



# Off Menu – Ep 111 – Steve Coogan

**Ed Gamble**

Welcome to the Off Menu podcast. Taking the champagne of conversation, adding the mango puree of humour, letting it stir in the glass, James, just letting it stir in the glass and creating the Bellini of podcasts. Mango Bellini.

**James Acaster**

That is Ed Gamble, my name is James Acaster. Together we own a dream restaurant and every single week we invite in a guest and we ask them their favourite ever starter, main course-,

**Ed Gamble**

Letting it stir in the glass.

**James Acaster**

Dessert, side dish and drink. Not in that order.

**Ed Gamble**

Letting it stir.

**James Acaster**

And this week our guest is, Steve Coogan. Steve Coogan.

**Ed Gamble**

Yes. Just Steve Coogan mate.

**James Acaster**

Yes, everyone knows Steve Coogan.

**Ed Gamble**

Yes.

**James Acaster**

Alan Partridge. The Trip.

**Ed Gamble**

Treas.

**James Acaster**

Philomena.

**Ed Gamble**

Treas.



**James Acaster**

Yes, he is a treas.

**Ed Gamble**

Yes, absolutely.

**James Acaster**

National?

**Ed Gamble**

Yes, national thereof. International really.

**James Acaster**

Yes, yes. Really international treas although I'm sure he would refute that.

**Ed Gamble**

Yes, I'm sure he would. We won't ask him if he thinks he's an international treas.

**James Acaster**

We should probably start doing that with the national treasures though. Just say to them, 'Will you admit you're a national treas?' Now, Steve Coogan, obviously comedy icon. We're very excited to have him on.

**Ed Gamble**

Yes, very much so.

**James Acaster**

And he's got a new book out.

**Ed Gamble**

Yes, there's a new partridge book out. I think the partridge books and the partridge podcasts-, Alan Partridge has been around for so long creating amazing stuff and somehow still hitting heights and this new book, I'm about half way through the audio book and it is absolutely fantastic. Again, it's called Big Beacon. It's about Alan renovating an old light house and it is absolutely fantastic. It's available in hard book, e-book and audio book and it's available now, published by Seven Dials. So do go and get that. That is a genuine recommendation from me. Oh he's in Doctor Strangelove as well, James. The stage production of Doctor Strangelove written by Armando Iannucci.

**James Acaster**

Very exciting.

**Ed Gamble**

Pretty cool.



**James Acaster**

Yes, one of my favourite films so that's so exciting that they've teamed up and they're doing that. I'd very much like to go and see that, Ed.

**Ed Gamble**

Yes me too and you've got a while until that starts James because it's October 2024 at the Noel Coward theatre so we'll set a date now. That's a date baby. Me, you and Benito.

**James Acaster**

I'll put it in the diary.

**Ed Gamble**

Yes. Very much looking forward to seeing that. It will be awful if we had to kick Steve out of the dream restaurant though.

**James Acaster**

Yes well every single week, Ed, there's a secret ingredient and if the guest says it we do have to kick them out and we can't make an exception even though it's Coogs. The Danish Coog.

**Ed Gamble**

Yes. The Danish Coog, yes. Did Nish text you that?

**James Acaster**

Yes. Nish text me saying Danish Coog and say to Ed, 'Danish Coog', because Ed's got a joke where he says Danish Boog.

**Ed Gamble**

Yes. I know Nish said it because he's also texted me it and sent a voice note of himself saying it. So yes. It would be a real shame if we had to kick the Danish Coog out but there is a secret ingredient that if he says it, we will remove him from the dream restaurant and today the secret ingredient is Toblerone. Toblerone.

**James Acaster**

Of course.

**Ed Gamble**

A very famous food associated with Alan Partridge because he eats loads of Toblerones and drives the Dundee in his bare feet.

**James Acaster**

Yes so you would think that-, well, Partridge would definitely be steering away from the Toblerone but, you know, does Steve Coogan?



**Ed Gamble**

Did that part of the show come from his love of Toblerone? Is he going to pick Toblerone for his dessert, perhaps?

**James Acaster**

Yes. It's tense times but hopefully, hopefully we'll be in the clear.

**Ed Gamble**

Fingers crossed we're in the clear. This is the Off Menu menu of Steve Coogan.

Welcome Steve to the dream restaurant.

**Steve Coogan**

Thank you very much, I'm-,

**James Acaster**

Welcome Steve Coogan to the dream restaurant. We've been expecting you for some time.

**Steve Coogan**

Thank you, thank you. Yes. I love the décor, it's very atmospheric. I especially love the cables on the floor. Nice post-modern industrial touch there. Well done.

**James Acaster**

That feels nice. Seeing all the cables on the floor.

**Ed Gamble**

Have you seen what they lead to or would you rather not know?

**Steve Coogan**

Well it's a small, sort of, mini lectern with some sort of digital control box which has levels. I mean, I don't know if your listeners know or can they see that on camera?

**Ed Gamble**

They won't be able to see the lectern.

**Steve Coogan**

Well there's some technical stuff that you'll never see and you're just going to have to imagine.

**Ed Gamble**

Yes but we do need it.

**James Acaster**

Yes we need that Steve.



**Steve Coogan**

Okay.

**Ed Gamble**

We often ask people to describe what their dream restaurant looks like. Are you taking this actual room to be your dream restaurant?

**Steve Coogan**

No I'm not going to do that because I think it's going to be less fruitful comically, okay?

**Ed Gamble**

Yes I was gently guiding you away from that.

**Steve Coogan**

Okay, I see. Yes, yes. Do you want to know what-, I've not thought about the interior décor. I tell you what I don't like. I mean I'm just not keen on table cloths.

**James Acaster**

No.

**Ed Gamble**

Yes.

**Steve Coogan**

No. It makes me feel like I've got to behave or-, I mean, my assistant booked me a snack between meetings and it was in a very posh restaurant with table cloths and there's something weird about sitting in a restaurant with a table cloth on your own.

**Ed Gamble**

Yes, especially for a snack.

**James Acaster**

Yes, just a snack.

**Steve Coogan**

Yes so I went round the corner to one of the high street boutiques that dispatch quick food but I'm not going to help them and help their share dividends by mentioning them.

**James Acaster**

We'd rather not. So you don't want to say what your snack was?

**Steve Coogan**

Well I just-,



**James Acaster**

Because there might be some people listening who are-,

**Steve Coogan**

No do you know what I'll do? Look, if I'm travelling on the motorway, I need a quick snack and I want a lot of protein. I just get, you know, a free range egg mayonnaise sandwich and I remove two of the slices so I have one big triangle fat with egg rather than four slices with the egg. So you get more protein and less carbs. Less bread, more substance.

**James Acaster**

That's a great hack. So you do-, one slice becomes the top.

**Steve Coogan**

What you do is take the two triangles in parallel, in the triangular box that we are all familiar with now, and you just take two slices out and but the two ledden fat-, because what they do is they sort of-, they gather the food in the middle so when you slice it down the centre it looks really full but actually if you pull the triangle off, the bread off, it's sort of centred around-, you know, it's a bit dishonest. A bit disingenuous. But anyway, that's my quick snack thing and I try to be veggie-ish but it doesn't always work out. You know, if there's a roast dinner on the menu that can fall to pieces quick quickly. Yes, so that's my snack tip.

**James Acaster**

I think I'm actually going to do that and I'm not even just saying that to make you feel good.

**Steve Coogan**

Thank you.

**James Acaster**

Although you do feel good, don't you? Knowing that I'm going to do it?

**Steve Coogan**

Yes, you know, I'm all about practical tips and practical advice. If, by the way, people are listening to this and they think-, because I'm sure they will and I'm going to bring it up now because, you know, you're going to bring it up. I do this character called Alan Partridge. That was my segue into that subject, that some of the things I say might sound a bit like him and that's okay.

**James Acaster**

Yes, that is okay. I mean, as you were saying it, I was thinking, 'Oh yes, I remember I read once that Armando Iannucci would just write down things you actually did and put it into the casting.'

**Steve Coogan**

Yes, that still happens.



**James Acaster**

Definitely that egg sandwich thing, wonderful.

