, those really thinly shaved, you know, you can get, like, the sawed off really really thinly and expertly, and then you get a layer of that. You get salad, you can get some fried aubergines on top as well, Tahini and pickles is a, kind of-, you can go for pickle or not, but I always love some pickles, like, cucumbers or you know those turnips that are pickled in beetroot liquid. So, there's these purples ones. And then lots of fries, like, chips inside and extra Tahini. Oh my god, that is just the best thing in the world and at the bottom of the pitta, if it doesn't go all over, you know, seeps through to your shoes, which is a, kind of, professional hazard.

**Ed Gamble**

Yes, sure.

**Yotam Ottolenghi**

You've got all these juices there and they are just so good, you know, the fat, the Tahini, the salad juices, etc., and then it hits the bread. It's so good.

**Ed Gamble**

I mean, it's difficult to argue with that being the best. That is just so up my street. That is so good.

**Yotam Ottolenghi**

Yes, because we all want to eat these kind of things, right, like, this is just-, and to be honest I'm not so picky. So, for instance in Turkey, the Doner would not have Tahini but would have some kind of yogurt based sauce, or yogurt garlic based sauce. That's also fine. You know, I'm not a purist when it comes to these things and I do prefer the chicken one with all the extra fat to the lamb/beef one because it's not that dominant and all the other things can come through, but I'm very happy with a lamb one as well, so, yes-,

**James Acaster**

I go chicken usually.

**Yotam Ottolenghi**

Yes, you can pick. But the spicing is important. So, the shawarma spice mix for me has to have some kind of a combination of balance of the, kind of, more savoury spices, obviously cumin, some heat, and then a bit of sweet that comes from all spice, or cinnamon or maybe-, no cardamom I wouldn't necessarily put there, but some of those more sweet spices and often it would have Fenugreek as well. So, you get that, kind of, wonderful balance of spices there as well.



**Ed Gamble**

I'm glad you considered cardamom and then got rid of it because-,

**Yotam Ottolenghi**

You don't like cardamom?

**Ed Gamble**

I hate that stuff.

**Yotam Ottolenghi**

No, I love cardamom but not for that.

**Ed Gamble**

No. Oh, I'd-,

**Yotam Ottolenghi**

So, you wouldn't have it in any-,

**Ed Gamble**

No, I'd probably have it if it was part of, like, a spice mix or it wasn't the dominant flavour, but as a dominant flavour-,

**Yotam Ottolenghi**

So, you were never going to get those, like, buns-,

**Ed Gamble**

No. I was in Copenhagen this weekend-,

**Yotam Ottolenghi**

Okay.

**Ed Gamble**

And I always try, because I know they're so popular. So, flown into Copenhagen in the morning, my wife was already there because we were going to a wedding that day and I flew in early in the morning. Arrived in Copenhagen, had a nap in the hotel, then I woke up after twenty minutes into my nap and she was eating a cardamom bun and I went, 'Just bring it here.' Had a big bite of it, went, 'No, still hate it.' And went back to sleep again. I'm a great guy to-,

**James Acaster**

He was telling me this story earlier about being asleep-, being on tour, his tour manager driving him, him being asleep in the car, him waking up and the tour manager going, 'This is my home town we're driving through now.' And Ed went, 'Absolute shit hole.' And then went to sleep.





**Ed Gamble**

That was great fun-,

**Yotam Ottolenghi**

Do they eat cardamom in those,

**Ed Gamble**

Yes, this was a very Scandinavian town in North Wales. Yes, cardamom, I don't know what it is. It's just the flavour. I like most things, and those buns are everywhere.

**Yotam Ottolenghi**

Yes. So, Arabic coffee often has cardamom infused or ground with the coffee ground, so, you have that sweetness coffee flavour and I just think that is just absolutely delicious. But if someone tells you they hate that flavour, then what can you do about it? Nothing.

**James Acaster**

I know this, I'm reading a book at the minute about coffee-,

**Ed Gamble**

What?

**James Acaster**

The Monk of Mokha it's called, and it's-,

**Ed Gamble**

Have you heard of this book Yotam?

**Yotam Ottolenghi**

No, but I'm curious.

**James Acaster**

It's a Dave Eggers book. It's based on a real man's life.

**Yotam Ottolenghi**

Oh yes.

**Ed Gamble**

Oh cool.

**James Acaster**

And he's trying to get a coffee business off the ground.

**Yotam Ottolenghi**

And where does the cardamom come in? So, you read about this practice of-,



**James Acaster**

Yes, so, loads of the book is just about coffee. So, you know, so far I think I've got 2% storyline and 98% the history of coffee and how coffee is made.

**Yotam Ottolenghi**

Which is great isn't it. It's really interesting.

**James Acaster**

Yes. I mean, how much I've actually retained, please don't test me on any of it.

**Yotam Ottolenghi**

I shall not, but you did retain the cardamom.

**Ed Gamble**

Yes.

**James Acaster**

Yes, I remember that, but now I'm thinking to myself, what country does the book even take place in? Because I know he starts of in San Francisco and then he goes somewhere else, and I'm thinking-

**Yotam Ottolenghi**

Yes, do share.

**James Acaster**

He goes, I think-,

**Ed Gamble**

For the rest of us?

**James Acaster**

Yes, I think he goes to-,

**Yotam Ottolenghi**

Uzbekistan?

**Ed Gamble**

Shall we start suggesting countries?

**James Acaster**

Yes.

**Ed Gamble**

Yes. Is it a, sort of, coffee place?



**James Acaster**

Yes, big coffee place but then-

**Yotam Ottolenghi**

Columbia?

**Ed Gamble**

Guatemala?

**Yotam Ottolenghi**

Ethiopia?

**James Acaster**

The problem with it is that they're big-, like, coffee was almost invented there but then they've fallen behind and he wants to bring them back into the coffee game because-

**Yotam Ottolenghi**

Oh I see.

**James Acaster**

People have forgotten that some of the best coffee originally came from that country.

