



# Off Menu – Ep137– Michael Schur

## Ed Gamble

Welcome to the Off Menu podcast, taking the Stilton of humour out of the fridge of the internet, letting it come up to room temperature, cutting it with the knife of good times, putting it on the cracker of great fun, with the chutney of friendship. Mm.

## James Acaster

Worst one yet obviously, for obvious reasons. Hated it. Disgusting.

## Ed Gamble

Definitely not the worst one yet, actually really nice, and I added so many elements to it, because I was, like, 'Oh, that sounds lovely.'

## James Acaster

Yes, you really got into it and you really got lost in it, but, look, if people are having that for lunch or after dessert fair enough, it's nice. You know how I feel about it. I've said it many times, but, like, you know that you're riling me up early doors. Are you going to send me into this interview angry?

## Ed Gamble

No. Look, sometimes sugar gets too much and it's lovely to have something deep and rich and flavoursome like a lovely bit of Stilton on a cracker. That's what this podcast represents, it's like a Stilton on a cracker.

## James Acaster

If you're wondering, that piece of shit is called Ed Gamble. My name is James Acaster, and this is the Off Menu podcast where we invite a guest into The Dream Restaurant and we ask them a favourite ever starter, main course, dessert, side dish, and drink. Not in that order. Making their dream menu, baby. And this week the guest is Michael Schur.

## Ed Gamble

Michael Schur. We're very excited to have Michael on the pod, James. What a back catalogue, what a body of work this man has. He's a writer, of course, a wonderful writer.

## James Acaster

A show runner. I mean, you know, also, dare I say, an actor, we've seen him in front of the camera as well as Cousin Mose.

## Ed Gamble

Yes, Mose.

## James Acaster

Look, we're big fans of The Good Place, of The Office.

## Ed Gamble

Parks and Rec.

## James Acaster

Parks and Rec. I mean, we could go on for a long time. He's been involved in-

## Ed Gamble

He co-created Parks and Rec, James, it's one of my favourite shows of all time.



**James Acaster**

Yes, it's a bit intimidating going into this, sure.

**Ed Gamble**

He's probably feeling the same.

**James Acaster**

Yes, well, he's at The Dream Restaurant, he's got to get it right, so he probably is feeling pretty-,

**Ed Gamble**

Yes, he probably loves hypothetical. He loves, sort of, later period Mock The Week. He's quaking in his little boots.

**James Acaster**

Be quaking in his little boots having to talk to us.

**Ed Gamble**

Yes.

**James Acaster**

Yes, good actually, good to really remember that before we go in so we're not intimidated.

**Ed Gamble**

Yes.

**James Acaster**

Also, of course, even though we're big fans, look, if he says the secret ingredient we're going to kick him out. That's how it goes. Every single week, there's an ingredient which we deem to be disgusting, then we kick someone out. This ingredient I actually don't think is disgusting, I actually like it a lot but-,

**Ed Gamble**

It's thematically appropriate.

**James Acaster**

Sometimes it relates to the guest so we do it, don't we?

**Ed Gamble**

Yes, so the secret ingredient is beets.

**James Acaster**

Beets.

**Ed Gamble**

Beets. Michael was, of course, Cousin Mose, who worked on Schrute Farms in The Office, an American Workplace which he also wrote for. And that was a beet farm, so beets.

**James Acaster**

It was a beet farm. There was a song by a band called The Hood Internet, where they said the line 'call me Dwight Schrute the way that I eat beets', which is pretty cool.

**Ed Gamble**

Oh, that's good, I like that.



**James Acaster**

Also, do you know what I'm very excited about? You're on tour and it's going great.

**Ed Gamble**

I am on tour. The show is called Electric. It goes all over the UK up until the end of April. Edgamble.co.uk for tickets. You know what I'm excited about James?

**James Acaster**

What are you excited about?

**Ed Gamble**

Your book.

**James Acaster**

Ah, yes. I've got a book coming out in August and people can pre-order it now. It's called James Acaster's Guide to Quitting Social Media: Being the best YOU you can be and saving yourself from loneliness, volume one. It's all about how I gave up social media and you can too. And if you're worried that that sounds a little preachy or heavy, don't worry, I've made everything up and it's really stupid.

**Ed Gamble**

And Volume Two is all about how you gave up caffeine.

**James Acaster**

Yes, and at the end of the book there's a hell of a twist.

**Ed Gamble**

Not a twist if you've ever listened to this podcast, of course. But, speaking of books, the reason Michael is here is to promote his book, as well as have a great chat with his two heroes of comedy, me and you. But his book is called How to be Perfect. So, it sounds like more of a helpful book than your book is.

**James Acaster**

Yes, it would probably cover everything I would have to say, and then more.

**Ed Gamble**

Yes. I know whose book I'm going to actually read and whose book I'm going to get on audiobook.

**James Acaster**

Yes. Hey, we don't get paid by the -, actually, no, we do, yes, because we get paid more for the book. Yes.

**Ed Gamble**

Well, without further ado, let's chat to Michael Schur.

**James Acaster**

Michael Schur. Here is the Off Menu menu of Michael Schur.

**Ed Gamble**

Here is the Off Menu menu of Michael Schur. Welcome Mike/Michael Schur to The Dream Restaurant.

**Michael Schur**

Do I get the genie or do I get the-



**James Acaster**

Pssshhh.

**Michael Schur**

Oh, there we go.

**James Acaster**

Welcome Michael Schur to The Dream Restaurant, we've been expecting you for some time.

**Michael Schur**

I thought for a second the genie was just not going to show up for me. That I was going to get denied.

**Ed Gamble**

What an awful start that would be if the genie just didn't show up to this episode of Off Menu, that would be so horrible.

**Michael Schur**

I know, just a sad, 'Come on in, have a seat,' like a moribund Dream Restaurant.

**James Acaster**

That would be sad actually. No, normally I try and interrupt the guest when they start saying, 'Oh, thanks for having me.' And a, 'Pssshhh,' out the-, and you anticipated it.

**Michael Schur**

Oh, I see.

**James Acaster**

And so we both were looking at each over Zoom like, 'Eh?' Who's going to go first?

**Michael Schur**

Which one of us-, yes, well, I'm happy that the genie showed up, that's great.

**James Acaster**

We were talking about this earlier, me and Ed, this is exactly what-, so, you know, awkward greetings and stuff like that, I was lucky enough to just visit very quickly the set of The Good Place one season, and I went to shake Ted Danson's hand, and I fucked that up, and that's exactly the same as this.

**Michael Schur**

How did you fuck that up? What did you do? Did you put out your left hand or something?

**James Acaster**

He admitted later on that it was his fault. I put my hand out for a normal hand shake and Ted Danson went in with his hand making a T shape with his hand and mine. I've never seen anyone do that before. He crashed his fingers into my palm. And I still instinctively gripped onto them, and he just said, 'Oh dear, that's not worked at all.' And I was really panicking. It was in front of Janet and Chidi. It was bad stuff.

**Michael Schur**

So, you were just like a T Rex, just awkwardly clinging to his hand?

**James Acaster**

Yes.



**Ed Gamble**

Are you sure it's not something Ted Danson was trying out to make the T-shape for Ted, and you, sort of, greeting?

**James Acaster**

Of course. Oh no, of course, I was meant to pivot and turn it into a D. So, he keeps his hand there, I go D, and we both look at each other and go, 'Ted Danson.'

**Michael Schur**

That's what he wants. Now, when were you here? How did I not know you were on the set? When did you come?

**James Acaster**

It was season 3, 2018 I think.

**Michael Schur**

Sounds right.

**James Acaster**

I was visiting a friend and she was working on set that day. I wasn't able to see her any other day so she just said, 'Just come.' I was very reluctant, just so you know. I don't want to get anyone in trouble here. I was, like, 'I can't come onto the set.' I was a big fan of the show anyway. I was like, 'I can't come onto the set,' and then, you know, I probably pretended like I didn't want to come on the set for about 2 more asks, and then I went because I did want to go.

**Ed Gamble**

The friend doesn't exist, he snuck on to the set.

**James Acaster**

Yes, I'm a blagger.

**Michael Schur**

He was at Universal Studios and just climbed over a fence.

**James Acaster**

Yes, exactly what I did.

**Michael Schur**

Did you have a good time? Did we treat you well while you were here? Did you enjoy your visit?