**Steve Coogan**

Yes well I do-, sometimes I say stuff as Partridge that I mean, I personally have no problem with, and then sometimes I say things that I find objectionable. Yes so sometimes Alan is right and sometimes Alan is wrong. That's the simplest way of putting it.

**Ed Gamble**

It's okay for your personality to bleed in to Partridge. When it starts happening the other way round, with the things you don't agree that Partridge says, that they start bleeding into your personality, that it might be the issue.

**Steve Coogan**

Yes but it just wouldn't. I mean sometimes, you know-, it's quite enjoyable because he's like a trojan horse. When I want to get things off my chest-, see a lot of people go on social media, don't they, and they sort of, like, bang on about stuff and they get stuck in a vortex of an argument with someone they don't know or care about and it's completely debilitating. They're wasting their creativity. They should just shove it in to their material. That's what I do. If I've got something I need to get off my chest, I put it into the mouth of Partridge knowing that if people go, 'That's not a very nice thing to say,' I go, 'Well it's just a character so what are you going to do? It's not me. It's him.'

**James Acaster**

And Alan has written, his first foray in to fiction now, is that right?

**Steve Coogan**

Yes. Well, we did. So we, actually me and the Gibbons. The Gibbons are an in-fluent number of monkeys. They are two brothers called Rob and Neil Gibbons who help me write Partridge. We did a biography and then we did a-, I think we called it Nomad. It was sort of an account of a journey he made. This one is-, yes. It's a foray in to-, it's semi-fictional even in Alan's world. So it's one level on from the fact that-, because I hate to break this to you, Alan doesn't actually exist.

**James Acaster**

What?

**Steve Coogan**

He doesn't exist. He's not real.

**James Acaster**

We'll be the judge of that, big shot.

**Ed Gamble**

The big exclusive for the pod.



**James Acaster**

Yes.

**Steve Coogan**

Or maybe I don't exist and Alan Partridge does exist. That's an interesting thing to ponder.

**James Acaster**

That will be a big twist.

**Ed Gamble**

So we're interviewing your character right now.

**James Acaster**

Yes.

**Steve Coogan**

Yes, yes. So what is it? It's called-, I did the talking book. It's like a talking book, audio book. I'm showing my age here. 'It's a talking book,' but anyway I did my version of that a couple of months ago and I did laugh, which sometimes happens when I revisit material I'd forgotten about. Alan basically moves to Kent to renovate a lighthouse because when me, Rob and Neil were trying to think of an idea for the book, what we had to do was try and do something which we think is interesting and funny, and not the same old stuff, and also not something that's jumping the shark comically and then ruining all the funny stuff we've done before. You think, 'Well if we do this idea, no critics can say, 'Oh no, they've run out of ideas. It's another one of those Alan moves to Kent coast to renovate a lighthouse stories.'

**Ed Gamble**

And also, it's a dual narrative as well, isn't it? Which Alan is very proud of.

**Steve Coogan**

Yes. It is. Yes, Alan has obviously discovered that you can do a dual narrative where one chapter is about one thing and the next chapter is about another thing and the third chapter is about the thing that the first chapter is about, and so on until the end, and just explains it all for people like himself. So yes, it's an account of that. There is a very good sex scene, I won't go into detail about it, that I'm particularly proud of. Alan describes the sexual con-grasp between him and a red-head member of the opposite sex.

**Ed Gamble**

Red. He calls her, 'Red.'

**Steve Coogan**

She's called Red. She has red hair and he says he's always wants to call a woman Red. He gets that opportunity in the novel, yes.





**Ed Gamble**

Yes the sex scene is absolutely horrific. I heard that on the audio book the other day. It's amazing.

**Steve Coogan**

Yes, you just have to sort of go for it really, with all this stuff. Just hold your nose and jump.

**James Acaster**

Well we were both at a wedding once where in the evening there was, like, DJs and whatever and people could do the silent disco thing with their headphones. I noticed that some of them had a green light on it and some of them had a red light on it and it turned out there was a switch you could flick and it was the first Partridge audio book and people were just listening to that at the wedding.

**Ed Gamble**

At the wedding.

**Steve Coogan**

Really?

**Ed Gamble**

Yes. There was one, like, music channel and then you'd look round the dance floor and people were just stood there laughing and they were listening to the Partridge audio book.

**Steve Coogan**

Wow, dancing to-, that's-, wow. People need to get out more.

**James Acaster**

Would you consider yourself a foodie?

**Steve Coogan**

Well I was talking to my daughter about this last night because I sort of have to. She's my counsellor so-, I think I probably am, yes-, I've eaten in lots of different kinds of restaurants. That sounds really bland, doesn't it, but I have eaten in the very best, poshest restaurants and the lowliest but I think I am a foodie but I didn't grow up as a foodie but I think I am. I'm not a food snob though and people who describe themselves as foodies almost annoy me because they've used that word to describe themselves. I like food. I can certainly say that.

**James Acaster**

And you've eaten at loads of great-, I mean, you know, you've got a whole TV series of you eating in great restaurants.

**Steve Coogan**

Yes, yes. I mean, Rob and I, we did four of those things. Two on the BBC, that everyone saw, two on Sky that hardly anyone saw. They were equally enjoyable, all of them. We went round Europe, Spain, Greece and Italy and the UK. I really enjoyed going around the North of England. The lakes of



Yorkshire and that. Italy was probably the best. Yes, we ate some very posh restaurants. I remember in Italy, because they've not quite caught up with the woke thing, I don't think, as much as the UK and other European-, I mean, on the menu, all the men's menus had the prices on and all the women's menus didn't have the prices on.

**James Acaster**

Oh wow.

**Steve Coogan**

Yes. That's pretty-,

**James Acaster**

That's mad.

**Steve Coogan**

Unreconstructed.

**James Acaster**

Yes.

**Steve Coogan**

I mean I was appalled on behalf of the opposite sex.

**Ed Gamble**

Well really neither yours or Rob's menus should have had the price and just the production menu-,

**Steve Coogan**

Yes I know, that is true and some of the women were offended. Quite rightly. But they also didn't have to pay the bill so it's kind of win-win, lose-win, for them.

**James Acaster**

Lose-win.

**Steve Coogan**

Yes, lose-win.

**James Acaster**

Yes, less of a phrase. Lose-win.

**Steve Coogan**

Lose-win but my abiding memory of those series is that because you're shooting a scene, you have to eat, sort of, three Michelin star dinners three times, more or less. You had to pace yourself because you spend eight hours slowly eating the same meal three times. You have to really-, it's very hard to pace yourself when what's been put in front of you tastes amazing and you just want to snaffle it all down but



you can't because you're going to make work for yourself later on. The hardest thing of all was when they put the dinner down at the-, because Michael Winterbottom, the director, would do his in reverse order. So when he shot all the funny stuff he'd just say, 'Okay, I just want a shot of you now. The dinner being put down in front of you as if it's the first time,' and you've already eaten it three times and you have to look and it and go, 'Mm, I can't wait to eat this.' That's the hardest, kind of, acting of all because it's like when you're shopping around-, don't shop on a full stomach or an empty stomach.

Well, an empty stomach, we all know that because then you buy rubbish, don't you? Because you're salivating. The worst is to shop on a full stomach. Then you sort of just put a stick of celery in your basket and then you go home, you're hungry again and you haven't got what you need. With the trip, Rob and I were just eating so much rich food. So rich and interesting and all the rest of it but after a while you start to crave really simple food because you've, sort of, had this assault of Roman-esque, kind of, Orge-esque indulgence of food. I remember when I was there having this craving for just a fried egg sandwich with just brown sauce on white bread and butter. Just something really simple because you'd had this assault of all these flavours.

**Ed Gamble**

Yes, I completely get that.

**James Acaster**

Yes I've had that. Yes, I've had that when you go to a fancy restaurant. It's a very special meal and then half way through I start thinking-

**Steve Coogan**

Half way through the meal? That's-,

**James Acaster**

Yes half way through the meal-

**Ed Gamble**

Half way through the meal?

**James Acaster**

So I'm thinking, 'I wonder if after this, I could get a burger from somewhere. Just go to McDonald's or something.'