**Yotam Ottolenghi**

It's an island? Is it like Caribbean Island, it's off the coast of Africa?

**James Acaster**

No.

**Ed Gamble**

James, this is not good stuff, man.

**James Acaster**

Huh?

**Ed Gamble**

This is not good stuff.

**James Acaster**

This is great. We've got Yotam Ottolenghi on and we're playing a guessing game about the book I was reading. This is good.

**Yotam Ottolenghi**

It will actually push the readers to go and read it because they will want to know the answers, so, you know, listeners would go, like-,



**James Acaster**

Well, I'll google it on my phone.

**Ed Gamble**

No, no, we won't. We'll just leave it.

**James Acaster**

No, this is really important.

**Yotam Ottolenghi**

Yes, google it on your phone.

**James Acaster**

Because otherwise-,

**Yotam Ottolenghi**

I've got all day.

**Ed Gamble**

It's certainly very important to Yotam that you find this out.

**Yotam Ottolenghi**

No, I want to know what that country is because I want to add it to my repertoire of anecdotes.

**Ed Gamble**

Yes.

**James Acaster**

Have you heard of the Yemen?

**Yotam Ottolenghi**

Oh, yes, the Yemen. I have heard of the Yemen.

**Ed Gamble**

Yes.

**James Acaster**

Yes.

**Yotam Ottolenghi**

Yes, actually that is a really good point because Yemen does have a history of coffee. I know that little bit. Maybe they used to add cardamom because Yemen is in the Middle East.



**James Acaster**

Yes.

**Yotam Ottolenghi**

Kind of. Yes. We'll have to find that out.

**James Acaster**

Yes, I think that something big is about to happen in the book. It almost feels like-

**Yotam Ottolenghi**

You're obviously very engaged.

**James Acaster**

He's about to-

**Ed Gamble**

Is he going to spill a coffee?

**James Acaster**

Some problem is going to-, he might spill a coffee. Maybe. Maybe he will spill a coffee in the book, that would be quite (talking over each other 47.56).

**Ed Gamble**

I actually think this book sounds good. I'm going to-

**Yotam Ottolenghi**

It sounds fun.

**Ed Gamble**

Well, I'm going to-, I'll tell you what I'll do Yotam, I'll buy the book and then I'll pop it on my pile of books and then I'll never read it.

**Yotam Ottolenghi**

There are so many books to read aren't there, it's such a problem.

**Ed Gamble**

Yes.

**James Acaster**

Too many.

**Yotam Ottolenghi**

It's just a lot. I've got a lot of books that I want to read and that people ask, 'What are you reading?' And essentially there are so many books that you just end up-



**Ed Gamble**

Reading none of them.

**Yotam Ottolenghi**

Reading none of them, yes. That's the problem.

**James Acaster**

Apart from the cookbooks, am I right?

**Yotam Ottolenghi**

Apart from the food cookbooks, yes.

**Ed Gamble**

I genuinely read cookbooks like novels though.

**Yotam Ottolenghi**

Do you?

**Ed Gamble**

When I get a new cookbook I will just, sort of, sit and read it cover to cover.

**Yotam Ottolenghi**

You don't read, like, half a teaspoon of salt?

**Ed Gamble**

No, but I mean, like-, you know, when I say read-,

**James Acaster**

Spoilers.

**Ed Gamble**

I look at the pictures.

**James Acaster**

Come on man. I haven't read this yet.

**Ed Gamble**

I haven't got to that bit yet.

**James Acaster**

I didn't know half a teaspoon of salt was in there.



**Ed Gamble**

Half a teaspoon? How do you even measure half a teaspoon?

**Yotam Ottolenghi**

Oh, don't get me started on that. People want to know how much of everything. I have recipes with an eighth of a teaspoon. I just let you know here, I'm saying it, I'm getting it out there-,

**Ed Gamble**

Yes.

**Yotam Ottolenghi**

Yes, even an eighth of a teaspoon is a thing. A quarter is a lot. It makes all the difference. No, there is a reason why we write those things down because often I-, we do have conversations, like, in the test kitchen there are a lot of long winded conversations. Often we can't decide between a quarter and-, because a pinch means nothing, so, you know, whether you want a little bit less than a quarter but it still needs a little bit of extra salt. So, the eighth comes into the conversation. And I always hear the people say, like, 'Why do you give me so much detail?' And I say, like, 'You don't need to follow the recipe exactly.' But I want people to get as close as possible to what happened in the room. If they follow it like a set of instructions like they were robots, I know most people don't cook like that but at least there's something-, it's like their newspaper of record, everything is there, it's there and you can follow it or not. And some people love that idea and they go, like, 'These are foolproof recipes because I followed it and I created an amazing meal.' So, it works for some.

**Ed Gamble**

But, then, yes, you'd do that the first-, that's what I would do the first time, and then if I did it again I'd-, you, sort of, you've got the basis of it and you add things or take things away.

**Yotam Ottolenghi**

And it's also true about, like, sometimes I think as a culture we love to, kind of, almost try new things all the time almost too much, and people come and often say to me, 'You know, I find it's quite stressful because I haven't yet mastered Burmese cuisine, you know, something like-, but I'm really making my way through Thai.' And I find it can be quite-, people get themselves into a rut over having these incredible repertoires. But Nigella always talks about the repetition, right, like the repetition is so important because it's comforting. When you cook something over and over again that's comforting, and we don't want to take the comfort away from cooking do we? We don't want to bring all that stress in because-, especially in the last few years, I've found so much comfort in cooking because there's so little comfort out there, right, like, with all the horrible things that are happening.

**Ed Gamble**

Yes, absolutely.

**James Acaster**

Especially the repetition of cooking the same thing over and over again in the last few years.



**Ed Gamble**

Well, you're the king of it.

**James Acaster**

Chorizo broccoli pasta, shout out.

**Yotam Ottolenghi**

Chorizo broccoli pasta?

**James Acaster**

Chorizo broccoli pasta, that's the dish that I've made the most in my lifetime and made it all exclusively during lockdown, over and over again.