**James Acaster**

Yes, I just watched a scene get rehearsed and then I went and got some free food.

**Michael Schur**

That is the ultimate Hollywood experience. Just work for 8 minutes and then get a bunch of free food.

**James Acaster**

What was the first set that you were ever on?

**Michael Schur**

I started at Saturday Night Live in 1998 and that was my first job and that was the first time I'd ever been on a set, so that was my introduction. That's not a good introduction to what it's like, because it's a one of a kind. No other show functions-, That show's bananas. You go to work at 1:00 in the afternoon and you stay at work until 5:00 in the morning. So, everyone is shifted. I got hired right



after college and it's the only job where your schedule shifts later than it was when you were in college. You sleep later and you go to bed later than when you were in college which is bananas. So, I was there for 7 years and then I came out to work on The Office, the American Office, and that was the first time I was on a real Hollywood set with free food and stuff like that. So, yes, that was my origin story.

**James Acaster**

Were you able to dictate people's bedtimes when you went to The Office and say, 'We're not staying up till 5:00AM anymore?'

**Michael Schur**

I did, yes. I made a chart and I was like, 'Everyone in bed by 11:00,' we don't have the lives no. That was 2004, so I've been doing, essentially, that same thing since 2004.

**Ed Gamble**

That whole SNL experience, it just sounds so intense. Whenever people talk about working on that show it just sounds so crazy to do all of that intense work, and then you do it, and then it's gone, it's done.

**Michael Schur**

Yes. Well, to me that's the good thing about it, because if you have the greatest week of your life, professionally, if you write 5 sketches and they all do great at the read-through, and then they all go on TV, and the audience laughs at all of them, and you're feeling incredible, you wake up on Monday and you've got nothing again, and you will get your ass kicked. The people who work at SNL tend to be very nice people because for most people it's their first job, and it just destroys your ego. It just drives all of the ego out of you because you bomb so hard. I bombed so hard for so long at that job. Just miserable flop sweating, famous people reading your sketches and the only sound that you hear is 100 people in the read-through room slowly turning the paper. That sound echoes in my ears to this day. So, you learn to not be precious about your own writing.

**Ed Gamble**

It's almost worse bombing when you're not performing. Because I've had both of those feelings. When you're bombing when you're performing, you can go, 'Well, just keep your head in it,' you keep going. But if you're watching someone else bomb with your words you feel guilty and terrible at comedy.

**James Acaster**

And helpless.

**Michael Schur**

I heard this rumour in the '70s, when the show first started, the read-throughs were so terrible sometimes that, I think Al Franken or Tom Davis, one of those legendary old-timey writers that used to work on the show invented this system where there's a little bell, like a bell when you go into a hotel and you ring for service. They handed it to the writer whose sketch it was, and the idea was if you get 4 pages into a 15-page sketch and it's bombing, the writer can just ring the bell and it's like, 'I give up.' It was a good idea in theory but apparently the problem was that every writer just as soon as one joke would bomb they were just going, 'Get me out of here,' hitting the bell. So, they had to stop doing it because every writer was panicking at every single sketch they wrote.

**James Acaster**

Ed, you've seen me have some pretty bad gigs. If I had a little bell that I could ring as writer and performer, how quickly do you think I'd ring a bell into most of my shows?

**Ed Gamble**

I've seen you have gigs where you would've rung the bell on the way out to the stage.



**Michael Schur**

'This isn't going to work. Sorry everyone.'

**Ed Gamble**

Or doing the announcement offstage. Please welcome to the-, 'ding'.

**James Acaster**

That's fair.

**Michael Schur**

I heard you guys talking about this actually on one of the podcasts about how 100 people can be laughing and you will find the 1 person in the crowd who isn't. A good friend of mine is a stand-up and he talks about that all the time. He'll just zero in on the 1 guy in row 83 who is just miserable and that's all you can think about. It's the same for me, by the way. 1 bad review-, I stopped reading reviews a long time ago because I realised that 1 bad one outdoes thousands of good ones.

**James Acaster**

I've come up with a really good segue. Check this out. But of course, you don't have to worry about bad reviews any more, Mike, because you're perfect and you can teach people who read your book how to be perfect, is that correct?

**Michael Schur**

That was a great segue. Although the perfection I'm talking about in the book is ethical perfection, not comedic perfection. What would you rather have? Would you rather be an ethically-perfect person, or a perfect comedian who gets laughs at every joke?

**Ed Gamble**

You are absolutely correct to separate the 2, and it's not possible to be both, as we all know from the best comedians.

**James Acaster**

They will tell you, 'You can't have good humour and make everyone laugh and be ethical at the same time.'

**Michael Schur**

I don't have any aspirations to be perfect in either version. Being a perfect comedian would be hell, right? If everyone always laughed at every joke, there would be no point in telling jokes. If you were a perfect ethical person, you would just be annoying and no one would like you, no one would want to hang out with you. So, it's bad either way.

**Ed Gamble**

Yes, totally.

**James Acaster**

Yes. Did you realise that-, see, this is what's going to happen, everything Michael says we're just going to go, 'Mm, that sets me up for a question about his work actually.'

**Ed Gamble**

You know that's what professional podcasts do though, James?



**James Acaster**

Yes, but then I have to stop myself. We're meant to be talking about food, don't fucking go, 'Oh, people being perfect, being boring and annoying, did that inspire you with The Good Place, to make sure it was about bad people and not the good people?' 'Shut the fuck up, James.' That's exactly where I was in my head. 'Ding!'

**Michael Schur**

There you go.

**Ed Gamble**

It's a good question though, James.

**Michael Schur**

The premise was always that there was some kind of perfect Eden paradise and that someone got in accidentally. That was always the starting point, because perfect people are boring and I thought the only way to make it funny was that someone gets in who shouldn't be there. That was always baked in. I guess I should spoiler alert this. I didn't come up with the idea of the whole thing being like a torture chamber until much later. I worked on it for a while, but I kept getting to this point where I was like, even though one of the characters is going to be a person who got accidentally, if everyone else is actually a good person and they are actually perfect, that's still going to be boring. That's still going to be annoying. Then I was like, 'Oh, wait, if all of them are actually being tortured by Ted Danson's character, now that's something interesting,' because you can present them to the audience as, 'These are what good people look like.' Then reveal, 'Oh, no, actually, they all suck in different ways.' So, that was the key, coming up with that twist. Then I was, like, 'Okay, now I feel like I know how to write this show.' The book was a natural end of the show. I got to the final season and just thought, 'I feel like I still want to write about this stuff in some way.' I thought of it as like an exit interview for myself, of what did I learn, can I talk about it in a way that is not boring? Because the books are boring.

The original texts are incredibly, bone-crushingly dull, and I felt like I was a better person because I had learnt about them and had talked to people who had explained them to me. I felt like if I could put all this stuff into a book that was for regular people, not PhD candidates, that it would perhaps be of some use to people. So, I just tried to dump everything that I'd learned into 1 conversational book about here's what I think it means to be a good person, take it or leave it. Here's a bunch of theories. They're helpful to me when I'm in weird spots in my life and maybe they'll be helpful to you, that was the basic idea.

**James Acaster**

Love it, thank you. I unring the bill, it was a good question.

**Ed Gamble**

Just put the bell away, man. In fact, let me take your bell, I'll be in charge of your bell.

**James Acaster**

Thank you, Ed. We always start with still or sparkling water, do you have a preference?

**Michael Schur**

I do. Before I do that, let me make one disclaimer if you don't mind. My food takes have been referred to by more than one friend of mine as horrifying and basic and terrible. I'm famous amongst my group of friends for having terrible takes on food. So, I hope that 1 of the aspects of The Dream Restaurant is that there's no judgement for what I'm about to say.

**James Acaster**

No.





**Michael Schur**

Okay, good.

**James Acaster**

Well, actually I say, 'No.'

**Ed Gamble**

Well, actually that's not true at all, is it? As you well know, Michael.

**James Acaster**

We've judged a lot of people, Michael. We've bullied some people. What do you put this down to, this taste in food?