**Steve Coogan**

Yes. I do like comfort food, like Italian, but good quality comfort food. So foodie wise, so my daughter did help me go through this with a pen and paper because she said you're going to be all over the place and you won't be able to focus properly so you've got to hone in on stuff.

**James Acaster**

Do you think she was right?



**Steve Coogan**

Yes, yes. She is right. Look, I'll be honest, I'm sort of a-, I frequently buy posh ready meals. I mean posh ones but they're still ready meals. I buy them for two even if it's just me, just so I feel like I'm not alone and just leave half of it.

**James Acaster**

One for you, one for Alan.

**Steve Coogan**

Yes that's right, yes. Can you imagine if I did that? If I ate one half as me and the other half as Alan? Just because I'm such a method comic actor.

**Ed Gamble**

I mean, as we go through the menu, we can try and establish what Alan would have as well.

**James Acaster**

We can or any of your characters?

**Steve Coogan**

Well there's a Venn diagram of me and Alan which looks like a, sort of, figure eight but some days that almost turns in to just a single circle. Other times it's like, you know, a bottom. It's but there is definitely an overlap that I'm quite comfortable with. I mean in the old days I used to say I'm the opposite of him but I'm not really and also it's like, you know-, he used to be that he was, like, very right wing and, sort of, Daily Mail reading, Zeno-phobic, blah blah blah, and that feels something really boring now. What's far more interesting is him trying to be, you know, socially liberal but economically conservative. Like a sort of trendy-, like the fusion of Tony Blair and David Cameron. That idea that they're kind of like, 'Call me Dave,' kind of. Like David Cameron likes the Smiths but isn't very keen on welfare and wants low taxation. It's a weird marriage of-,

Oh yes, like a typical Smith's fan, they're in to low taxation. Anyway, so there is that. Alan is struggling to be post-modern and enlightened and woke, or as woke as he thinks he needs to be appear to be to sustain a career. It's far more enjoyable because it's almost like it's a career-, because of, like, culture wars at the moment, you can make a career decision and you're coming in this atrocious war fare and, sort of, the Daily Mail and the Tories at the last conference really were trying to pick a fight about culture wars when most people in the street aren't arsed about-, I mean one way or the other, to be honest with you, but they really want to pick a fight to try and say, 'Look, left is really ruining everything.' But you can make a choice, can't you? So I think Alan has made a choice that it's better to-, on balance, there's not that many, kind of, Daily Mail anti-woke, kind of, Zeno-phobes in showbiz.

There aren't. There just aren't. You know, there's some but not that many. So I think he's made the decision to go, 'I'm going to go with the woke brigade,' as a career decision. I'm going to try and, sort of, get on message with all that. So that's quite good fun.



**Ed Gamble**

There's a bit in the book, not to give anything away, but where Alan is talking about Me Too and he's absolutely delighted about Me Too. He thinks it's a great thing but mainly because he sees that as a gap has been left open for him, as a sort of non-offending, white, middle-aged presenter.

**Steve Coogan**

Oh yes, yes. I think he also says there's no skeletons in his closet and, for full disclosure, said he once touched Sue Cook's hair.

**James Acaster**

We always start the meal with still or sparkling water, Steve.

**Steve Coogan**

Well if it's Summer, I'll have very chilled sparkling water but the rest of the time I'll have room temp tap water. I prefer Northern tap water to-, this is a lime-scaley Southern tap water which means you've got limescale. I grew up in Manchester. I never had to de-scale a kettle until I was 20-something and came down South. I have many happy memories about not having to de-scale the kettle in my younger days.

**Ed Gamble**

Did you take it for granted at the time?

**Steve Coogan**

I did. I did. No, I did. I did. I come down now and sometimes when I look in the kettle and see the limescale I just think, 'Did I make the right choices in life?'

**James Acaster**

Yes, sure.

**Steve Coogan**

Anyway. So still and still at room temperature because if you want to warm your vocal chords up, if you're performing live, and I'm sure as comics you might poo-poo the idea of technical warm ups. It seems a bit, sort of, dandy-ish.

**James Acaster**

Pathetic.

**Steve Coogan**

Yes, pathetic. Alright, okay, yes and sort of-, but they actually are-, I did go to drama school so I'm sort of half-actor, half-comic, I suppose. They really do work. Anyway, I'm going around in circles but basically cold water doesn't help you, your vocal chords. Room temperature, normal temperature, is very good to keep everything working.



**Ed Gamble**

The start of this dream meal, you're having room temperature water to warm up your vocal chords for chatting?

**Steve Coogan**

Well, no, I'm just giving you some deep background. I'm trying to pad it out, you know, but you can decide what you keep in later. I'm just-, yes.

**James Acaster**

This is going out live, Steve.

**Steve Coogan**

Ah, okay. So that's that. Okay, what's the next-, go on. Come on. I want to really get in to this now.

**James Acaster**

Popadoms or bread? Popadoms or bread, Steve Coogan? Popadoms or bread?

**Steve Coogan**

Popadoms or-, if I'm in a curry house, I'll have popadoms but generally, no, I love good bread. I love good bread. Another controversial statement from left-wing fire brand, Steve Coogan. Yes, I wonder what social media are going to say about that. So I was in Spain in, sort of, Catalan area of Spain with Rob Brydon. I was down there five years, six years ago and I remember we had this bread in this-, I think it was one of these restaurants that was like, 'Number one in the world,' on some list somewhere. The bread and the butter, the butter was from the cows. You could see the cows through the window in the field, that the butter came from. It was this sweet, fresh bread and this-, I've never forgotten how good that bread and butter was but-, that's very interesting, diverting, but really I like Irish soda bread with butter. Simple. Warm, straight from the oven. You make it with sour milk. In fact, growing up my mum would have bottles of milk and leave them on the shelf until they went off. Some so that the build up of sour milk will push the foil top off the top of the milk bottle so they'd be a column of sour milk. Almost solidified, pushing the lid off. The rest of it was sort of like water-y, vinegar-y. It looked disgusting and she just put all that in to the mixing bowl like that and make soda bread and it tastes fantastic. So that's my bread course, yes. Soda bread.

**James Acaster**

So would you like it made by your mum?

**Steve Coogan**

Yes, or my sister is quite good or, to be honest, any working class Irish woman would probably do.

**James Acaster**

Yes, we can sort that out for your dream meal. But you don't want to see the cows out the window for this one?



**Steve Coogan**

No, no, no. I mean, that's just a kind of novelty isn't it? It's funny, a lot of these posh restaurants, they sort of try to make it a visceral, authentic experience, don't they? If it does have a kind of pheasant flavour, it's normally sort of packaged pheasant experience for rich people.

**Ed Gamble**

Do you think it helps seeing the cow?

**Steve Coogan**

It's nice to know where it comes from. Look, I'm trying to be a vegetarian but I do eat a bit of meat if I know where it's come from. I won't order a curry with meat in it because I don't want to eat, you know, battery chicken that's-, I mean when I was growing up, we had a butcher that lived next door and our Christmas turkey, it must have-, it was like-, we once had a 48 pound Christmas turkey. I swear to God, that turkey must have been walking around saying, 'Please, somebody shoot me.' We had to kick it in to the oven. It almost came out square shaped because it wouldn't quite fit in the oven aperture. In those days, no one cared about hormones or chemicals. It was just quantity in those days. This is the biggest turkey that anyone has had this Christmas therefore it's good, therefore it's better. More is better and less is worse. That was the only real criteria. Have you had enough to eat? I used to read the Beano. At the back of the Beano, if the main character wasn't being slippered or beaten by an adult for some sort of misdemeanour, he'd been given a reward of a fiver and it was, 'And now for a feast.' That was the end of every comic strip. The best thing a child could have is just enough to eat.

**Ed Gamble**

Yes. A big plate of mash and sausages.

**James Acaster**

Yes, yes. All the sausages.

**Steve Coogan**

It's funny, isn't it?

**Ed Gamble**

What do they get rewarded with in the Beano now?

**Steve Coogan**

I've not read it for ages but I mean it was also-, it really was-, I think they tried to-, what was it? It's like a curiosity now, isn't it? I mean they had, like, the Walt and the softies. They got rid of it. Clearly, it was clearly a slightly effeminate, young boy turned in to the softie which is really not on message with current ways of thinking so I think we've moved on. I'd like to think we've all moved on from the Beano.