**Yotam Ottolenghi**

Did you find comfort in it?

**James Acaster**

Beyond what you can possibly imagine. The highest levels of comfort. It's my happy place all the time, every time I think of it.

**Yotam Ottolenghi**

Yes.

**Ed Gamble**

And still, you still make it now, right?

**James Acaster**

Well, made it a couple of times since the lockdowns have-, everything's opened up, and it feels weird now.

**Ed Gamble**

Oh really.

**James Acaster**

It feels weird to me having it now.

**Yotam Ottolenghi**

What kind of chorizo do you use? Do you use a soft chorizo or-

**James Acaster**

No, not soft.

**Yotam Ottolenghi**

The cooked chorizo? The slices? The salami style?





**James Acaster**

Yes, yes.

**Yotam Ottolenghi**

Okay.

**Ed Gamble**

Well, not the salami-, like-,

**Yotam Ottolenghi**

No, you use-,

**Ed Gamble**

Just the whole-,

**James Acaster**

Yes, it's in a sausage.

**Ed Gamble**

Yes.

**James Acaster**

But I chop it up.

**Yotam Ottolenghi**

Yes.

**James Acaster**

I chop it up still.

**Yotam Ottolenghi**

Yes.

**James Acaster**

But it's hard. It's, not, like-,

**Ed Gamble**

No-one was suggesting you drop the whole sausage into some pasta.

**Yotam Ottolenghi**

You chop it-, tell us how you make it? I mean, maybe you've spoken about it on the show already.



**James Acaster**

Yes, okay. No, this is good. Chop up the chorizo, chop up the broccoli stems but not the heads. The heads don't go in. So, that's what we-, originally we did it because we were, like, having broccoli in the house and we'd have the stems left over-,

**Yotam Ottolenghi**

The stems are so good, they're so sweet.

**Ed Gamble**

Yes.

**James Acaster**

So, we were, like, 'We need to use these stems for something.' We learnt this recipe, used the stems, and now we're buying broccoli to make that. So, now, it used to be, 'We don't know what to do with the stems.' Now we're, like, 'We don't know what to do with the heads.'

**Yotam Ottolenghi**

Oh my goodness, that is a brain fuck.

**James Acaster**

Chop chop the stems up. Chop up some garlic, some chilli-,

**Yotam Ottolenghi**

Garlic, chilli.

**Ed Gamble**

Yes.

**James Acaster**

Put the chorizo in for a bit on its own. After a few minutes add the stems, add the chilli, add the garlic. Put some pasta on, the ones that look like little ears.

**Yotam Ottolenghi**

Orecchiette.

**James Acaster**

Yes, and then add some capers as well.

**Yotam Ottolenghi**

Ah nice, nice touch.

**James Acaster**

Then get a cup of the pasta water, put that in with everything. Dunk the pasta in with it all, mix it all together, add some black pepper while you're mixing, then bung a load of Parmesan as well-,



**Yotam Ottolenghi**

How many tablespoons?

**James Acaster**

Huh? An eighth.

**Yotam Ottolenghi**

Carry on.

**James Acaster**

Always an eighth. And then, load of Parmesan, then you're ready to go.

**Ed Gamble**

Yes.

**Yotam Ottolenghi**

But it sounds delicious.

**Ed Gamble**

It's a Tom Kerridge recipe. I'll just say that, just before-,

**James Acaster**

We added the capers.

**Yotam Ottolenghi**

Fair enough.

**James Acaster**

But, yes.

**Yotam Ottolenghi**

You can't trademark a recipe, so, you didn't even have to add the capers, you could-,

**James Acaster**

We've got it now. Yes. We corn ribbed him.

**Ed Gamble**

Yes, you absolutely corn ribbed that guy.

**James Acaster**

Yes, yes, absolutely corn ribbed Kerridge. I have a question about the shawarma.

**Yotam Ottolenghi**

Oh, yes, go on.



**James Acaster**

Do you want The Avengers with you while you eat it?

**Yotam Ottolenghi**

The Avengers?

**James Acaster**

Yes, the superheroes, The Avengers. They like shawarma.

**Yotam Ottolenghi**

All of them?

**James Acaster**

I think it was Iron Man.

**Ed Gamble**

He was the original one, right? The original (talking over each other 53.28).

**James Acaster**

Our man Captain America. The Hulk.

**Yotam Ottolenghi**

To be honest, no, I don't want people with me.

**James Acaster**

Thor, Black Widow and (talking over each other 53.33).

**Yotam Ottolenghi**

Are they people though?

**Ed Gamble**

Well, this is it, yes. You don't want anyone-, you want to be alone?

**Yotam Ottolenghi**

For this particular-, I actually don't like being alone. I'm terrified of being alone. Normally I love people around me, but for this particular dish I love to be alone because it's quite embarrassing, you know, it's very animalistic the way you, kind of, you tuck into it and your whole face is in there.

**James Acaster**

Wow.

**Ed Gamble**

Then may I suggest that you pop into the garden and get your clothes off?



**James Acaster**

Pop them off.

**Yotam Ottolenghi**

It's a very good idea.

**James Acaster**

Pop your pants off, yes, let's have you going into the bottom of the garden mate.

**Yotam Ottolenghi**

The problem is you get it in the shawarma shop and to get to the garden is quite a schlep. So, you need to, kind of, get in the car, drive, get your clothes off. It's cold by then. All the fats have coagulated. It's, like, the whole fun has gone.

**Ed Gamble**

Yes, yes.

**James Acaster**

Yes, yes, talking about the shawarma there. Yes. Just checking.

**Ed Gamble**

That's why, you know, maybe you should open a shawarma shop with a little private garden in the back.

**Yotam Ottolenghi**

I think we'd love it with a bunch of naked people just eating a shawarma. Let's just imagine that for a second.

**Ed Gamble**

That sounds so delicious.

**James Acaster**

Yes.

**Ed Gamble**

The fluffy pitta as well. I think I've had some pretty bad pittas in my time.