**Michael Schur**

I don't know. I really like good food. When I eat good food, I'm happy and I recognise it as good food. But when I eat bad food, I often feel the same way. I often feel like, 'This is fine, I'm eating food and it's fine.' So, I think I'm just unrefined. I just have no ability to discern, really, between good and bad food. So, as a result, my favourite foods-, I eat like a child, essentially. I eat like an 11 year old boy, that's how I would characterise my palate. It's not that I don't have an appreciation for excellent cuisine, I do, I just never think to seek it out and I don't really care whether what I'm eating is-, I'm eating at French Laundry or something or I'm making myself a peanut butter and jelly sandwich.

**Ed Gamble**

So, they would both rank high on your list?

**Michael Schur**

Yes.

**Ed Gamble**

If you went to a restaurant like the French Laundry and they brought you a peanut butter and jelly sandwich, you would go, 'Oh this makes sense?'

**Michael Schur**

Yes, this is great. I love peanut butter sandwiches. So, anyway, I know I'll be judged. I hope I'm not judged too harshly. Also, I weirdly hope that I say the secret ingredient and you guys just kick me out because then I'll save myself a lot of embarrassment. So, with that qualification, still water please, thank you.

**Ed Gamble**

Acceptable so far, we're not going to judge you so far.

**Michael Schur**

I find that sparkling water makes me thirstier. Has anyone ever said this? Is this a new take for you?

**Ed Gamble**

No, I think that is a new take.

**James Acaster**

I think some people have said the opposite. Some people have said that they've read that scientifically it is meant to quench your thirst more.



**Michael Schur**

Well, I disagree. I feel like when I drink sparkling water my throat gets parched and I need more. It's like an endless loop, I'll just fall into this endless loop where I'll drink more and more of it because I'm thirstier and thirstier, and then it'll make me thirstier, and eventually I'll die. I'll get desiccated and die. So, still water please.

**Ed Gamble**

Do you think this is something that the sparkling water people have developed over the years in a lab to sell more sparkling water?

**Michael Schur**

Yes. I think it's nefarious. I think they know what they're doing and they've carbonated it in order to make you thirstier to buy more of their product. Yes, that's literally what I think, I'm not kidding. I've had that exact thought before. This is a loophole.

**James Acaster**

Have you said it out loud to people?

**Michael Schur**

No. God no. No. Except for you right now. Because I'll be laughed out of polite society if I suggest a hair-brained theory like that.

**Ed Gamble**

Then it's a rabbit-hole situation isn't it? You have that theory and then next thing you know you're looking on YouTube for that theory, and you're QAnon within a month.

**Michael Schur**

I'm watching Steve Bannon's podcast and just going down.

**James Acaster**

Everyone's very hydrated in LA, is that fair to say?

**Michael Schur**

Yes. There's a lot of water shaming that goes on. People have 128-ounce bottles of water that they drink slowly over the course of a day and they tell you that if you're not drinking 128 ounces of water a day you're failing as a citizen. There's a lot of that that goes on, and I can't do that, in part because it just makes me have to pee every 8 seconds. So, I drink 1 glass of water a day, and I'm going to die young because I'm not properly hydrated, that's alright.

**James Acaster**

I've been getting into the drinking, trying to be as hydrated as I can this year. New year's res. Still keeping it up but I am very good friends with my toilet now.

**Michael Schur**

Yes. Every 15 minutes, it's too much.

**James Acaster**

My girlfriend things I'm addicted to cocaine in the flat.

**Michael Schur**

That's less embarrassing than the truth, which is just that you're just urinating every 10 minutes, yes.

**Ed Gamble**

I don't think coke addicts do coke in their toilet when they're in their own house, right?



**James Acaster**

But if I did cocaine that's what I would do. So, that makes sense. Just do it in there, then come out and talk about myself and my business plans to my girlfriend, like she would have no idea.

**Michael Schur**

Talk about all the new apps you're developing and cryptocurrency and whatever, yes, it's a miserable experience.

**James Acaster**

Poppadoms or bread, Mike Schur?

**Michael Schur**

Bread please, thank you. I like a hardy bread like a bread with a lot of grains and nuts and stuff like that, and warm butter, this is a key to me. The butter has to be warm so that it spreads easily. Because that hard, cold butter, you can't do that. My problem is I like bread with chunks of stuff in it and occasionally, if it's a dark restaurant, there will be an olive bread that looks like the kind of bread I want and I'll take it, and olive bread is horrifying and no one should ever eat it. This is one of my food takes, I hate olive bread. So, I hate olives and I hate olive breads, so I sometimes am fooled into thinking I'm getting what I want and getting exactly the opposite.

**Ed Gamble**

This plays perfectly into you eating like an 11-year-old boy because there are no 11-year-old boys who love olives.

**Michael Schur**

That's exactly right, yes

**James Acaster**

My nephew likes olives, my nephew's liked olives since they were 6 or 7. I used to stare at him and I couldn't believe it, when he was just there eating olives. I remember once, in between olives, he went, 'I love olives,' out loud, and it blew my mind. What is going on?

**Ed Gamble**

I'll say that I definitely liked olives when I was 11.

**James Acaster**

You did?

**Ed Gamble**

Yes, I was that kid, totally, I loved olives. I loved poached salmon. I was a proper little gourmand 11-year-old fat boy in dungarees.

**Michael Schur**

That's impressive. That super savoury salty taste like that, that's not for me, no. No olives for me.

**Ed Gamble**

Now, Mike, I hate to pick you up on an inconsistency straight away, because we've had the whole discussion about how you said sparkling water makes you more thirsty, you prefer still water. And listeners might have heard a little can being opened there, and I saw you take a sip and it was a La Croix, which, is that not a sparkling water?



**Michael Schur**

It is. So, there's a corollary to my theory, which is-, well it's 2 parts. (1) is when it's the only thing that you have to drink and you're doing a podcast, then maybe it's okay to just try to soothe your throat. But also, for some reason, the flavoured sparkling water makes me less thirsty than regular sparkling water, I don't know why. It could be psychosomatic but I'm worried that I'm going to start coughing because I'm talking so much, so I need a thing to drink and so I'm risking being extra parched just so to try to make this podcast go more smoothly.

**Ed Gamble**

Fair. Look, you are allowed something to drink. I don't want you to think that I'm saying, 'Don't drink anything during our podcast, Mike.'

**James Acaster**

But that is the closest we've ever got to-, I felt like you were Colombo, or some detective, that you completely caught him out, like, 'Oh, yes?'

**Ed Gamble**

Yes, I did, I got him.

**Michael Schur**

It was on camera for a third of a second and he somehow saw it.

**James Acaster**

I can't believe it. I wasn't even thinking about that, I was there going, 'Oh, what can I say about olives?' That's what I was thinking in my head. You noticed a can?

**Ed Gamble**

That's what I like to do, I like to make our guests feel uncomfortable about every move they make on camera. That's what I do.

**Michael Schur**

Just question them, catch them in inconsistencies. Challenge them.

**Ed Gamble**

I notice on the shelf behind you there you've got a jar of olives, Mike.

**Michael Schur**

Just throwing them into my mouth one after another.

**James Acaster**

The cold butter thing. The amount of despair I feel when I try and spread cold butter across the bread and all that happens is it tears the bread up, you end up with a block of cold butter with loads of bread stuck to it that's not spread around. The sadness that I feel I think is too much.

**Michael Schur**

It's profound.

**James Acaster**

I think I shouldn't feel as sad as I do when that happens, but I feel so sad, like the whole day is ruined and I should go back to bed.



**Michael Schur**

Yes. I think of it as when you're on an aeroplane. If you ever get butter and bread on an aeroplane, it's always like it's been in the freezer. It's not just that it's cold, it's rock hard and you have to hold it in your hand in the wrapper for 30 minutes to get it to just that level that you're talking about. It's horrifying and I feel like there should be a law. We should actually make a law. The Hague, the world court, should try restaurants that don't make their butter spreadable. That's my position.

**James Acaster**

I'd sign that petition.

**Ed Gamble**

I don't think I would and here's why. I love butter and I want any excuse to be able to eat as much butter as possible. When the butter's hard, I like taking a chunk of butter, putting it on the bread and just like almost more butter than bread and eating that like a little butter sandwich.

**Michael Schur**

Oh God, that's terrifying. Your teeth biting into a chunk of butter, that's a pleasant feeling for you?

**Ed Gamble**

Yes, please.

**Michael Schur**

Wow, and you prefer it to an evenly-spread level of butter over the bread?