**James Acaster**

We haven't.



**Ed Gamble**

We haven't. We were in it.

**James Acaster**

We were in the Beano.

**Steve Coogan**

Are you?

**James Acaster**

We were.

**Steve Coogan**

Were you really?

**Ed Gamble**

In one panel.

**James Acaster**

They drew us in a panel of Mini the Minx.

**Steve Coogan**

Oh really?

**Ed Gamble**

Yes in a restaurant.

**Steve Coogan**

I'm sort of-, I'm slightly jealous of that.

**James Acaster**

I thought you would be jealous.

Your dream starter?

**Steve Coogan**

So I was trying to-,

**James Acaster**

Have we got in your head now about the Beano thing?

**Steve Coogan**

Yes. You have a bit, yes. She helped me make notes here. I said some sort of soup to go with the bread. It sounds really boring, doesn't it? Having, like I say, eaten at all the best restaurants in the





Western hemisphere, I would quite like a pea soup but not pea soup-, I don't like soups that are made when people blitz everything in a blender so it's all just one consistency. I like lumps of stuff. You know what I mean?

**James Acaster**

Yes, yes, yes.

**Steve Coogan**

And I like a pea soup that's got little bits of pea still in it.

**Ed Gamble**

Whole peas or just bits of peas?

**Steve Coogan**

Yes just, like, broken down peas. Half broken down in the greenness of the soup and, of course, white pepper. I'm a big white pepper person. There's certain things that really bug me. Clare said, my daughter, said, 'Don't get too angry about stuff.'

**James Acaster**

You can get angry. You don't need to listen to Clare.

**Steve Coogan**

Well basically I'm fed up of restaurants that don't have white pepper. They've all got the grinder, the big sort of grinder with the, sort of, black pepper in. Yes and black pepper is great for pasta and stuff like that. It's great but years ago, in this country, we used to have white pepper. In every café, they'd be a little plastic thing of white pepper and now you can't get it. 'Do you have any white pepper?' 'Oh no, we don't have white pepper. We only have black pepper.' Why? Why don't you have white pepper? You know, on eggs, black pepper is shit. You have to have white pepper on eggs, on mashed potato, on shepherd's pie or on macaroni cheese. White pepper. White pepper is the only thing that will do.

**James Acaster**

You're mainly putting it on quite pale stuff so I imagine the white pepper, you don't know how much you've put on? Just vanishes.

**Steve Coogan**

Well you give it a bit of a shake. It's like talcum powder but it's not.

**Ed Gamble**

Talcum up your food.

**Steve Coogan**

People need to re-discover it. I think it's associated with, sort of, low-fi, old fashioned, old ladies. Whatever. That people who are on trendy restaurants, establishments, don't really put it out there but I



predict that they'll be a bit of a resurgence in white pepper within the next five years partly because of this podcast.

**James Acaster**

Yes, I think so. I think it will probably help.

**Steve Coogan**

So I'm a big, big white pepper person. Why did we get on to that? Pea soup. Yes so I'd put white pepper on the pea soup. That was why I mentioned that. What else? Something else that bugs me, while we're on things that bug me, when it comes to-, because I can't really cook but I can do a, sort of-, I can cook a breakfast. I'll do that quite well.

**James Acaster**

I think of you every time I have a fried breakfast.

**Ed Gamble**

Yes, so do I.

**Steve Coogan**

Okay so Partridge did-, we did that. There was a Partridge thing about fried bread. I try to be vegetarian but I reserve the right to not be vegetarian when there's, like, an amazingly good roast dinner in a proper, like, gastro pub that really have used aged beef and it's really, really-, you know. So I will do that. Only if I know the provenance of where the meat's come from. Otherwise-, yes, we've been over that. It's not nice. It's not nice thinking about-, and I don't like-, and also I don't want animals to be badly treated.

**Ed Gamble**

With the breakfast, the Partridge bit about the breakfast-,

**Steve Coogan**

Oh yes, using the sausage as a breakwater to keep the beans away from the egg. I'm still pretty-, I mean that is me. I don't mind beans on sausage and I don't mind sausage and egg and I don't mind-, you know, in the old days, when I ate more meat, bacon and egg and beans and bacon. But beans? Just beans and egg? It doesn't quite work for me but these days I still do a fried breakfast but I'll do-, I mean the veggie meat options now are so good. You know, like, the sausages. In the old days, meat substitutes were like, if you got a veggie sausage, it was just vegetables put in to a sausage shape. Now they seem a lot more tasty and so I have those but I don't like people who put beans in the microwave. It really makes me angry. Not as angry as, you know, human rights violations but pretty angry.

**James Acaster**

Somewhere in between.



**Steve Coogan**

Yes, yes. Human rights violations and paper cuts. Yes. So that is what-, microwave beans because when you microwave beans, they come out hot and hard. Hot, mini bullets in, sort of, watery tomato sauce. What you need to do is-, when you're doing a breakfast, the first thing you put on is the beans and really let them break down. It's almost like-, almost to the level of mushy peas but not quite. So they're sort of mushy beans. Then they're much nicer to put on your breakfast. So don't-, anyone who puts beans in the microwave I think is-, I know they're probably-, maybe they're busy and they probably don't like people saying that but I just think it's about quality of life at the end of the day.

**Ed Gamble**

Because they even sell them in little microwavable pots, don't they?

**Steve Coogan**

Yes I know that's just awful. Porridge, you know. I mean you can microwave porridge, it's fine, and there's some things actually-, I'm not anti-microwave, you know. I know some people are snobs who don't have microwaves. 'Oh, they give you cancer.' No they don't. They don't give you cancer. It's a bad science. Bad science by people who make science up.

**James Acaster**

So is the soup the starter?

**Steve Coogan**

Yes, sorry. It sounds pretty boring but, you know, I like simple things well done.

**James Acaster**

No, I think it's lovely.

**Ed Gamble**

And are you saving a bit of bread from the bread course to dip in?

**Steve Coogan**

Yes but soda bread is quite heavy. Now I'm back tracking on soda bread because I love soda bread, it's great with cheese. It's great with anything but, I mean, soda bread and cheese soup, that's a meal really. Also, my daughter Clare said, 'Plan it and think about what your perfect meal is.' I said, 'Well, there's loads of things I like individually but they might not work all together,' but I'm still going to say this is what I'm going to have with my meal. Not because it works together harmoniously, because it actually doesn't really, but I love them all in their own different ways so I'm going to put them together on the table.

**Ed Gamble**

That's fine. That's what we like people to do. It doesn't have to go together. This is your dream.

**Steve Coogan**

Oh great, okay.



### **James Acaster**

So your dream main course? Is this going to be something out of left-field after the soup, then?

### **Steve Coogan**

Well no. This is interesting because I think I've gone through a bit of a transition because I am not a baby boomer and I think I'm gen-, do they call it X? Well, I'm sort of right after boomers. Boomers stopped in, it's very interesting all this stuff, in about 1963 or 1964. They stopped with the arrival of the pill, basically. There was loads and loads of babies and then there weren't as many, surprise surprise, and I'm just on the cusp of the new lot. So I grew up with some very old-, I mean I grew up eating some really nice food because our mother, who is half Irish, would cook really fresh food. Not because she was really keen on giving us fresh food, it was just economically the best thing to do. You'd make a stew, use fresh vegetables and some meat, or whatever, and it all tastes great. She would do that as a sort of economic choice, not because she thought it was healthy.

I was jealous of all the kids at school who had Findus crispy pancakes. I wanted all the processed food. So that was sort of what I wanted. When I go home now, my mum makes vegetable soup and everyone goes, 'Oh this vegetable soup tastes great.' Yes because it's had a big bone marinating in it for, like, a month. It's the only vegetable soup that vegetarians can't eat. So I would have had things like, in the old days, cheese and onion pie or a roast dinner or something. My daughter is a chef and, you know, I'm only blowing her own trumpet because during lockdown she used me and her boyfriend as guinea pigs for her food and it opened up my mind to the possibilities of really good vegetarian food. Incredible ingredients, you know. So I wouldn't have-, my daughter has written down, 'Grandma food,' meaning the food my mum makes. My mother, her grandmother.