**James Acaster**

Yes.

**Yotam Ottolenghi**

The worst pitta you can get is the one you can get, like, in normal pitta in a supermarket. I think it's a disgrace. It's so dry. I mean, I'd never get that. So, obviously it's nice to make your own but you could get-, in some Jewish bakeries in North London you can get nice fluffy pittas and, I mean, it's just something completely different.



**James Acaster**

Yes. I am Doner in Harrogate is the best pitta-,

**Ed Gamble**

Oh really?

**James Acaster**

That I've had, yes, for a kebab. Like, just really fluffy. I could eat it on its own that pitta and it would be just, like, so delicious.

**Yotam Ottolenghi**

Yes, I mean, that is the test isn't it, you need to enjoy it on it's own before you start loading it with stuff. I mean, that's a true test.

**James Acaster**

Yes.

**Yotam Ottolenghi**

But for me this is, like, really, kind of, basic. It's like the beyond restaurant experience going out and eating street food like that, the stuff that's just uninhibitedly delicious and nobody cares.

**Ed Gamble**

And Tahini as well.

**Yotam Ottolenghi**

Yes.

**Ed Gamble**

Tahini on everything please.

**Yotam Ottolenghi**

Tahini or you could do like a Tahini or garlic sauce, or yogurt garlic. So good.

**James Acaster**

I mentioned I am Doner recently. Nish was there, our friend Nish Kumar, and I said to him, whoever it was I was recommending it to, I said, 'Nish, love, your favourite kebabs right?' And Nish very moodily said, 'No, they're not.' And then corrected me on what his favourite kebabs are. Can you guess which ones his favourite-,

**Ed Gamble**

Palmyra?



**James Acaster**

No, not Palmyra. That would have been my second guess.

**Ed Gamble**

Kebab Kid?

**James Acaster**

Kebab Kid, yes.

**Ed Gamble**

Kebab Kid. Yes.

**James Acaster**

No, no. Kebab Kid's the best. (talking over each other 56.01) as he walked away.

**Ed Gamble**

Kebab Kid's on New Kings Road, near Parsons Green.

**Yotam Ottolenghi**

Okay.

**Ed Gamble**

Yes, it's been there for, like, 30/40 years I think.

**Yotam Ottolenghi**

Okay.

**Ed Gamble**

Yes, yes.

**Yotam Ottolenghi**

And those are the best kebabs?

**Ed Gamble**

They're very good kebabs, yes.

**James Acaster**

Ed and Nish used to live opposite Kebab Kid.

**Yotam Ottolenghi**

Okay.

**James Acaster**

Those were some dangerous days.



**Ed Gamble**

Yes. I mean, Nish used to get one a day sometimes I think.

**James Acaster**

Yes.

**Ed Gamble**

Yes.

**James Acaster**

He's no longer with us, but we like telling stories about him just so we remember our friend.

**Yotam Ottolenghi**

Yes, no, that is-, yes, and he didn't go naked in the garden to eat his kebab?

**Ed Gamble**

No, we were at the flat unfortunately, so, they just used to hang it all out the window.

**James Acaster**

Yes, instant arrest.

**Ed Gamble**

Yes. Is there anywhere, like, in London-, I mean, I'm saying it for the listener but for myself, that you can get a really good shawarma like that?

**Yotam Ottolenghi**

Shawarma? I can't say that I know. But, I haven't done a proper search of that, it's just for me, it's just something that I have left back from my time in Israel, and when I do go there I go. And there's also these days in Tel Aviv, which has got great food, there are these, kind of, posh kebab places, but they didn't change anything fundamentally. It's just the components are a little bit better, like, better sauce, etc. But the whole essence of it is, like, super fresh off the skewer with all the condiments as they should be. But they also, they are a bit more like professorial about it. You know, they measure exactly how much they put in each layer, so every bite has got equal quantities of everything and you see how they do it. And they do have that, like-, there are a bunch of dishes that go in a pitta like that which, you know, there is another one which I absolutely love, it involves aubergine, hard boiled egg and a, kind of, Fenugreek-y, mango-y sauce with it, then the salad and also the French fries sometimes or not, and that's called Sabich and it's the same thing. So, again, they put a layer of the aubergines, a layer of the salad, a layer of the French fries and egg. It's just-,

**Ed Gamble**

Oh my gosh.

**James Acaster**

And so your dream side dish is the chips?





**Yotam Ottolenghi**

My dream side dish is the chips, but actually it goes in. But, I mentioned it as a side dish, because you don't want anything else on the side, right, so, it's like you can have it on the side and if you insist that I have a side dish that is actually on the side-

**James Acaster**

No.

**Yotam Ottolenghi**

Then I'll just stuff it. I didn't know how formal you guys are, like, whether you-

**Ed Gamble**

Oh no.

**James Acaster**

This is your dream meal.

**Ed Gamble**

It's your dream meal. I mean, look you can have that so it's all in the shawarma. There could be a few extra chips on the side.

**Yotam Ottolenghi**

Yes, let's just do that.

**Ed Gamble**

Yes.

**Yotam Ottolenghi**

Let's do that.

**James Acaster**

Your dream drink then?

**Yotam Ottolenghi**

So, this is where I, kind of-, so, I was thinking when I was growing up we had this malt drink, like, fizzy malt drink. So, in Israel people don't drink a lot of alcohol, so, the beer, it was called black beer which is, like, non alcoholic beer and it was-, like here we have, what's it called Maltese-

**James Acaster**

Malt.

**Ed Gamble**

Supermalt.



**Yotam Ottolenghi**

Supermalt.

**Ed Gamble**

Supermalt, yes.

**Yotam Ottolenghi**

So, it's a bit like Supermalt. It's slightly different in the flavour, it's a bit more caramel-y, it's darker but it's, like, those kind of flavours and we used to have this with our-, and I thought I'd ask for that, because it will take me back and I'll get the whole experience. But, then I also really love Campari, but not with that. I just love Campari. So, I thought, if you want to hear what I have next to that, that would be that, and if you want what-, I love Campari.