**Ed Gamble**

I think I do. When I was a kid there were occasions where my mum would go into the fridge and find teeth marks in the butter, which will be the title of my autobiography. Look out for it.

**James Acaster**

So we've got the hearty bread with loads of stuff on the outside, so roughage, and you want warm butter, and that's all you want? No olives specifically.

**Michael Schur**

Yes. No olives anywhere. I'll take a pretzel bread too. I don't know if that's a big thing in London but pretzel bread is good. If there's no hardy, chunky, seedy bread, I'll go with a pretzel bread if that's an option.

**James Acaster**

That is quite exciting. Very German, am I right in saying?

**Michael Schur**

I think you're right, it feels German.

**James Acaster**

Cousin Mose coming out in you here?

**Michael Schur**

I don't know if Mose would eat, I think Mose would more eat a proper ploughman's lunch. He was a farmer. I think he's just taking a big chunk of sourdough and a big chunk of cheese and quietly eating it alone somewhere in an outhouse on his farm.

**James Acaster**

Or he would eat a pretzel but if it was made out of jerky that was made out of a bull's intestine. I think he would have that.



**Michael Schur**

Yes, venison jerky or something, yes, just some horrifying farm meat that he cured himself, yes. Thank you for bringing up Mose by the way, it's very kind of you.

**Ed Gamble**

I think about Mose a lot. I think just that specific scene where people arrive in a car to the farm and Mose just silently runs alongside the car is quite disturbing.

**Michael Schur**

It really is, isn't it, yes. The way it was written in the script was, 'the car pulls up along driveway, suddenly Mose appears out of nowhere and runs alongside it like a dog'. That was the stage direction.

**James Acaster**

Your dream starter?

**Michael Schur**

Here's the problem. I'm a vegetarian but since this is a dream restaurant, if there's no good vegetarian option I will order fish, I will be a pescatarian occasionally. So, I don't know if this is cheating, but my starter's going to be a seafood tower. Is that cheating?

**Ed Gamble**

No.

**Michael Schur**

Because that's more than 1 thing? Okay. When I do eat fish, which is fairly rarely, my favourite thing to get is a seafood tower with multiple platters. So, on my seafood tower would be crab meat, jumbo shrimp, sushi, some good sushi rolls. I don't eat oysters or clams, so no oysters or clams, but you can picture the genie putting an enormous 3-tiered seafood tower with just loads of lump crab meat, lobster, sushi, and jumbo shrimp, and then all the hot sauces and mustards and stuff like that, and I'm going to eat the entire thing.

**Ed Gamble**

It's the first time anyone's employed the tower format to get around having more than one thing, and I'm here for it, I love it. The tower defence.

**Michael Schur**

Good. I definitely had a, 'Am I going to be kicked out for cheating/finding a loophole?' I'm glad to know that I didn't run afoul of your rules. I feel like when you're in a restaurant and someone orders the seafood tower, I feel like everybody's happy. There's something about the variety and the excitement of all of the different things on the tower that just makes everybody happy. So, when I'm in a restaurant like this, I'm constantly finding myself talking other people into the seafood tower. I feel like I'm a salesman and I'm trying to sell them on how great this is going to be and everybody's sceptical and then when it comes everybody's happy.

**James Acaster**

The jumbo shrimp, is that the same as king prawns, Ed?

**Ed Gamble**

Yes, I guess so, like a big shrimp? A shrimp is a prawn, right?

**Michael Schur**

Yes, the big guys that are, like, that big. Then there's the hot sauce, and the shrimp cocktail sauce in a big white dish that you can just dip the whole thing in and then one bite. It's great.



**Ed Gamble**

That is so fancy. If you get that, you feel like, 'This is a fancy night.'

**Michael Schur**

Yes, that's right. You're in Las Vegas, you've gone out and you're at a bachelor party or some kind of celebratory event. There's 8 people, the seafood tower shows up, everyone's happy. Everybody's always happy with a seafood tower.

**Ed Gamble**

That feels like a gala event in a Batman film before something goes really wrong.

**Michael Schur**

The Joker's about to show up.

**Ed Gamble**

Yes. 'You better enjoy that shrimp because the Joker's on his way.'

**Michael Schur**

It's all the rich fat-cats in their tuxedos who are in a rarefied location that's about to be raided by the Joker and his minions. Exactly right.

**Ed Gamble**

It's amazing they even go to those in Gotham any more.

**Michael Schur**

I know.

**Ed Gamble**

Just stay away.

**Michael Schur**

If you get that invitation you're like, 'That sounds fun, we should-, wait a second. Hold on. No, this is a trap.'

**Ed Gamble**

The Joker's going to show up, or multiple villains are going to show up, depending on which film.

**Michael Schur**

As you're driving in your tuxedo, you hear, over the radio, that there was a breakout at Arkham Asylum and a bunch of them escaped, and you're like, 'Well, that probably won't affect my evening. I'll be fine.'

**Ed Gamble**

'Looking forward to my jumbo shrimp.'

**James Acaster**

I think that's a great starter. Also, every time people mention lobster now-, I've got big into reaction videos during the pandemic. I never used to watch reaction videos before the pandemic, and I think something about watching them now brings me a lot of joy.

**Ed Gamble**

Connects you to people?



**James Acaster**

Yes, that's what it is, I think. I've been watching a lot of this guy who plays his dad albums that he likes, and his dad is really open to his son's music, and so it's very heartwarming. There was one where his dad turned to his son and went, 'You're just feeding me lobster here. It's all lobster,' and I always think of that whenever anyone says 'lobster'.

**Michael Schur**

What does that mean?

**James Acaster**

He basically was saying, 'I'm sure you could've been playing me loads of rubbish music but all you keep bringing me is lobster, you keep bring me the best, and there hasn't been an album I don't like so far.'

**Michael Schur**

What a wonderful way to say that, that's great. I love that. 'You're giving me the good stuff,' is what he's saying. Great, that's adorable.

**James Acaster**

Very nice Canadian father and son. We move onto your main course. The dream main. You've had a big tower. So, for your tower as a starter, I'm expecting a skyscraper now for your main course.

**Michael Schur**

Here's where it's all going to fall apart because my 11-year-old boy thing kicks in. I legitimately thought about making my main course peanut butter and jelly sandwich, and my actual choice isn't much better. My actual choice is an entire 16-inch pizza with onions on it. That's my main course. Specifically, when I lived in New York, there was a pizza place called Nino's that was on St Mark's Place in the East Village. I lived near there and I felt like when I found it, 'Oh, I've found the best pizza place in New York. This is it. Everyone wonders where the best pizza is, this is it.' Now, to be fair, 95% of the time I ate pizza there it was 3:00 in the morning and I was drunk, and so I don't trust my opinion, but it closed a long time ago and it was like a crushing thing for me that it closed. Because it was like the place. Every time I went to New York, even after I left, I would go back, I would make a pilgrimage to that pizza place and get a piece of pizza. So, I want to use the magic restaurant to re-open Nino's pizza, and I want an entire pizza with nothing but onions on it. That's my main course.

**James Acaster**

Wow. Is there cheese on it?

**Michael Schur**

Yes. Cheese pizza, cheese and sauce, and then the topping is onions.

**Ed Gamble**

Were you suddenly worried that Mike was picking a pizza with no tomato, no cheese, and just onions?

**Michael Schur**

Just bread and onions.

**James Acaster**

Yes, I was a bit worried. It's just 1 step up from the Kevin McAllister pizza.





### **Michael Schur**

I'd say a half step up from the Kevin McAllister pizza. Here's the thing. In TV writers' rooms, you get lunch every day, and you order from different restaurants. If you order from a restaurant that has an option pizza, I try not to get pizza because I'm too old to be eating pizza every day, so I'll get a healthy salad or something or a veggie burger. If I don't get the pizza, someone else will get a pizza and, as soon as it shows up, I immediately think, 'I wish I had gotten pizza.' Because it looks better than whatever it is that you're eating if you're eating anything else. So, when I thought about the dream restaurant, I thought, 'If I'm in this dream restaurant and someone at another table is eating pizza, whatever I'm eating-, I could be eating the entire chef's menu at French Laundry, I would still look over and smell the pizza from the next table over and think, "I wish I were eating that instead."'