### **Ed Gamble**

Hold on, so your daughter made these notes for you?

### **Steve Coogan**

Well I was stood next to her and she was scribbling. Yes, this is her handwriting. Broccoli, garlic, chilli pasta. That's the thing that she does for me. She does this thing where she just, like, blitzes anchovy and puts it in with like broccoli and garlic and chilli and pasta. It just tastes amazing. It's like it's not really expensive food but it's that whole new thing because-, you know the East of London where the trendy people live? Okay.

### **Ed Gamble**

Sorry.

### **Steve Coogan**

Don't be sorry. They're not that bad. I mean I know they're annoying but-, and it's, sort of, started to make me feel like a lot of this sort of posh, very posh, over-presented Michelin restaurants, fine dining, it's like some of the joys-, I mean, I love-, they're very impressed with a lot of these chefs but sometimes they take the joy out of food, don't they? It's so perfected it becomes almost fetishised and elitist and I call them the dot, dot, dot people because instead of putting the sauce on the plate, they go dot, dot, dot with the sauce. Like, sort of, punctuation points. There's something just really anally retentive about



it. It really irritates me and it's like-, you feel like it's a masterpiece but you don't feel there's any love in it. You know. You go, 'Oh this is really impressive food,' and that, sort of, love cliché is really, actually important because I like the idea of food, people coming together and you break bread with people.

It's a celebratory thing and so what I like, I suppose, is good peasant food. Right? Really good-, and Rob Brydon always took the piss out of me on the trip saying, 'I know what Steve says. If you've got simple ingredients, the best ingredients simply made,' and all that, which is true.

### **Ed Gamble**

That is what he told-, when we had him on, he said if you ever have Steve on this, he'll say he like simple ingredients, simply made.

### **Steve Coogan**

Yes that's true, it's true and because peasant/working class people in Europe, in Spain, France, Italy, even working class people, eat really well. They don't in England and they don't in America. They eat stuff in cardboard boxes given to them by multi-national companies who go, 'Don't worry about your food, we'll give you this for £3.' Right? So they eat rubbish. I'm generalising. I'm generalising, obviously, but that is definitely an issue and the food I like is the food like I just described which is actually-, the ingredients aren't that expensive but they taste really great and they're accessible and there's no meat in them but it's just really, really good food. So I'd have some sort of pasta dish that my daughter would make. For a side-, so in Italy, I love good tomatoes. Really hard to come by, aren't they? Really good ones. The best ones are the one you grow yourself. Even posh, organic, sort of, over-priced supermarkets still never quite get tomatoes the way they are if you take them out of a green house. And so I'd have those chopped up, a bit of salt, pepper, a bit of olive oil. That's it. Some white bread. Fresh white bread. You can't beat that. Maybe some mozzarella if you're feeling particularly indulgent but that is a really good-, that's what Rob's talking about when he mocks my-, that's sort of stuff I like. It's like really simple, fresh-,

### **Ed Gamble**

This menu's fitting together by the way. I know you were worried about it not but, you know, a lovely pea soup and broccoli pasta.

### **Steve Coogan**

Yes I suppose it does, doesn't it? Yes.

### **Ed Gamble**

You like broccoli pasta.

### **James Acaster**

I like broccoli pasta, yes. I had too much of it during lockdown though.

### **Steve Coogan**



Yes it's-, I like, yes, it all chopped and blitzed. I don't know. Anyway, she does things that are very-, I can't quite replicate but it's-, For example, if my daughter does me boiled eggs and soldiers, she'll put a tiny blitzed anchovy and whisk it with the butter so that it-, it's just exactly the same as boiled egg and soldiers but just that little twist she'll put in it will make you-, suddenly you'll go, 'The toast tastes amazing,' just because there's tiny bits of anchovy in the butter. Little things like that. I'm kind of in to that new discovery of that food that looks appetising and nice but isn't over-arranged and over-preened and over-fetishised. You know, a lot of these TV shows at the moment are about this, kind of, perfection of presentation and everything. I just think people are over it and it's, like, you can have food that looks appetising and honest and not poncy, frankly. Poncy, nancy food. I don't want to eat it anymore. So, yes.

### **James Acaster**

Would you say, like, your approach to comedy is similar? Because I remember seeing you being interviewed once, I think it was at the Edinburgh Comedy Awards, and you'd seen a lot of shows that month and you said that you'd like to see, like, some rough and ready shows. You prefer those shows.

### **Steve Coogan**

Well I do-, look, a polished mediocrity, I'm less interested in. I can see why people quite like it, it's like an easy read isn't it? It's like, sort of, an airport novel of comedy. I like things that are-, well, as a kind of journey man, as the bus man's holiday that people go, 'He's really good isn't he?' And I go, 'He's alright.' That's my response to most of it. What I like is when I see someone, I go, 'I don't know why-, I can't quite figure out why they're funny.' I mean Tim Key for example. When I met him, it must have been fifteen/sixteen years ago. He auditioned for me when he was in his early days and I remember watching him and he was making me laugh and I couldn't figure out why he was funny. That's always much more interesting to me because I think, 'Oh yes and I had to do that,' and, 'Oh yeah, oh I see, you did that,' and then you go, 'Oh yes, you can say that really quickly and say it really loudly or you can say it really quietly and they're both funny.' You sort of learn that stuff, don't you? You're old enough to know that you start to learn those little patterns and structures about how you do comedy. They are great and it's great fun. It's great also when you discover things where you go, 'Oh actually, I'm going to say that five times instead of three,' and it will still be funny or play around with things. When we did Partridge, when we did the original TV series, he was having a sex scene in the dark. It was a sex scene and we thought, 'How long can we keep the people watching TV when it's literally a black screen?' Almost as a challenge, just in and of itself and that can help you find weird things that are weirdly funny. So all that's wonderful, being able to sort of explore that, but Tim Key, I couldn't see what he was doing. I didn't understand what was going on. Why I was laughing or why what he was doing was funny. It was like I was sort of a bit lost. That's, weirdly, exciting because I don't understand it. I can't deconstruct it. That's the sort of thing I like. Things that are interesting and different and not perfect. I'm more interested in it because a lot of people-, you know, I was always very interested in doing stuff and I was quite challenged when I started working with Armando Iannucci and Patrick Marber and people. I had to learn to go down that avenue of experimenting and potentially failing to discover, you know, different, more interesting ways of being funny. It's quite learnt, you know, because if you're very, very professional in this business, very professional, and you consistently deliver stuff which is just above average, you can have a very long career and have a nice mortgage and a nice house and all of that. Good luck to those people but I just like seeing things where you- You know, Vic



and Bob, they were one of the first people to do it. You think, how the hell is that funny? I don't know what's going on. I can't figure it out but it's making me laugh, you know-, and let's try and fold that back in to the food thing.

**Ed Gamble**

The broccoli pasta is like Tim Key?

**Steve Coogan**

He is a bit, yes. Sometimes that stuff looks odd but it's sort of going back to basics because you look at, like, Charlie Chaplin and Buster Keaton and Stan Laurel.

**Ed Gamble**

That's you.

**Steve Coogan**

Oh yes, I played him but they did stuff where you couldn't quite know. Yes. So it sounds like it's-, it's not really avant garde, it's just sort of trying to just shake things up a bit. I think it's good in the box of Lego that is comedy, is to shake it up a bit sometimes and then start building stuff again.

**Ed Gamble**

Yes, yes. Build something that looks Tim Key.

**Steve Coogan**

Yes, yes. This is going really well.

**James Acaster**

Your dream drink, Steve?

**Steve Coogan**

Dream drink, okay. Yes, I talked to my daughter about this. I said what's that-, I don't know what my dream-, I don't drink anymore. I used to drink a lot. Maybe a bit too much sometimes. If I was still drinking, it would be, and this really shows my age, is-, I don't like lager. They are alright but the best drink of all, by far, the one that I miss because I don't drink, is Bitter. I think Alan actually might have said that. But anyway, Bitter. Room temperature Bitter, hand-pumped from a pub. Not chilled. So it's just at room temperature. Not that fizzy, a bit flat. That, to me, is perfect. I just love the taste of that.