**Ed Gamble**

But, you know, we could have Campari as a little, sort of, pre-dinner thing.

**Yotam Ottolenghi**

I think that's what we should have.

**Ed Gamble**

Yes, we could add that, yes.

**Yotam Ottolenghi**

We should have Campari on ice with a bit of orange and it's just as it is. Not with sparkling water or anything like that.

**Ed Gamble**

No.

**Yotam Ottolenghi**

Not in this case, no.

**James Acaster**

Would you normally have it at the start of a meal before anything else?

**Yotam Ottolenghi**

Yes, so, yes, I don't drink it all the time, but we often go on holiday to Greece, so, this is a, kind of, a tradition that goes back about ten years where we go to Greece with a bunch of friends and we rent a house. My sister comes with her kids and other people come along and we have this, kind of, wonderful week of just, like, cooking and swimming and we don't do anything but that. And we always start the evening, before we start cooking, with Campari on ice with orange. And for me that is just, like, holiday.

**Ed Gamble**

Amazing.



**Yotam Ottolenghi**

It's just such a good thing.

**James Acaster**

The Great Benito just went on holiday to Greece.

**Yotam Ottolenghi**

Did you?

**James Acaster**

He hated it.

**Yotam Ottolenghi**

He had a worst?

**James Acaster**

He said it was a waking hell. He's a bustling boy.

**Ed Gamble**

He needs roller-coasters.

**James Acaster**

He loves roller-coasters.

**Yotam Ottolenghi**

Yes, well, you don't go to Greece for that.

**Ed Gamble**

No.

**James Acaster**

I do, I like a good roller-coaster myself.

**Yotam Ottolenghi**

Roller-coaster, fair enough, yes.

**James Acaster**

I was about to tell you about the best one I've been on-,

**Yotam Ottolenghi**

Please.



**James Acaster**

But I can't tell you because the Great Benito doesn't like spoilers when it comes to roller-coasters and this is one he hasn't been on, so, I literally am not allowed to describe it to people in front of him because he will leave the room.

**Yotam Ottolenghi**

Okay, and we need him.

**James Acaster**

We need him, yes.

**Ed Gamble**

We do need him, yes, unfortunately, yes.

**Yotam Ottolenghi**

So, you also are a big roller-coaster fan?

**James Acaster**

No, not really, but I just had a very good roller-coaster experience recently where I was like, 'Oh, yes, this is why people love roller-coasters. I get it.' Because they can.

**Yotam Ottolenghi**

Don't build it up too much for him.

**James Acaster**

Yes. That's a good point actually. I can't do that. He'll go on then going, 'What was James going on about this for?' But, you know, at the best, Benito, they make you experience life in a whole new way, right? It makes you feel a way you've never felt before a good roller-coaster.

**Ed Gamble**

Oh, you're really building this up though.

**James Acaster**

Yes, that's how it felt, like-,

**Ed Gamble**

He's going to sat on there with the cheese dish from The French just having an awful time. 'This should be the best day of my life.'

**James Acaster**

Now, the malt drink sounds very intriguing as well.



**Yotam Ottolenghi**

Yes, so, that's-, it's just really it's a dark malt, like, fizzy malt. It's sweet and really really dark and it's really malty, so, it's refreshing, and you give it to kids because obviously they don't drink beer, and as I said people are not huge alcohol drinkers back home. Maybe now they more are but historically it wasn't. But that is something you have with your dinner. And it's really good with all this stuff because it's just, like-, in the same way that wine doesn't work with street food most of the time, right. Like, it's just too delicate and sharp and it just doesn't work. So, those were-, if you're not going to drink proper beer-,

**James Acaster**

How big's the bottle?

**Yotam Ottolenghi**

The bottles are pretty big. They're, like, a litre or three quarters of a litre. You don't finish it, but, yes.

**James Acaster**

I was going to say, the mime you're doing for it all the time is huge, so, I was, like, (talking over each other 01.02.18).

**Yotam Ottolenghi**

Maybe I was smaller-,

**James Acaster**

Little kids must look mad carrying them around.

**Yotam Ottolenghi**

Yes.

**Ed Gamble**

I guess it was because you were a kid as well, right.

**Yotam Ottolenghi**

Yes, I was a kid. Yes, but you don't finish it. Like, you have it at the table and everybody shares. You don't get an individual bottle. Yes.

**Ed Gamble**

It's funny when you're a kid isn't it. We were talking about this, me and my wife the other day, how big food is.

**Yotam Ottolenghi**

How big food is?

**Ed Gamble**

Yes.



**James Acaster**

Fucking hell.

**Ed Gamble**

Like we saw a baby-,

**James Acaster**

I'll tell you what-,

**Ed Gamble**

We saw a baby with a cookie and the baby was literally looking at this thing, like, 'I don't think I'm ever going to get through this. It's bigger than my face.'

**Yotam Ottolenghi**

But they do actually, they do get through it.

**Ed Gamble**

They do but it takes, like, gumming away at a cookie for ages.

**James Acaster**

Most of it goes on the floor.

**Ed Gamble**

Yes.

**Yotam Ottolenghi**

I have two young boys, right, they're not that young anymore, so, they're seven-years-old and nine-years-old, and they can eat cookies. I mean, they can eat so much cookies.

**James Acaster**

Do you think as a chef with kids, are you, like, trying to push them a certain way with food or are you thinking, 'If I just let them do whatever they want, they can get this out their system and when they're older maybe they'll make better decisions.'?

**Yotam Ottolenghi**

Well, I am not the latter. No. I'm not so cool like that. I let them, kind of, like, eat things, but I put a limit to how many sour skittles they can have.

**Ed Gamble**

Sure.