### **Ed Gamble**

I agree with that as a premise, that pizza always looks better than whatever you're eating if you're not eating pizza. I would say the one exception to that for me would be if the pizza only had onions on it.

### **Michael Schur**

I don't know where this started, I don't know why. To me, it's always been like I will eat cheese pizza if it's around, happily, but I will always then wish I were eating onion pizza instead. I know how weird this is, believe me, there's nothing you can say to me that hasn't been said to me a million times before. But I really think onion pizza's the best pizza.

### **Ed Gamble**

I'm also now imagining this, Mike, in the Gotham fundraiser. So, they've taken away the seafood tower and everyone's like, 'Wow, what's coming next?' And then they bring out these huge pizzas. That would be the Joker, it would turn out it's The Joker with the pizza.

### **Michael Schur**

That's how they would know the Joker's about to show up.

### **Ed Gamble**

Yes.

### **James Acaster**

'Oh fuck.' They would open it and they would be, 'Ah, shit?' 'Who ordered pizza?;

### **Michael Schur**

Actually, what it would be like is people would smell pizza and they would go, 'Oh, interesting.' And then they would see that there are onions on it and be like, 'The fucking Riddler man. He's done it again.'

### **James Acaster**

Yes, 'Here he comes.'

### **Michael Schur**

Yes, I think it's the texture. I think I just like the little crunch, it adds something to it. I don't know. I don't like any other topping, I don't like peppers, obviously I don't eat pepperoni or sausage, but I just always want onions. I always want onions on my pizza.

### **James Acaster**

I kind of get the onion thing in a way, because I've started just doing a simple dish where I just roast a load of vegetables and then put them with some cous cous and chickpeas and stuff. I put shallots in there every time. If I forget the shallots, which I did on one occasion, it really is a lot worse. Not just for flavour, but because I am missing those little crunchy bits, it just makes the dish more interesting. And it became a lot more boring-, because if it's just roast veg and cous cous, it's



amazing how much I'm enjoying it lately and finding it fairly exciting, but I think the onions are doing quite a lot of the heavy lifting.

**Michael Schur**

I agree, see. I'm not crazy.

**Ed Gamble**

Look, I love an onion, I love the sweetness of an onion, I love the crunch of an onion, but I just think that pizza is a blank canvas, you can fill it up with whatever you like. Maybe I need to try this. I think I get giddy every time when I'm ordering pizza and I think, 'What can I have on it?' And I pile it up with so much stuff.

**Michael Schur**

I think the mistake with pizza is too many toppings. I think that because it is a blank canvas and you're like, 'That looks good and that looks good.' No matter what it is, I think you want basically 1 or maybe 2 toppings. People who eat meat will eat sausage and onion or you'll eat pepperoni and onion, whatever, but I think anything more than 2 toppings, you're ruining the pizza. Because then all you taste is the stuff on top, then you don't get the basic pizza taste.

**James Acaster**

Is it Nino's you want the pizza from?

**Michael Schur**

Yes.

**James Acaster**

You want it from there?

**Michael Schur**

Yes.

**James Acaster**

I was going to offer you 2 other places. Do you want it from Alfredo's Pizza, or Pizza by Alfredo?

**Michael Schur**

Wow, that's a deep cut.

**Ed Gamble**

I told you this was going to happen. James said that he wouldn't do this. Don't worry. We had Martin Freeman on and James spent the whole thing asking him to do his voice from Fargo so this is actually going very well compared to that.

**Michael Schur**

I heard that one. He didn't get it. It was clear that you wanted him to do the voice and he didn't understand that for a long time.

**James Acaster**

Oh he got it, he got that that's what I wanted him to do the whole time. Martin Freeman's not playing ball with the likes of me.

**Michael Schur**

You kept saying, 'Everyone else isn't good at it, you're the one who's good at it,' and he was like, 'Thank you, thank you very much.' He just didn't take the bait over and over again. I was like, 'He's not going to do it, man.'



**James Acaster**

He's wily, but he got me to do it and then I was pretty gutted about that. I've watched them all again recently, because my girlfriend hadn't seen them, so we watched them all during lockdown. So, they're fresh in the head here. Was it the most watched show during 2020 or something?

**Michael Schur**

The Office was, I think, the most watched show even before the pandemic. It was having this weird resurgence, and then the pandemic kicked it into overdrive. Even with a mask on, I got recognised as Mose more in the last 2 or 3 years than I had when the show was on. I think that when everyone has to stay in the house and there's nothing to do, that show had 201 episodes or something like that, and I think it just became the thing that was a ritualistic family way to pass time. It definitely kicked up a notch. I tried to show my kids the British version and they were like, 'No thank you.' They did not like David Brent as much as Michael Scott, which I get for a kid. Adults love it.

**James Acaster**

All the people in that version, they're killjoys, they don't do accents if you ask them to. They're not very fun, are they? Your dream side dish, what's accompanying this onion pizza from Nino's?

**Michael Schur**

So, my favourite individual food of all foods, I think, is sweet potatoes. There's a restaurant in LA called Jar and they make this side dish that's technically a purple yam is what they call it. It's just a whole purple yam cut in half and then they put this crème fraiche on it as a little sauce there, and it's so dense and hearty that you can kind of just eat that as a whole meal. I always order something and then also the purple yam with crème fraiche, and I then skip most of what I ordered as my dinner and just eat the purple yam. So, I'm ordering a purple yam with crème fraiche from Jar to go along with my entire onion pizza. I'm just realising how horrifying a meal this sounds like. But I'm going to have a side dish of one giant purple yam with crème fraiche.

**Ed Gamble**

Purple yam sounds like-, I mean, this is not 11-year-old boy food. A purple yam with crème fraiche, this is big boy stuff now.

**Michael Schur**

This is big boy food, yes. This is the 1 thing that I feel like an adult when I eat, no question. But it's really good, it's really thick and hearty but also it's got a sweetness to it, and then the crème fraiche is like a little exciting flavour added. I just really love it. I'm not a Thanksgiving food guy, but the one thing I will always eat is sweet potatoes. Any time there's sweet potatoes on a menu I will order them happily and mostly eat that. So, I did not spend a lot of time thinking about how it was going to mix with the onion pizza. It feels like it would be okay with the onion pizza, right?

**Ed Gamble**

I can see you going to and fro between them.

**Michael Schur**

Yes, taking a little break from my enormous onion pizza.

**Ed Gamble**

To go with your purple yam, yes.

**James Acaster**

So far you've essentially ordered 3 things that you'd have as a main meal. You said that this purple yam is pretty much a main course, you have it as your main meal, and then the starter is a tower of 3 different types of seafood. So, you've kind of got 3 main meals so far really. So you could just space them out an hour apart.



**Michael Schur**

Is there someone else coming in after me or can I have this table for a while?

**James Acaster**

You've got this as long as you need it.

**Ed Gamble**

For eternity.

**James Acaster**

Yes, this is The Dream Restaurant. Also, you mentioned Thanksgiving there. American TV shows, and this is maybe something that we notice a lot being from the UK, but, especially sitcoms, there's always a Thanksgiving episode pretty regularly. It seems like that would be a fun thing to do, to be like, 'We've got our own show, we get to do a Thanksgiving episode, especially if it's about a community of a family.' Is that fun, where you get to go, 'Right, how are we going to do this one?'

**Michael Schur**

It is. Although now, TV's been around for so long that there's nothing left to do. The theme of Thanksgiving episodes is always the same, which is, if it's a workplace show, the theme always ends up being, 'You know what, this work place is kind of like a family.' So, you're doing that over and over again. The network TV schedule which is sort of now outdated runs basically September to May. So, you have a Halloween episode, you have a Thanksgiving episode, you have a Christmas episode, you have a Valentine's Day episode. Those are the 4 big staples of American TV holiday episodes. You never get July 4th, Independence Day. Anything in the summer is missing. You don't really get New Year's episodes. You sometimes do, but the show's already off the air from early December to January. So, there are holidays that you never get episodes for and then there are certain holidays that every show does an episode for. It was fun for a while, and then in season 7 of a show you're like, 'God damn it, we have to do a Thanksgiving episode again.' So, it's not un-fun but it also now feels a little perfunctory instead of exciting.

**Ed Gamble**

I had Thanksgiving dinner once, and there was sweet potatoes with marshmallow on the top. That was the maddest thing I've ever eaten in my life and I was like, 'I cannot wrap my head around why this is a thing.'