**Ed Gamble**

Do you have a particular Bitter?

**Steve Coogan**

Well the weaker the Bitter, the better. That's not because of not wanting to have as much alcohol. It just tastes better. So if you get, like, 3.8%, or 3.6% or 3.8%, that's really good. The reason they're not that popular in pubs is they don't keep as well so unless someone drinks them quite quickly, the beer goes



off. So they all want 4.8% and 5% and you think, 'Oh great, loads of alcohol in that.' It's actually not a better drink. It's an inferior drink because the lower alcohol content is a better better Bitter.

**Ed Gamble**

In one of the mugs? The sort of mug?

**Steve Coogan**

No, I'm not a dick about it. No. I just like it in a normal glass. I'm not, like, a real ale-, so no but the thing is, because I don't do that now, I go through fads, as my daughter as well-, I get in to a certain kind of thing, like a Kombucha. I was buying loads of Kombucha, trying different kinds of Kombucha. That's really good and-,

**Ed Gamble**

You love that as well.

**James Acaster**

Love Kombucha, yes.

**Steve Coogan**

Yes. The sourness combined with the sweetness. I don't like things that are too sugary. Then there's the CBD drinks. I get all those. Then I go that phase and then I go back to the Kombucha. Then I quite like those Duchy of Cornwall orange jiggers.

**James Acaster**

Right, I've not had that.

**Steve Coogan**

Okay. Well Jigger is like a posh person's name for just orange juice. I think that might be fizzy. So yes, I do like Prince Charles' Dutch. It's King Charles. It's King Charles' Dutch of Cornwall produce even though I am an anti-monarchist. It's interesting because when I buy that stuff I go, 'I don't like having a royal family but I do like his produce.' So I feel a bit torn.

**Ed Gamble**

I think you can be anti-monarchist but also admit they've done some things right. Their orange juice is spot on.

**Steve Coogan**

I suppose it's just because most of the people who are in to it all, those flag waving plastic boater people, I think are kind of idiots because they support a power structure that keeps a foot on the throat of working class people. I'm just not very keen on that kind of thing.

**James Acaster**

Yes, yes. Agreed.





**Ed Gamble**

Good biscuits though.

**Steve Coogan**

But having said that, the Queen worked very hard. So she's alright. She was alright. The rest of them are problematic for me.

**James Acaster**

I guess they're also, like, pouring-, like, while they've got their foot on the throat, they're pouring juice in their mouths.

**Steve Coogan**

Yes. At least King Charles, if he, as the head of a power structure, even unwittingly and maybe subconsciously, has his foot collectively on the throats of working class people by being party to a power structure that rewards-, blah, blah, blah. You can fill in the rest yourself. While he's doing that, while he's got his foot on the throats, you're right. He's putting orange jigger in their mouths. Mouths, mouths.

**Ed Gamble**

Your dream dessert?

**Steve Coogan**

Okay so this is interesting to me. Whether it's interesting to other people remains to be seen. I do like-, I am a big rhubarb person.

**Ed Gamble**

Yes.

**James Acaster**

Yes. Love rhubarb.

**Steve Coogan**

If a scan a menu, what I do is I do, like, a fast word search for the word rhubarb with my head. Like a computer, pretending to be a computer.

**Ed Gamble**

You're pretending to be a computer whose only programming is to find the word rhubarb. Yes.

**Steve Coogan**

If I see the word rhubarb, I just go, 'I'll have that.' I don't care what it is. If it's got rhubarb in, I'll have it. Forced rhubarb, which in the 1970s would have been a hilarious thing for someone like John Inman to talk about on Are You Being Served? But we've moved on from then. It does sound like it's sort of funny in some way but it's not. Forced rhubarb which is pink rhubarb, again still sounds a bit rude, it is rhubarb which is grown in dark sheds with no light so that the rhubarb is forced to sort of-, it's almost



like the veal equivalent of vegetables. Is it a fruit or a vegetable? It's a vegetable, isn't it? It's a weird one, isn't it?

**Ed Gamble**

I think it's a veg, rhubarb, is it?

**James Acaster**

Not sure. It has no seeds so it must be a vegetable, yes.

**Steve Coogan**

And forced rhubarb is naturally pink. So most rhubarb when you're growing up, if you're like me, when you get rhubarb crumble, you get, like, a bit of green rhubarb. A little bit of pink, a little bit of green. That's got a lot of sugar in it. The pink rhubarb, you don't have to put much sugar in it. It's naturally sweet. That's why it's called forced because it's pink. So there you go, very interesting.

**Ed Gamble**

You can hear it creaking, can't you, when it's growing? Yes I love that.

**Steve Coogan**

Very interesting, forced rhubarb. They have candles in the sheds. It's really, really weird. It looks like this little wicker man dessert. Anyway-, now, I do remember a dessert I had about 2010, I think it was, on The Trip. It was called The Trip with Rob Brydon. We were in England and it was at Hipping Hall which is sort of between-,

**James Acaster**

Is this where you slept with the woman?

**Steve Coogan**

No, no. I slept with a woman at the place called the Inn at White Well. Because it's semi-fictional, I slept with the woman on front desk of the hotel, consensually, even within the fiction, but when we'd-, these are real establishments but we mix up the actors so some people are played by real people, some people are played by actors. I'm happy to say that the woman that I simulated having slept with in the drama was an actor playing someone who worked on front desk who showed me to my room. We had a conversation. It went from there and developed in a way that was so respectful it was staggering. Anyway, so someone-, when this episode went out, people would go to the hotel. I do go to that hotel to eat the food. It's a place, Inn at White Well. It's a nice country pub and it's lovely.

Some of these places I went to before we made the show and I went, 'I know that place,' but some people go to the hotel and ask for-, the character was called Magda. People say, 'Is Magda here behind front desk? Can we see Magda?' Like I'd really slept with someone who worked behind the front desk. The weird thing is, it's like because it's semi-fictional, I wake up in bed with a woman. Do people think that there's a camera crew waking for me to wake up in my-, I don't know, people get a bit confused.



**James Acaster**

Well Rob had people consoling his wife during the school run because he'd cheated on her.

**Steve Coogan**

Yes because on one episode he sleeps with-, yes, we changed it up a bit because, in reality, I have a daughter and in The Trip I have a son. So we always mixed it up a bit just to confuse our enemies. They go, 'I don't know what's real and what's not.' Anyway, Hipping Hall had this rhubarb dessert that had rhubarb done about four different ways, all within the same thing. Like rhubarb jelly, blitzed rhubarb, sliced rhubarb, all stacked up on this layered thing and I've not had it since and I've not forgotten it and I sometimes think, 'I'm going to go back there one day and see if they still do that dessert,' because it stayed with me as a dessert.

**James Acaster**

I'd love that.

**Steve Coogan**

Having said that, I'm going to have another one which is-, generally speaking, I'm a huge-, because there's-, I'm torn between that and trifle. Trifle, I'm a huge trifle person. Trifle, never heard of it in America. Most Gen Z's stare at you when you say, 'I like trifle.' They don't know what you're on about. They think it's 'offel' or something.

**Ed Gamble**

Do they stare at you because you're just saying that completely out of the blue?

**Steve Coogan**

Yes because I say it to people in-, I always say it to people at London Bridge station as I'm going through the turnstiles and they get so weirded out. I'm like, 'Chill out. I'm just telling you that I like trifle. What's your problem?' Anyway so, yes, trifle has not really made a big come back, has it? You know like with bread and butter pudding. Those sort of, like I say, working class peasant desserts that get re-invented by posh restaurants that go, 'Look, look. Remember this? Here's a posh version of the working class thing,' and it's quite nice but trifle never got re-invented like that and I think it's one of those desserts where they use-, it's like a way of using up stale cake. Isn't it? It's like bread and butter pudding, you'd use the stale bread. Because you've got cake, jelly, custard, cream and sometimes sprinkly bits.

**James Acaster**

Yes, yes. You have sprinkly bits on the top.