**Yotam Ottolenghi**

And I also make sure that they are exposed to nice food, so, even if they don't want to eat it. And to be honest they haven't been the best. Like people would always say, 'Oh, the Ottolenghi kids they probably



eat olives and since they were born.' In actual fact they have gone through quite, like, finicky stages, but this summer we went to Paris for the first time and they ate snails. They love eating snails. And I thought, like, that is super cool, now I can-, they're finally there. But we've gone through a period where they just wouldn't eat anything that's green, like, it's got green bits in it and all the rest. It's tough sometimes because you-,

**Ed Gamble**

Yes, that must be gutting if you-,

**Yotam Ottolenghi**

There's so much effort that goes into food and the rejection with kids is just so extreme. You know, there's no niceties. They don't moderate their behaviour for you. They don't go, like, 'That's okay.' And put it to the side. They go, like, 'That's disgusting.' Or they go, like, 'This is just not as good as we get at school.' That is crushing.

**James Acaster**

Oh, wow, that's bad.

**Yotam Ottolenghi**

That is crushing, yes, yes, that is very bad.

**Ed Gamble**

The celeriac shawarma at school is so much better.

**Yotam Ottolenghi**

I know, yes.

**James Acaster**

This doesn't even have the essence of spinach. What are you talking about? Going back to the kid with a cookie as big as his head, I'm pretty sure-, am I right in thinking that your wife started that conversation?

**Ed Gamble**

Yes, of course, yes.

**James Acaster**

Just making sure that I knew.

**Yotam Ottolenghi**

So, what did she say? 'How can a kid possibly finish this cookie?'

**Ed Gamble**

Yes, no, it wasn't even that. It was, like-, 'Food is so big when you're a child.'



**James Acaster**

Yes, there's a very-

**Ed Gamble**

And the thing is if she started that conversation with anyone else there would be, like, five minutes where they were going, 'What are you talking about? That's such a weird thing to say.' But I'm now obviously so in tune with what she means. I'm like, 'Yes, I know, well, let's have this chat.' (talking over each other 01.05.10)

**Yotam Ottolenghi**

I have a memory like that. So, when I was a child, when I was around seven or eight, we went to live in California for one year because my dad had a job there and we lived outside San Francisco, and I remember one of my first experiences, like, the most memorable one was how big the food was. There was one time we went to this restaurant and someone ordered a salad and it was just, like, a pyramid of ingredients. It was so big and on top there were three cocktail umbrellas. You know, and I was looking and I'd be, like, 'How could-,' And I'm sure it wasn't because I was small, I'm sure it was massive.

**Ed Gamble**

Oh, America. It's just America, yes.

**Yotam Ottolenghi**

Yes, and I was just, like, 'How could that be true and real?' I mean, that salad, I'll never forget that. Still to that day I'm traumatised.

**Ed Gamble**

Yes. It's crazy, like, I've just spent a bit of time in America and if you're, like, 'We'll have a healthy day I'll just order a salad.' I ordered, like, a cob salad once and it was on, like, a dinner plate, a serving plate for one person, and then just a line of chicken. There must have been about three chicken breasts, a block of blue cheese, like, eight eggs. And you're, like, 'This was me trying to be healthy.'

**Yotam Ottolenghi**

Yes.

**Ed Gamble**

And then you pour the dressing on the top. I ate the whole thing.

**James Acaster**

Yes, yes, of course. (talking over each other 01.06.26) It is mad.

**Ed Gamble**

Delicious.





**Yotam Ottolenghi**

But the trouble is is that it's quantity over quality isn't it. It's, like, there's so much but actually it normally often doesn't taste of much either. So, you, kind of, just try to get to the flavour but it never comes.

**James Acaster**

This is going to blow your mind.

**Ed Gamble**

Go on.

**James Acaster**

My first meal that I had in Disney World on my recent holiday, starter snails, main course cob salad. What the hell is going on? This is one conversation and you guys are-

**Ed Gamble**

Wow, you had snails at Disney World?

**James Acaster**

Yes.

**Yotam Ottolenghi**

Who serves snails at Disney World?

**James Acaster**

Brown's Derby Diner. I went to Brown's Derby-

**Yotam Ottolenghi**

How do you remember that as well? I mean, was it so recent?

**James Acaster**

Oh, it's recent, but the main thing I was obsessed with was making sure we had good food all week because we were there for a week at Disney World.

**Ed Gamble**

He doesn't have kids.

**Yotam Ottolenghi**

What a nightmare.

**James Acaster**

I don't have kids, and, so-

**Yotam Ottolenghi**

A week?



**James Acaster**

Yes, it's just me and my girlfriend. One of the best holidays I've ever had. It was just absolutely brilliant.

**Yotam Ottolenghi**

So, you wake up in the morning and you go, like, 'I'm going to spend the day in Disney World.'?

**James Acaster**

Yes.

**Yotam Ottolenghi**

And then the next day you wake up in the morning and say, 'I'm going to spend my day in Disney World.'?

**James Acaster**

Yes, but what you've got bear in mind is there are four different parks, so, you're not going in the same park every day, and there's also Disney Springs, and you just get to take your time a little bit. We were basically there for-, well, we ended up being there for six days because we had a whole palava with our flights.

**Yotam Ottolenghi**

Oh my god, you missed the seventh day.

**James Acaster**

We missed the first day, but yes.

**Yotam Ottolenghi**

Oh, the first day.

**James Acaster**

But we basically did. But it was great and I was really obsessed, my girlfriend was on top of everything, but I was obsessed with food and what we were going to eat, because I didn't want to eat bad Disney food all week. So, first the meal we had-,

**Ed Gamble**

Because James is a gourmand, you know. So, this week at Disney world-,

**Yotam Ottolenghi**

I'm starting not to believe that, but, I mean, why would the gourmand go to Disney World. Oh, I guess there are really good restaurants in Disney World. I've never been, so-,

**James Acaster**

Well, I wasn't going for the food obviously, but I was, like, 'We're going to have to eat while we're there. I don't want to just eat, like, the worst theme park food ever for a week. It's going to be depressing. So, I've got find what the best food at Disney World is so that I can make sure that it's good and I like it.' And Brown's Derby was our first meal that we had when we got there. So, we've had, like, a day and a half



living in an airport because our flight got delayed, cancelled and all sorts. So, we get there and I'd just been thinking about Brown's Derby for ages. I'd been looking on the app, in the airport and going, 'Right, what am I going to order when I get to Brown's Derby man?' Because that's my first meal when I get there. I was, like, 'I'm going to get the snails. I'm going to get that cob salad, the world famous cob salad.'