**Michael Schur**

Because you don't live in America. In America, it's like, 'take the sugary thing and then put sugar on it'. But the craziest thing is that's part of the meal, that's not dessert. Then after that they're like, 'Who wants pie?' And you're like, 'I just ate pie, I just ate exactly this thing.' Then you eat a pecan pie that has more sugar in it. It's bananas. It's nonsense. It shouldn't exist, it should be outlawed.

**James Acaster**

We get onto your dream drink now. By the way, you were saying about the secret ingredient earlier. I don't think you need to worry anymore. We won't tell you what it is just yet, but I think you're out of the woods secret ingredient-wise.

**Michael Schur**

I'm a whiskey drinker generally and I usually just drink neat whiskey, but, since this is a special occasion, I'm going to have a proper Old Fashioned. That's my drink of choice if I'm in the cocktail mood as opposed to just a glass of whiskey mood. So, I'm going to get an Old Fashioned. I'm not going to get super fancy with the whiskey. I'm going to have a Makers Mark Old Fashioned with a nice little dash of sugar and some bitters, and a little twist, and one nice big clear ice cube. I'll have 11 of them because I'm assuming that I won't get drunk, magically, in this dream restaurant. But if I'm feeling it's a special occasion, I'll get an Old Fashioned.



## Ed Gamble

Is this love of whiskey something you funnelled into Ron Swanson?

## Michael Schur

Yes, it's actually a crazy story. Well, not crazy, it's an interesting story. My favourite whiskey is Lagavulin which, when I was living in New York, I used to go to this liquor store. I'm not a huge drinker, but I used to have a bottle of whiskey around if I wanted some whiskey at night. I went into this liquor store and there was this really old Russian guy who ran this liquor store and I used to buy probably Makers Mark, and one day I went in and I was like, 'I'll have a bottle of Makers Mark,' and he was like, 'You like whiskey?' I was like, 'Yes,' and he did this 'come here' thing with his hand and I was like okay. He brought me into the back of his liquor store and I was like, 'I might get murdered. This might be it.' But he said 'Try this,' and he took a tiny little thimble plastic glass and he poured some whiskey into it and he had me try it and it was delicious and he showed me, it was Lagavulin. I was like 'This is great.' He was like, 'This is the best whiskey, this is what you should drink, don't drink Makers Mark, drink this.' So, I was like, 'Alright, old Russian gentleman, you're on.' So, I became a Lagavulin drinker and at the time, this is 2000, maybe 2001, I was the only person I knew who had heard of Lagavulin. It's a tiny small batch thing from Scotland, and I was very proud of the fact that I knew about a whiskey that no one else knew about.

So, I got to LA and I created the show and I made Ron Swanson a whiskey drinker, and the props woman said, 'What whiskey should he drink?' I said, 'Oh, he should drink this whiskey called Lagavulin.' So, she bought a bottle of Lagavulin and put it on his desk for the scene. Now, unbeknownst to me, Nick Offerman got to the scene. I wasn't on the set that day. He got to the scene and was like, 'Oh, I must've told someone that my favourite whiskey was Lagavulin,' because it was his favourite whiskey too. So, we went 2 years not knowing and every time he had to drink whiskey it was Lagavulin, and we went for 2 years not knowing that there was this coincidence. Then, one day I was on the set and someone was like, 'Why do you drink Lagavulin?' And Nick was like, 'It's my favourite whiskey.' And I was like, 'No, it's my favourite whiskey.' And we realised that we had this crazy weird thing in common and we just hugged each other and wept and had a great time. So, it was this weird piece of kismet that lined up perfectly.

## Ed Gamble

It ended up, there's that absolutely beautiful scene where Ron visits the distillery, and it's stunning. Because normally I don't like seeing sitcom characters outside of their natural environment, but it just worked so perfectly, it's just such a peaceful, lovely scene.

## Michael Schur

Yes, we were shooting in London because Chris Pratt was doing the first Guardians movie and we went to London, and we were like, 'Well if we're going all the way to London, what else should we do?' So, we did a bunch of things. We went to Stonehenge for an hour and shot a tiny little scene where Pratt-, there's a moment where he gets a job there and someone gets a letter from him, and it says he went to his first day at work and he got lost, and you just cut to him at Stonehenge going, 'This isn't right.' That was it. It was 3 seconds of an episode. We snuck off to Paris and shot a thing in Paris. Then I was like, 'Well, if we're going all the way to England, we ought to take Nick to the Lagavulin distillery.' So, they broke off a little unit and he took a train and he went to a lighthouse, and he did this whole journey where he went to the only place in Europe that that character would want to go, which was the Lagavulin distillery.

## Ed Gamble

I'm now just saying things I like, but also, because Chris Pratt had got so ripped for Guardians there's that one line in that episode where you have to reference the fact he's lost so much weight and he just says, 'I stopped drinking beer.'



### **Michael Schur**

Yes, he's walking in and he's like, 'That's it? You just stopped drinking beer?' He's like, 'Yes, I've lost 50 pounds.'

### **James Acaster**

Here's the thing, I have absorbed that line as fact, and anytime I don't drink beer and I'm doing Dry January and not drinking for a month or whatever, I genuinely think to myself, 'Ah, good, you're going to end up like Chris Pratt now,' and I genuinely think that in my head, and think, 'Yes, because remember he just stopped drinking beer,' and it's like, 'No, that was a line.'

### **Michael Schur**

In your mind you saw a documentary once about health and there was a line in there about if you don't drink beer you'll look like an action star.

### **Ed Gamble**

You'll look like Star-Lord.

### **James Acaster**

Every year, around this time when I've not drunk for a month and all that, and I'm continuing to not drink too much, I always think of Chris Pratt all the time, think of him saying all he did was quit beer, and in my head I don't put it in Parks and Rec, in my head he's sitting on the sofa being interviewed by Ellen or someone. And it was a real thing that he said once. It's like, 'Yes, because, remember, Chris Pratt said that.'

### **Michael Schur**

He told me what it takes to actually get into that shape and it's more than that. Here is a Chris Pratt story. He was doing a movie called Delivery Man, I think, with Vince Vaughan, and he was playing the fat best friend. So, he was like, 'I'm going to get to 300 pounds.' It was his goal. He's a big guy, he's 6'3" or something. But he was like, 'I'm going to weigh 300 pounds for this role.' So, he just started eating a ton and just ballooning up. We did a scene for an episode where he was in an ice-cream parlour and they were eating ice cream, and all the actors have spit buckets so that the scene is going, they're pretending to eat the ice cream, and when they yell cut, they spit it out. Pratt ate the ice cream every time and he ate, I believe the number is 14 ice cream cones over the course of the scene, and he woke up in the middle of the night with tachycardia. His heart was beating 200 beats a minute, because he had ingested 10,000 grams of fat in one night. So, he got up to 300 pounds. Then, he got cast in Guardians and was like, 'Oh no, I have to be in superhero shape.' So, he started this crazy training regimen, and just the pounds melted off and he was doing 2 a day, 3 a day workouts and going down and down and down. He got to 250, 240, 230. Then they needed to do re-shoots for the first movie. He was like, 'Oh man, okay.' He went back up to 280 and did the re-shoots and then he crashed again. He was like Robert De Niro, his weight was fluctuating 80 pounds twice over the course of 5 months. It was bananas. If you watch, that's season 4 or 5, I can't remember now. If you watch it, from episode to episode he's a completely different person. He just is either enormous and pudgy or looks like a superstar.

### **Ed Gamble**

My wife has occasionally said to me that I remind her of Chris Pratt, and we've never said out loud which Chris Pratt she's talking about. I think I know, but I choose to believe the other one.

### **James Acaster**

That ice-cream chat brings us quite neatly onto dessert. When you were saying about him waking up in the night with his heart going, for me that's a window into my future, I know that's how I'm going to go, after having 14 ice-cream cones, and I'll be happy with that.





**Michael Schur**

I have an extremely specific and angry belief about proper dessert in restaurants, which is that there's only one dessert that anyone should serve, and when a restaurant doesn't serve it, it infuriates me. I don't want anything fancy, I don't want any complicated hot-lava this or lemon-meringue that. I don't want any of that stuff. Here's what I want. A warm chocolate brownie with nuts in it, and a scoop of ice cream. That's it. Just brownie a la mode with nuts, and if a restaurant doesn't serve that dessert, in my mind it's an illegitimate restaurant and should be shut down by the health department.