**Steve Coogan**

And it tastes great. I don't know why it fell out of fashion.

**Ed Gamble**

I'm sure it's due a comeback at some point. Someone will-,



**Steve Coogan**

Marks and Spencers still do one and if I'm-, when I'm going-, I go up to the Lake District a lot. I've got a cottage there that my family use. It's not like a second home. Loads of people use it. I'm really generous with it. Get off my back. When I go up there, when you stop off and get-, you know, I get my bread and coffee and tea so I've got essentials for the morning. Milk and all that. I will sometimes also go, 'Oh, I'll have that trifle as well.' So I'll put a trifle in the carrier bag. So there you go. That's, kind of, the end of my story about trifle.

**James Acaster**

We had one of your friends and colleagues on the podcast and they chose trifle as their dessert. Do you think you can guess which one? Someone that, I mean, definitely you've worked with a lot, chose the trifle as their dream dessert.

**Steve Coogan**

Maybe Armando Iannucci?

**James Acaster**

Yes, yes.

**Steve Coogan**

Wow. Do you know what? That-, yes, I'm pleased I got that.

**James Acaster**

You are very pleased. I can see that you're pleased.

**Steve Coogan**

I was thinking, yes, that makes sense to me. Yes. Well I'm working with him again which I haven't done for years but there's something funny when you work with a group of people so intensely and you all sort of go off in different directions and then come back. It's quite nice to do it. You go, 'Ah,' because it's only years later-, I mean it's 30 years ago, nearly, that I worked with Armando-, well over that since we worked on radio but the first TV thing we did was called The Day to Day and, amongst comic circles, revered as a sort of-, we did six couple of episodes on TV but that was, you know, that was really exciting. So exciting at that time when I was, like, twenty-something working on a show and thinking-, when you're in this business, it happens occasionally, you go, 'There's no one else I'd swap places with right now.' And that was one of those moments.

**James Acaster**

Can we hear a few more of those moments before we wrap up? I'd like to know the points of your career where you've felt that because sometimes, like, the character you play on The Trip is always looking at what other people are doing.

**Steve Coogan**

Yes, yes.



**James Acaster**

But it's quite nice-, I think people would love to hear the points in your career where you've-

**Steve Coogan**

Well okay. Alright well I'll tell you what, a part of the comic conceit of The Trip is that I'm on the back foot and a bit irritated by other people's success and there was some truth in that but not so much that it's all consuming but Rob obviously likes to pick at that and go, 'Oh, did you see they are doing well, aren't they?' Just needling me, you know, but it was really great when I got the film that I produced, wrote and have acted in with Judy Dench got four Oscar nominations.

**James Acaster**

Philomena.

**Steve Coogan**

Philomena and Rob was saying-, I think we were improvising on one of The Trip's to Spain or something, I can't remember what it was. It was after this, I got all this adulation, and he tried to go at me. My contemporaries at the time were like Sacha Baren Cohen, Simon Pegg, Ricky Gervais who were all sort of, you know, had this impact in America which I didn't quite have and also he said-, Lake Bell is an American comic/actress who I am a huge fan of and also she's very beautiful and she's very funny. So suddenly you think, 'Wow, she'd be a great person to act within a movie because she's glamorous and smart and funny.' All those things. Anyway, I remember Rob was saying, 'I see your mate Simon Pegg is doing a film with Lake Bell. You like her don't you?'

Just to wind me up. I go, 'Well-, ' Anyway, this is at the time. Anyway, he would do stuff like that but this time he was doing it and I just went, 'Rob?' 'Yes?' 'Four Oscar nominations.' He'd go, 'Yes and what about that?' And I'd just go, 'Rob, four. Four. Four,' Like that and it would sort of trounce anything he'd try and throw at me and he got really frustrated and he went, 'Well this is not going to work anymore,' and I was like, 'Ha ha ha ha.' I mean it does still work because then you don't repeat that success for quite a while and then he goes, 'Oh that was ages ago, remember when you were really good?' So you do get moments like that. I think there was a moment when we did I Am Alan Partridge, the first series, that really landed. I got amazing-, it did get amazing reviews and then you do stuff that you think-, you're equally proud of and it just doesn't quite land. Generally speaking, I've had more hits than misses and I'm really-,

I love what I do. I love working hard. You know, I've made a couple of bum steers but generally doing stuff which is-, you know, I like taking risks because it's very hard to get enthusiasm because I'm naturally quite lazy but if you're doing something where you go-, it's not like, 'If this goes well, it will be really good,' but, 'If I get this wrong, this will be really bad and you'll look shit and everyone will think you're-, it's not-, ' then that makes you think, 'Well I'd better concentrate and I better try and do the best job I can.' So I'm lucky enough, that I'm secure enough, that I can go, 'Let's play for high stakes and see if we win.' Most of the time I do. If it does fail, I'm not going to be penniless I'm just going to be very unfashionable but I'll still be able to put a roof over my head so, you know. Also, I always stayed off social media which is bad in some ways because if someone goes, 'Oh I didn't know he had a new thing out.' Yes, well I do.



It's good that I don't get sucked in to it. That I don't get sucked in to things and I can't publicise things. I do put everything in to creative process. So any junks growing in your head, it's so cathartic, you throw it all in to whatever you're doing. Whether it's a drama, or writing a drama, which I'm doing a bit of that now, or a comedy. Just throw it all in and it's all-, what's that Nora Ephron thing? Everything is copy. You know. Any bad personal experiences, any bad things that-, anything, people you're angry with in real life, things that bother you on the news. Just chuck it all in there, stir it up, put it in the oven.

**James Acaster**

Kick it in the oven if it's a big old turkey.

**Steve Coogan**

Yes but anyway, that was a long winded answer to your-,

**Ed Gamble**

No but you folded it back in to food. You put it in the oven at the end so-,

**Steve Coogan**

I'm just looking and seeing if there's any bits that I've missed food-wise.

**Ed Gamble**

I find it quite suspicious that your daughter wrote that down for you and the dream main course is something that she cooked.

**Steve Coogan**

I said I want to say that. She said, 'No you don't need to do that,' and I said, 'Yes but I really do-,' It's like a window in to a new way of eating that's, like-, I mean some younger people who have got disposable income and are not mainstream-, you know, the people who live in those areas. Those areas in, like, Manchester. Every city has got that area, haven't they? Where you go and it's all-, and I do like things that are, like, repurposed and, you know, that lived in, beaten up kind of-, I don't like things that show off. I don't like food that shows off. I don't like interiors that show off. I don't like cars that show off. I don't like anything that shows off. I like things that are comfortable and feel like they've got integrity even when you look at them and taste it. Yes, stuff like that.

**James Acaster**

I'm going to read your menu back to you now, Steve. See how you feel about it. You would like room temperature Northern tap water. You would like warm, Irish soda bread with butter made by any working class Irish woman. Starter, you would like chunky pea soup with white pepper. Main course, broccoli pasta made by your daughter. Side dish, fresh tomatoes with olive oil, salt and pepper, fresh white bread. Maybe some mozzarella if you're feeling like it. Drink, a pint of room temperature Bitter and dessert, well, did we settle on the trifle or the rhubarb four-ways from Hipping Hall?

**Steve Coogan**

Yes. I mean that, I'd be happy with that. I'll stand by that, yes.



**Ed Gamble**

This is the first time as well we've ever had a guest listen to their own menu back and check it off against the one they've got in front of them.

**Steve Coogan**

Yes, I want to get it right. Yes. I'm really happy with that.

**James Acaster**

You should be.

**Ed Gamble**

That's a lovely menu. Yes, you should be happy with that.

**James Acaster**

It sounds delicious.

**Steve Coogan**

It doesn't sound pretentious but it also doesn't sound like I'm trying to go, 'Oh I'm really working class, me. I like fish and chips and chip butty,' which is equally annoying as the posh people who go on about-, have you ever had those twenty four course menus? That sounds like me complaining about something that most people don't get to experience because it's astronomically expensive. It takes longer to describe. Basically, for those who haven't experienced it, you get twenty four courses. That's the most I think we've ever had and it's like a little thing and they come along and describe it, 'This is a bit of a foam and a bit of-, This looks like soil and it's made by freeze, dried mushrooms so it looks like you're eating soil.' I don't know why people want to do that and they talk about it and describe it and it literally takes longer to describe the food than it does to eat it because they describe it and then you just take it and you go, 'Ump' and then you go, 'Wow that was really interesting.'