**Ed Gamble**

World famous cob salad.

**James Acaster**

Well, it's what it says on the list. On the menu they're called world famous cob salad.

**Ed Gamble**

They don't even call them menus.

**James Acaster**

Yes. And then I was, like, 'Dessert, I'm going to get the 50th Anniversary Baked Alaska.' And that's exactly what I did and it was delicious.

**Yotam Ottolenghi**

I thought you were going to get the cheese course.

**James Acaster**

Not at Brown's Derby.

**Ed Gamble**

Not tempted to open a restaurant in Disney World Yotam?

**Yotam Ottolenghi**

Well, now that you say it, if you've got some sad gourmands coming to Disney World then I would probably just-, that would be the next stop.

**James Acaster**

There's a gap in the market there, because actually what we ended up doing is we had a lot of dinner reservations and we cancelled all of them because actually a lot of the restaurants we found by day two we were, like, 'Do you know what these restaurants aren't very good, but the snacks that we're getting along the way in Disney are great.' So, we cancelled all our dinner reservations and just snacked our way around the park. So, that's my top tip.

**Yotam Ottolenghi**

So, what were the snacks like, some highlight snacks?

**James Acaster**

Oh, let me tell you. Cheeseburger spring rolls.



**Yotam Ottolenghi**

Oh wow.

**James Acaster**

I dream of them still to this day.

**Yotam Ottolenghi**

Do you?

**James Acaster**

Yes. The cheeseburger spring rolls (talking over each other 01.09.55).

**Yotam Ottolenghi**

So, the cheeseburger in the spring roll, you get the burger and the cheese? Or you also get the bun?

**James Acaster**

No bun. Burger and cheese-

**Ed Gamble**

James, this is disgraceful.

**James Acaster**

Maybe some pickles in the-

**Ed Gamble**

You've got Yotam Ottolenghi on the podcast and you're telling me about cheese burger spring rolls.

**Yotam Ottolenghi**

You need to balance its yin and yang.

**James Acaster**

From Disney World if you please.

**Ed Gamble**

Oh no, this is so embarrassing Yotam, I'm so sorry.

**James Acaster**

And a burger sauce dip. So, you get two cheese burger spring rolls, burger sauce dip, and you eat them when you're going over the bridge, and it is a wonderful start to the day.

**Ed Gamble**

And then you chuck yourself off the bridge because they make you feel so sad.



**James Acaster**

If the river was full of spring rolls I would chuck myself off the bridge. If it was full of cheeseburger spring rolls I'd chuck myself off the bridge immediately, happily. But, yes, cheeseburger spring rolls are my top recommendation. I love them.

**Yotam Ottolenghi**

And how was the roller-coaster?

**James Acaster**

I can't tell you about it. No, no.

**Yotam Ottolenghi**

Is that the roller-coaster?

**James Acaster**

Oh, yes, the roller-coaster was the food.

**Yotam Ottolenghi**

It was the cheeseburger was it?

**Ed Gamble**

What roller-coaster was it?

**James Acaster**

It was Cosmic Rewind. Guardians of the Galaxy, Cosmic Rewind. It's the best roller-coaster I've ever been on in my life. No spoilers. We arrive at your dream dessert.

**Yotam Ottolenghi**

Okay, so, my dream dessert is a tiramisu, and I hope I'm not like a lot of people on the show have already went along for this. I don't know-,

**James Acaster**

It's not come up as often as you think, yes.

**Ed Gamble**

No, not as much as I would have thought, because it's obviously a very popular dessert.

**Yotam Ottolenghi**

Something that I've been exposed to from also quite a young age, like, my mum used to make tiramisu, and then I've made it myself, and I just-, for me it's just the ultimate dessert. It's creamy, it's spongy, it's got that coffee and alcohol and it's just-, a bit of chocolate on top if you want to. I mean, it's just so good and I don't know, I can't say much more about it. I just love a tiramisu.



**James Acaster**

It's one of those ones where I think my dad told me when I was a kid that this is the best dessert in the world, and because I just believed everything my dad said I thought that was official. So, I still think of it now that-

**Ed Gamble**

Well, it's the best dessert in the world isn't it?

**James Acaster**

Well, it's the best dessert in the world, a tiramisu.

**Yotam Ottolenghi**

Yes, that's right. It is the best dessert in the world and I think it's, kind of, it's got this perfection. It's subtle, it's not, like-, I like lots of desserts but this one is sophisticated-

**Ed Gamble**

t's a grown up dessert.

**Yotam Ottolenghi**

Yes, but it's not so grown up, like, that-, it's great. I often think about it as like-, so, Italians have tiramisu and Brits have trifle. I actually like trifle too, but trifle can go wrong in so many ways, and tiramisu doesn't really go wrong. So, in trifle if you get the fruit aspect too much it really just spoils it. The moment when the fruit touches the cream and it all becomes a bit like-

**Ed Gamble**

Liquid-y and, yes.

**Yotam Ottolenghi**

Yes, that's bad. So, a good trifle needs to prevent that from happening. So, it's much easier to get a bad trifle. But a tiramisu that hardly ever happens, it's, kind of, all soft and it all comes together at the end. Nothing really bad can happen.

**James Acaster**

So, in Superbad they make tiramisu-

**Ed Gamble**

Do they?

**James Acaster**

In cookery class near the beginning of the film and they've messed it up and they just say, 'Just grate loads of chocolate and it will be fine.' And they're doing that.

**Yotam Ottolenghi**

It will be fine.



**James Acaster**

And they're doing that, so, I think Superbad knows what it's on about.

**Yotam Ottolenghi**

Yes.