**Ed Gamble**

By the health department?

**Michael Schur**

Yes.

**Ed Gamble**

So, the health department are coming in, they're going, 'There's no chocolate brownie here, you're being shut down. You may as well as have rats.'

**James Acaster**

That's fair enough.

**Michael Schur**

To me, it's the pizza of desserts, which is to say, if you're eating any dessert and you see anyone else eating that, you would rather have that.

**Ed Gamble**

Do you want onion on your brownie?

**Michael Schur**

Yes, please. No, it has to have nuts in it though. Again, there's some kind of theme here of crunchiness because a chocolate brownie without nuts, take it or leave it. Chocolate brownie with nuts, to me, is the perfect dessert.

**James Acaster**

Interesting. What nuts? Because I think, for me, I'm almost the other way around, because my mum is a really good baker and made a lot of chocolate brownies when we were growing up, but they always had nuts in them. And then I think if it's what you've always had, as nice as it is once you have something that's different, it's like, 'This is the real treat outside of my house,' even though your mum's being really nice to you and making you really nice stuff, you're like, 'Oh, but I get this at my friend's house and I could eat that there.' So, if I had brownies without the nuts in, and still now I get too excited about that. Brownies with walnuts in, I love them.

**Michael Schur**

Yes, that's the right nut.

**Ed Gamble**

Walnut brownies are great.

**Michael Schur**

Yes, that's the right move. So, you're saying that you would reject your mother's love in exchange for just a different dessert.



**James Acaster**

Maybe not these days but as a kid I think I was going a lot of that. I didn't realise how good I had it, with a mum who was really good at baking, really good at cooking, and then I would always think, 'Oh, those kids who are just allowed to eat McDonald's, those lucky kids are so lucky,' and I was there eating something that probably tasted a lot better.

**Ed Gamble**

It's a very James Acaster way to rebel, to have brownies without walnuts. 'In your face, Mum.'

**James Acaster**

'Screw you, Mum, I'm doing what I want.'

**Ed Gamble**

'I'm having no texture in my food.'

**Michael Schur**

I grew up in a very no-sugar household, so any of my friends who had Fruit Loops or whatever, any kind of sugary cereal, that's where I wanted to be sleeping over because I was denied terrible food. So, I was always finding the people whose parents took a more casual approach to their children's health, and that's where I wanted to be. We couldn't eat sugary gum, we couldn't eat sugary cereal. My dad was a health food nut so I ate granola every morning, hearty organic granola was my breakfast. Which is fine, I'm happy that he did that, but at the time all I wanted was Applejacks or whatever.

**James Acaster**

My Mum's more that perfect, very healthy. My dad the opposite, and yet he managed to completely hide that from us throughout our childhood, and we thought he was just as healthy as mum was, and then I've grown up. It's really weird. The sugary cereal, it was called special cereal in our house, we had 1 box of special cereal at the start of the month and whoever went with Mum on the big shop got to choose the special cereal, so you're more likely to want to help out on the big shop and push the trolley and stuff, so you get to choose whatever the special cereal was. And when it's gone, it's gone and you have to wait until the next month for it. Now we've all moved out, I go home to visit and all I want in the morning cereal-wise is something sensible and boring, and I open the cupboard and it's full of sugar cereal because of my dad. That's who he is. I'm like, 'Are you serious? There's Cookie Crisp in here. You're in your 60s. You're going to go nuts. You can't eat Cookie Crisp in your 60s.'

**Michael Schur**

Did you try to make the 1 box last for the whole month? Did you parse it out or just wolf it down?

**James Acaster**

Massive cereal bowl of it. We were allowed one bowl in the morning so it would absolutely brimming to the point where it's nearly spilling over the sides, but not quite, got very good at doing that. Wolf it all down, love it, be in heaven, and then go to school. Yeah, there's me, my brother and sister.

**Michael Schur**

So, it's like 2 days and it's gone?

**James Acaster**

Yes, and then it's gone. Meanwhile my dad was hiding ice cream in the freezer underneath meats so we couldn't see them, and eating it himself, and I didn't know that until I was an adult.

**Michael Schur**

This is fantastic. Kudos to him for pulling it off. You went your whole childhood and never knew this?





**James Acaster**

Yes. He absolutely nailed it.

**Ed Gamble**

Yes, and now he's out in the open he's absolutely going for it this guy.

**James Acaster**

He doesn't care now.

**Ed Gamble**

He doesn't care now.

**Michael Schur**

Cookie Crisp is the perfect cereal for a 60-year-old lunatic to be eating.

**Ed Gamble**

Yes, if you're in your 60s you shouldn't be eating a cereal with a wolf on the box.

**James Acaster**

If anything, I think if he'd been behaving like this when we were children we would've eaten healthier because I think we would have looked at him and gone, 'Oh no, we can't go down this path. He's going crazy this guy.'

**Michael Schur**

That is the parenting question, is always do you do the wrong thing and trust that your kids will rebel against it and do the right thing? That's a constant question in my mind. Should I be letting my kid just watch as much TV as they want and playing with their phones and stuff, and then they'll rebel and become very studious and boring kids who study Philosophy at Oxford or something. I think about that all the time. Clearly, it worked, because now you want boring, sensible, health cereal. He pulled it off.

**James Acaster**

Although there's a certain time of the day where I then go nuts. I can't start the day off with sugar cereal, I just can't, my brain can't do it. I would feel like, 'No, that's it, the whole day's a write-off,' but there's a certain point in the day where I'm like, 'Right, now I'm just crazy dessert guy.' I'm trying to get on top of it, Michael. I'm currently, Monday to Friday, being a good boy, and then the weekends are like the last days of Sodom and Gomorrah. Absolutely insane weekend.

**Ed Gamble**

Do you remember that in The Bible, the tales about Sodom in The Bible where everyone had big bowls of Cookie Crisp?

**James Acaster**

Yes, listen, I might as well be doing what the people in that city did, to the desserts, I might as well be doing it. That's how crazy I'm going, I'm going absolutely crazy.

**Michael Schur**

Walk me through that weekend then, what does it look like?

**James Acaster**

I'm off the leash and I know it. I know it's Saturday, and so everything that I'm eating in the day is just followed up with-, also I've still got all the Christmas chocolate and fudge in the cupboard that all my relatives got for me. So, now, I'm not eating that in the week but in the weekend I'm just dipping in. I'm getting a caramel-covered pretzel every 5 seconds, there's clotted cream fudge. There were these marshmallows that were mango and passion fruit with bits of meringue in them, I was eating



those. I was eating these massive blocks of honeycomb covered in chocolate. Ed got me 4 different types of ice cream and a bag of cookie dough for my birthday. I've just finished them. I finished the cookie dough the other day, directly after I'd eaten some fudge.

**Ed Gamble**

You've got to take the edge off the fudge, haven't you?

**James Acaster**

There was no gap between either of them. It was like there was a come-down after the fudge so, 'I need to level it out with this cookie dough.'

**Ed Gamble**

Do you eat all this in your kitchen or do you take it to the toilet like you're in a night club?

**James Acaster**

I go right to the toilet, I'm eating it all, I'm coming out, I'm talking really quickly about an app that I've designed that gets desserts delivered straight to your bedroom.

**Michael Schur**

Wiping his mouth hoping that no one notices the little bits of fudge on the corners of his lips.

**Ed Gamble**

Powdered sugar all over his nose.

**James Acaster**

Absolutely crazy. Yes,

**Michael Schur**

When the Christmas candy runs out, are you going to be okay then or are you going to go back and restock and keep this up?

**James Acaster**

I tell myself every single year that, 'This is just because I've got it all in the cupboard, because it's Christmas stuff. Once that's gone, I'll cut them down. I know that that's not going to happen. I won't be buying that sort of stuff but ice cream is the one. Ice cream is the one where I'll just be like, 'Well, obviously I'll buy a tub of ice cream today because I feel like treating myself,' and I'll go and buy that. I'm very good now at not eating a whole tub in one go, but that doesn't really count when you go, 'Well, it's good that I only ate a few scoops, and then followed it up with a handful of caramel-covered pretzels, some marshmallow-crazy meringue concoction, and some cookie dough that my friend got me for my 37th birthday.'