That goes on and after about two and half hours, you're like, 'I just want to go home and watch telly with a sandwich. With some toast, cheese on toast.' So I'm not mad keen on those. I do like a posh restaurant but I'm not mad-, there's a guy called Simon Rogan who-,

**James Acaster**

Yes. L'enclumbe.

**Steve Coogan**

L'enclumbe. I ate at L'enclumbe and I'd been there a few times and they have quite-,

**Ed Gamble**

Was that episode one of The Trip?

**James Acaster**

It was, yes.



**Steve Coogan**

Was it?

**James Acaster**

Yes it was.

**Steve Coogan**

No it wasn't-,

**James Acaster**

It was.

**Steve Coogan**

Inn at White Well.

**James Acaster**

It was. It was L' enclumbe.

**Steve Coogan**

Do you know what, there's a very good lesson there. If you just insist your-, stand by what you say even when all the facts are crumbling around you.

**Ed Gamble**

Did you see what I did? I went, 'Was that episode one?' And I was asking you and James just went straight in with, 'It was, yes.'

**Steve Coogan**

No it wasn't. Inn at White Well.

**James Acaster**

It was Inn at White Well.

**Steve Coogan**

Yes. That's good. You're shifting your position. That's annoying when you argue with someone and you go, 'Hang on, you've changed your position,' and they go, 'No I haven't.'

**James Acaster**

I was pretty pleased with myself.

**Steve Coogan**

Now you're just agreeing with me.





**Ed Gamble**

Yes because Benito's Googled it now and found out that Steve, surprisingly, you, the person in the programme, were right.

**Steve Coogan**

Anyway I want to say Simon Rogan is good because he also does do, like-, I once had mashed potatoes, lentils and black pudding and it was done brilliantly. He can do the simple stuff and the complex, fancy stuff but on balance I'd prefer the simple stuff.

**James Acaster**

He very nicely sent a box to us during lockdown. It had a ribbon on it that said his name over and over again. Simon Rogan, Simon Rogan all over it. When I got cats, we were trying to make some toys for them to keep them entertained one day and there was a little furry monkey that one of them liked playing with. We tied the Simon Rogan around it and we'd use that to, like, throw it out and they'd get it and then we started just casually referring to the monkey as Simon Rogan and now that's a thing that just-, it's just a thing. Yesterday-, and also the cat has now taken to-, if one of the other cats is feeling a bit sad or ill, she brings them Simon Rogan to cheer it up and we've started just-, I was saying, 'Oh yes, he's been a bit quiet today but she brought him Simon Rogan,' realising in my head, this has become a very normal thing that I now say even though it's not Simon Rogan because he's a man.

**Ed Gamble**

You actually shouldn't give cats ribbon because they swallow it and if it comes out their anus and it's still out their mouth, either way you pull it you're going to cause internal damage.

**Steve Coogan**

Yes and you can't floss your intestines and that's a fact.

**James Acaster**

Steve, thank you for coming in to the dream restaurant.

**Steve Coogan**

Thank you.

**Ed Gamble**

Well there we are James, what a fun chat with Steve Coogan.

**James Acaster**

Fantastic. Everything I hoped it would be.

**Ed Gamble**

Yes it was very, very good. Lovely menu as well. He'd really thought about it.

**James Acaster**

Shout out to his daughter.



**Ed Gamble**

Shout out to his daughter who really helped him with it as well, wrote it all done for him which was lovely. I thought that was a nice, sort of, personal heart warming touch.

**James Acaster**

Yes, yes. Very nice and most important, Toblerone did not feature on this so we didn't have to kick Steve Coogan out of the dream restaurant.

**Ed Gamble**

Thank the Lord. Do go and buy Alan Partridge Big Beacon, the new Partridge book, it's fantastic. You can get it on e-book and audio, if you want, or you can get it in more traditional hardback. Lovely to speak to Steve and do go and see Dr Strangelove which is October 2024 at the Noel Coward Theatre but it is on sale now. Even though it's a while off, you can get tickets now.

**James Acaster**

That's exciting. I'm so excited.

**Ed Gamble**

And look, it can't all be about the Partridge book James because I've got a book coming out tomorrow, if you're listening to this on the day it comes out. 26 October. Glutton: the multi-course life of a very greedy boy is out officially. It's publication day baby.

**James Acaster**

Ed gave me my copy today, I was very excited and I cannot say this about-, I can't really think about a book I can say this about. I laughed at the inside jacket.

**Ed Gamble**

Yes. It's because it's pictures of me as a baby and James finds that funny.

**James Acaster**

Immediately made me laugh with some, I won't spoil it, but with some things that Ed wrote as a child as well for school. I mean, how many books can you say that about? That make you laugh before you've even started reading it.

**Ed Gamble**

Yes that's true. I suppose the hope is then you continue to laugh as you read the book.

**James Acaster**

And I'm sure I will.

**Ed Gamble**

Yes I'm sure you will as well. Anyway, that's out tomorrow. Thank you. Let's do some food shout outs James. S



**James Acaster**

Yes. First of all I'd like to say thank you to the Windmill in Brighton. When I was there recently, in Brighton. George Egg, a very funny comedian and the snack hacker, if you want to look him up on YouTube, and myself, we went to the Windmill and they were doing a photo shoot for their new menu and said, 'Well you can just eat the food. We'll photograph it and then you can eat it.' So we got a free meal of this whole menu. It's absolutely delicious. I highly recommend it. So yes, if anyone is in Brighton, they should go and I would recommend getting the ham sandwich. That was my favourite ham and egg sandwich.

**Ed Gamble**

We're going to Brighton soon.

**James Acaster**

Yes. Well let's go and get the sandwiches.

**Ed Gamble**

Yes please. Now recently on the podcast, James shamefully just asked for some chocolate. Just said, 'Send me some chocolate,' and, you know what, at the time I thought, 'Deary me, it's a dirty sell out,' but then all this chocolate arrived and I'm quite excited about it. So Land Chocolate sent us some chocolate.

**James Acaster**

Yes, delicious. Pump Street.

**Ed Gamble**

Pump Street Chocolate sent us some chocolate, thank you, and Flower and White sent us these bars that are sort of meringue, flavoured meringue, bars and some little bites as well. I've been popping those in my mouth every time I go in to the office.

**James Acaster**

You have been popping them in your mouth, walking around. Yes thank you for all of those. They've been great. We've been-, well I especially have enjoyed the white chocolate with cocoa nibs from Land.

**Ed Gamble**

Lovely. So there's probably some people who work for chocolate companies out there pretty jealous now. Going, 'I can't believe we didn't send them any chocolate.' I guess there's a way of rectifying that.

**James Acaster**

Balls in your court, I guess.

**Ed Gamble**

Chocolate balls in your chocolate court.



**James Acaster**

Serve it over the net. Here we are. Open mouths.

**Ed Gamble**

We also got sent some drinks, James.

**James Acaster**

And I think this was done to me as well. These are things that I shouted out. Cawston Press have got a new flavour.

**Ed Gamble**

The little beggar boy.

**James Acaster**

Pineapple flavour. A tropical Cawston Press. Loved it. Drank it the other day. Also Green Cola, I mentioned them on the Paul Foot episode. They sent us some cherry, some lemonade, some orange, some cola. So they sent those over. Very excited. And LA Brewery sent their Kombucha over. You know I'm a fan of the Buch. I said that to Coogs.

**Ed Gamble**

Yes. Buch is a fan of the Coogs.

**James Acaster**

Yes, yes. Danish Buch.

**Ed Gamble**

Sometimes you just say things the wrong way round and you've just got to run with them, you know.

**James Acaster**

Yes and so very excited, all of those drinks. I mean, we've got a lovely fridge here at Off Menu and it's great to open it and see so many nice drinks in there.

**Ed Gamble**

Yes. Thanks very much for listening. We'll see you next week, bye bye.

**James Acaster**

See you.