**James Acaster**

Like, it agrees with you that you can't really mess up a tiramisu.

**Yotam Ottolenghi**

Tiramisu.

**Ed Gamble**

I think I only started to like tiramisu recently because it does feel like more of a grown up dessert, and a lot of my dessert love comes from when I was a kid. It feels nostalgic. Like, I really like chocolate so anything really chocolatey I'm into. But now eating tiramisu it feels-, as a kid I was not into it because it was heavy coffee and a boozy taste in it.

**Yotam Ottolenghi**

Well, yes, because it's not just for the-, but you can adjust it for kids. Like, it doesn't have to have as much coffee and you can literally-,

**Ed Gamble**

Now, yes.

**Yotam Ottolenghi**

And you can, kind of, do it like a nice syrup, like a maple syrup or something like that, and then you dip them and it's fine. You don't have to have-,

**James Acaster**

You must go to loads of different other chefs' restaurants and try other stuff, and weird, like, versions of things, deconstructed-, have you had weird versions of tiramisu where they've done it completely differently, tried to reinvent it?

**Yotam Ottolenghi**

I'm trying to think. I'm sure I have. I mean, and the thing is that when you go to Italian restaurants and they sit there in the refrigerated cupboard that you can actually see through because it's, like, it's a glass fridge, you always think that it's probably sat there for too long and it's not going to be nice. All those cakes and desserts that sit in that-, but they always surprise you when you go to a good Italian restaurant because all the rest comes from the kitchen but those things have sat and you think, like, 'Oh, I want something fresh that's been plated from-', ' But tiramisu actually really benefits from that. I'm trying to think if I had a deconstructed tiramisu. No, nothing comes to mind.



**Ed Gamble**

The classic's the best, right?

**Yotam Ottolenghi**

I think because it needs to sit. I think you don't eat tiramisu as soon as you've made it, you need to really let it settle-

**Ed Gamble**

So, then you can cut the-, slice it-,

**Yotam Ottolenghi**

And then you can cut it, refrigerate-, but also it comes together like so many other foods, it's, kind of, like, yes, it needs to-, the ingredients need to have a little time together to settle, to play, to get to know each other.

**James Acaster**

Still find it impossible every time people talk about tiramisu and mention it, not to think of Milton Jones' joke that his daughter wrote for him.

**Ed Gamble**

Go on.

**James Acaster**

Ask me if I want a tiramisu.

**Ed Gamble**

Do you want a tiramisu?

**James Acaster**

Don't mind if a tirami-do.

**Ed Gamble**

Lovely.

**James Acaster**

His daughter said it once to him at the table and then he just put it in his show. Didn't even tell the audience his daughter said it. He just went, 'Tiramisu? Don't mind if I tirami-do.' They'd laugh every night.

**Ed Gamble**

Yes.

**James Acaster**

I'm going to read your menu back to you now, see how you feel about it. You would like Campari on ice with some orange before the meal begins.





**Yotam Ottolenghi**

That's right.

**James Acaster**

Then sparkling water. You would like some sourdough from The Dusty Knuckle with salted butter. Starter, your grandmother's semolina gnocchi with cheese and nutmeg. Main course, chicken shawarma in pitta with salad, tahini, pickles, side dish of chips. Would you want it in the pitta? Drink, the black beer, the fizzy malt. Dessert, tiramisu.

**Yotam Ottolenghi**

That's right.

**James Acaster**

That's a very clean menu as well. That's very, like, simple.

**Ed Gamble**

Oh, it's delicious.

**Yotam Ottolenghi**

Yes, because things are familiar, kind of, we know what you're talking about.

**Ed Gamble**

Yes.

**Yotam Ottolenghi**

And, yes, I love that. Are you going to serve it to me?

**James Acaster**

Yes, right now.

**Ed Gamble**

Absolutely. Get in the garden.

**James Acaster**

Just put your clothes over there.

**Ed Gamble**

Yotam, thanks so much for coming to the dream restaurant. Thank you.

**Yotam Ottolenghi**

Oh, it was a pleasure.

**Ed Gamble**

What a wonderful, wonderful menu.



**James Acaster**

It was always going to be delicious. We knew it, but it was great to hear it. Great to hear the recipes, the techniques broken down sometimes as well. Real top notch stuff, and not any mild cheddar in sight.

**Ed Gamble**

No, and a lovely man who dealt with us very well I think.

**James Acaster**

Oh, yes, yes, yes. I think he found us charming.

**Ed Gamble**

Yes. At no point before we interviewed Yotam Ottolenghi did I think he'd have to sit through so much roller-coaster chat.

**James Acaster**

Yes, and you know, he sat through it, he did.

**Ed Gamble**

Yes.

**James Acaster**

But we appreciate it Yotam and any time you want to talk about Disney World again, you know, I'll happily recommend all the snacks.

**Ed Gamble**

Yes.

**James Acaster**

Hopefully one day Yotam Ottolenghi's going to try cheeseburger spring rolls from the spring roll cart in Disney World (talking over each other 01.16.36).

**Ed Gamble**

Yes, I'm not sure man. I was looking at his face all the way through that. He looked absolutely disgusted by it.

**James Acaster**

I don't know.

**Ed Gamble**

Do go and buy Ottolenghi Test Kitchen, Extra Good Things by Yotam and by Noor Murad and the rest of the Ottolenghi test kitchen. I've had a bigger read now. I'm very excited to cook some stuff from it. It is out now and it's published by Ebury Press.



**James Acaster**

When I die, bury me with Ebury Press.

**Ed Gamble**

Also go onto my website because I'm coming to Australia soon. See you in Australia, for gigs. I'm not on holiday. I'm not plugging my holiday.

**James Acaster**

No, keep that hush.

**Ed Gamble**

Get on my website. Check it out. I'm going to hit up some Australian cities and some New Zealand cities.

**James Acaster**

Ebury, Ebury, Ebury Press. I read a look a book and then I say yes.

**Ed Gamble**

Thank you very much for listening. Goodbye.

**James Acaster**

Goodbye.