**Michael Schur**

Do you do the thing of if there's a piece of candy, you'll be like, 'I'm just going to eat half of this.' Then you break it in half and eat it and 10 seconds later, you're like, 'Well, now I'll eat the other half?'

**Ed Gamble**

Yes.

**Michael Schur**

Yes, on sets, shooting early in the morning out here, there's always Krispy Kreme doughnuts and I always see them and I'm always like, I really want one of those but I don't want a whole one, so I take a knife and I cut it in half and I eat it. As I'm eating the half of it I'm reaching for the other half with my other hand. It's like, 'What was the point of this?' Psychologically I'm healthier because I cut it in half somehow.



**Ed Gamble**

There's a 1 second gap between the 2 halves, it's like you've taken a break.

**Michael Schur**

To give your body a chance to cope with it, process the sugar.

**Ed Gamble**

To scream at you a bit more.

**James Acaster**

Someone sent me some doughnuts for Christmas, Crosstown doughnuts, and there were 6 of them, because I live with my girlfriend so clearly we can share those doughnuts. But she looked at them and said, 'Oh, I'm not really into any of those flavours.' I was into all of those flavours and there was a sticker on the box that said 'must be eaten within a day'. I was like, 'Oh no, I wish I hadn't read that.'

**Michael Schur**

You were just following the rules, that's a good, ethical person right there. You were doing what the rules were.

**Ed Gamble**

He's got a whole roll of those stickers in his drawer and he puts them on everything, and then pretends that they were there when they arrived.

**James Acaster**

I'm going to read your menu back to you now, see how you feel about it. You would like still water, hearty grainy nutty bread and pretzel bread with warm butter. Starter, a seafood tower, crab meat, lobster, jumbo shrimp, sushi rolls, and mustard, hot sauce, and cocktails. Main course, an entire 16-inch pizza with onions from Nino's New York. RIP. Side dish, purple yam with crème fraiche from Jar in LA. Drink, 11 Makers Mark Old Fashioneds with a big ice cube in each one. Dessert, a warm chocolate brownie with nuts and a scoop of ice cream, otherwise we get shut down by the health board.

**Michael Schur**

When I hear it back, I'm pretty into it, I've got to say.

**Ed Gamble**

You know what, so am I, and I actually think that pizza's a stroke of genius in the middle of all of that. To have the seafood tower, you're feeling all fancy, and then you're eating a big old slice of cheesy pizza. I think it's great.

**Michael Schur**

Just what you want to eat for dinner always.

**James Acaster**

Got bad news for you Michael, I know you think you've been in the dream restaurant. It was the nightmare restaurant all along.

**Michael Schur**

I was worried that this was going to happen.

**James Acaster**

I texted Ed yesterday and told him I was going to do that.



**Ed Gamble**

He was so excited. He texted me yesterday going, 'guess what I'm going to do tomorrow. I'm going to say it was the nightmare restaurant all along'. I was, like, 'yes, you do that, man, that's pretty good'.

**Michael Schur**

What was the mystery ingredient, can you tell me now?

**James Acaster**

Can you guess what it is? It's specific to you, related to you and your work.

**Michael Schur**

Is it like chilli?

**Ed Gamble**

It's even more specific to you.

**James Acaster**

You're going to kick yourself so hard.

**Ed Gamble**

But you're in the right show.

**Michael Schur**

Oh, beets.

**Ed Gamble**

When we were circling around the purple yam I thought, 'It's not not a beet, is it?'

**Michael Schur**

No, it's close.

**James Acaster**

Oh, yes, that would have been close.

**Ed Gamble**

Thanks so much for doing the podcast.

**Michael Schur**

It's a real pleasure, thank you for having me.

**Ed Gamble**

Well, there we are, what a lovely chat with Michael Schur, what a nice guy.

**James Acaster**

Lovely chat, lovely guy. It was a privilege.

**Ed Gamble**

Absolutely, and even more of a privilege because he did not say beets, James.

**James Acaster**

Thank you for not saying beets. We would have had to kick you out and then, who knows? Do you think when we kick people out now they just, like, land on a pile on top of Jade Adams?



**Ed Gamble**

Yes, I think so. Or they go to the bad place.

**James Acaster**

Did you like my twist that I did at the end of the episode, Ed?

**Ed Gamble**

Yes.

**James Acaster**

It was good, wasn't it? I think Michael liked it.

**Ed Gamble**

Very clever. I knew you were going to do it, of course, because you texted me yesterday saying you were going to do it.

**James Acaster**

Yes, I texted you telling you that it was going to happen.

**Ed Gamble**

Always good to plan a twist in advance and tell the other person involved.

**James Acaster**

Yes, I thought, 'I'll tell Ed I'm going to do it, because if it's an awful idea Ed will just tell me not to do it.' However, I did forget that our relationship, you don't tell me not to do bad ideas, you just kind of let me do them anyway.

**Ed Gamble**

Yes, good luck with your book.

**James Acaster**

Thank you.

**Ed Gamble**

But Michael has a book that is a good idea, it's called How to be Perfect.

**James Acaster**

Yes, if there's ever been a more alluring title I'd like to know about it, because we'd all like to be perfect.

**Ed Gamble**

Yes, we would, and I'm very excited to read it. It is out now, and it is published by Quercus, and you can find it in all good book stores. Your book, James, of course, is called something different.

**James Acaster**

Yes, you can pre-order it now on all the usual platforms. It's called James Acaster's Guide to Quitting Social Media: Being the best YOU you can be and Curing Yourself of Loneliness, volume 1. And of course you can also go and get tickets to Ed Gamble's live comedy show, Electric. It's tearing up the nation.

**Ed Gamble**

It's tearing up the nation, it's tearing up hearts. It's available on [edgamble.co.uk](http://edgamble.co.uk). Tickets are available, not the show itself of course. Plenty more dates left, get stuck in.



**James Acaster**

Yes, and, listen, maybe Ed's not been paying attention to this, but people are raving about this show.

**Ed Gamble**

Man, my mum said she was proud of me.

**James Acaster**

Yes, Ed's mum, and people who aren't his mum.

**Ed Gamble**

My mother-in-law. Didn't say anything to me about the rude bits.

**James Acaster**

That's good, isn't it, it's a step forward.

**Ed Gamble**

Yes, because that would have been awkward. She didn't punch me in the arm and say, 'You're so rude,' which she normally does. So, come and see that. A show that does not deserve a punch in the arm, but I must emphasise is quite rude.

**James Acaster**

It is quite rude to be fair. He's a rude boy. Also, hey, you can get us on all the socials. My book's about quitting social media, but don't quit social media just yet, you've got to follow Off Menu on Twitter, @offmenuofficial.

**Ed Gamble**

Yes, and, of course, you need to follow us on Instagram, @offmenuofficial, and go on our website offmenupodcast.co.uk. There's also a list of restaurants on there for every restaurant that gets mentioned.

**James Acaster**

Every restaurant that's ever been mentioned on the podcast is on that list, and sometimes, Ed, people come up to me and they say, 'Hey, thanks for that list that's on your website, that's really helpful for me when I'm going out to eat.' And I'll say, 'Oh, cool, What restaurants have you been to on the list?' And they go, 'Oh, I haven't actually been to any of them. I just go and look at the list, but I haven't been to any of them yet.' That's always what people say. They never say, 'Oh, I went to this one.' They go, 'Oh, no, I'm just saying it's nice to look at the list.'

**Ed Gamble**

Yes, you've never interaction with the general public that's gone like that and someone's said, 'Hey, thanks for this,' and you've gone, 'That's okay, that's cool, tell me more.'

**James Acaster**

Well, when I say general public, this is usual people who are working on TV shows that I'm already-, colleagues.

**Ed Gamble**

Yes, colleagues. The general public as you refer to them.

**James Acaster**

The general public goes like this, 'Hey, fuck off, get out of here.' 'Don't talk to me.'



**Ed Gamble**

Yes, well thank you very much for listening to the podcast, we will see you again next week, I'd imagine.

**James Acaster**

We'll see you next week but you won't see us, because it's a podcast.

**Ed Gamble**

Beep beep.

**James Acaster**

Beep beep.