



Off Menu – Ep 202 – Jimi Famuwera

Ed Gamble

Welcome to the Off Menu podcast, shaking up the champagne of conversation, taking the sharp knife of humour, whipping it along the top of the champagne, taking off the cork of bad times and pouring ourselves a nice bubbly glass of podcast.

James Acaster

Celebrate good times, come on.

Ed Gamble

Boop boop.

James Acaster

That's Ed Gamble, I'm James Acaster. We own a dream restaurant and we invite a guest in every single week and ask them their favourite ever starter, main course, dessert, side dish and drink, not in that order, And this week our guest is Jimi Famurewa.

Ed Gamble

Jimi Famurewa. Yes, wonderful food critic, brilliant writer. You've seen him as a judge on Master Chef I'm sure. Jimi has a new book out.

James Acaster

Settlers: Journey Through the Food, Faith and Culture of Black African London. That's out now and we will ask Jimi about it during the podcast as well.

Ed Gamble

We will but I can't wait for this menu, James.

James Acaster

This is exciting. If you are not listening to this episode with a pen and paper, you probably should so that you can write down all the recommendations. Surely this guy is going to have them coming out the wazoo.

Ed Gamble

He knows his stuff, his wazoo is overflowing with recs.

James Acaster

Yes, you would imagine.

Ed Gamble

Yes.



James Acaster

So, I'm quite excited to hear all these recommendations.

Ed Gamble

Is that how wazoos work. Does-, so much stuff in the wazoo that it starts to spill out?

James Acaster

Yes. I think so. Yes, I think that makes the sound wazoo as it all comes out.

Ed Gamble

Wazoo.

James Acaster

Yes, yes, wazoo, yes you can.

Ed Gamble

Wazoo, yes you can.

James Acaster

Yes but-, hey, listen. We love Jimi Famurewa but if Jimi says the secret ingredient-, an ingredient which we have deemed to be unacceptable, we will be forced to kick him out of the dream restaurant.

Ed Gamble

And this week the secret ingredient is cauliflower rice.

James Acaster

Cauliflower rice.

Ed Gamble

I can't see Jimi saying this.

James Acaster

Surely he wouldn't say cauliflower rice. I only know about cauliflower rice because I saw Ed do a routine-,

Ed Gamble

A whole show really.

James Acaster

About it when it was a fad about having to grate a cauliflower and how long that takes.

Ed Gamble

Yes, yes.



James Acaster

So, basically someone decided that rice wasn't good for you and people started coming up with alternatives.

Ed Gamble

And you'd use that to make pizza bases and stuff. Horrid.

James Acaster

Using cauliflower in the worst ways possible. Hopefully-, I mean, Jimi surely isn't going to say it but like-

Ed Gamble

Unless there's some new brilliant trendy high-end restaurant that's using cauliflower rice in an amazing way. You know, we'll be happy to hear about that and we're excited but that will be the last thing he says on the Off Menu podcast.

James Acaster

Yes, yes, we will have to kick him out so, fingers crossed that won't happen.

Ed Gamble

And that suggestion came from Hannah Sinclair.

James Acaster

Hannah Sinclair, she just don't care.

Ed Gamble

Apart from if it's cauliflower rice.

James Acaster

Yes, then she cares, she's got an opinion on that.

Ed Gamble

Hannah Sinclair really do care.

James Acaster

Yes, Hannah Sinclair, Hannah do care.

Ed Gamble

This is the Off Menu menu of Jimi Famurewa.

James Acaster

Jimi Famurewa.

Ed Gamble

Welcome, Jimi, to the dream restaurant.



Jimi Famurewa

Thanks for having me.

James Acaster

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

Jimi Famurewa

Wow, it's happening. It's really happening. It's great to be here.

James Acaster

I was happy with my energy there.

Ed Gamble

Yes, it was good energy actually.

Jimi Famurewa

Yes, I think so. Yes, I think it was really good. I am impressed that this genie pronounced my name so well as well to be honest.

James Acaster

Thank you very much.

Ed Gamble

Well, he's been practicing it because it plays perfectly into his speech impediment.

James Acaster

It doesn't play perfectly-, it plays havoc with my-,

Jimi Famurewa

Right, right. Like it was like I deliberately-

James Acaster

Soft R's-, a lot of the time so an R and a W together quite quickly means that I'm taking a run up to that.

Jimi Famurewa

Just a load of hazards.

James Acaster

I really want to focus on saying an R noise.

Jimi Famurewa

Imagine if I reveal at this point that it's not even my real name. It's just been a really long slow burn bit to get to this point and wind you up. Like, yes, Jimi Smith weirdly.



Ed Gamble

It's not often we get a food critic in the dream restaurant.

Jimi Famurewa

Is it not?

James Acaster

You'll be the third one.

Jimi Famurewa

Really?

James Acaster

In like however many-,

Jimi Famurewa

Yes, I guess that is-

James Acaster

Five years, over 200 episodes recorded.

Ed Gamble

Yes.

Jimi Famurewa

Wow.

Ed Gamble

Always nerve wracking but then because you're picking the stuff in the dream restaurant hopefully you won't be too critical of the-,

Jimi Famurewa

Of my own choices, yes, yes, yes. That would really play to type if I was like, 'Oh, really obvious.' Like, just, kind of, you know, almost doing my own annotations. Yes, but no it's lovely to be here.

Ed Gamble

But you're one of the more positive ones.

Jimi Famurewa

I think that, yes. Yes, people do say that like someone was-, I was waiting to get the train the other day and this woman was like, 'I love how kind you are.' I was like, yes, I don't know if that's what they want from me but I do try to be. I think it would be disingenuous if I was like some, kind of, like cackling villainous person because I guess I'm, sort of, quite a genial, positive person in real life so, yes,



probably-, I probably wouldn't be able to keep it up if I was like, you know, being really out of order. But yes, yes.

Ed Gamble

Especially if you're, like, friendly to everyone when you go into the restaurant and then they read a bad review and they're like, 'He seemed so happy when he was here.'

Jimi Famurewa

Well, there is always an element of that like you, kind of-, and I guess everyone has this when they go to a restaurant and it's like, 'How is it going?' And it's like how honest are you to that question? They don't want you to be honest. It's like being asked 'how are you', isn't it? It's just, kind of, like-, and so, yes. Yes. I am always conscious of that, that you don't want to seem like you're being just, like, duplicitous and like, 'Yes, this is great.' And then you're just like ripping them to shreds afterwards. But, yes, like you must find this in, you know, when you're, kind of-, We're both, kind of, jamming our faces with food on TV. When you're on Great British Menu.

Ed Gamble

I get to be the positive one though because I'm not the food professional so I get to absolutely just gobble it all up and then I try not to be mean because also they're all brilliant professional chefs. So, the base level is excellent and then it works-, it's from there really. So, yes. I have a great time doing it but I eat everything.

Jimi Famurewa

You don't pace yourself?

Ed Gamble

No, god no.

Jimi Famurewa

Yes, I always intend to pace myself and you're like right we've got a big day of eating here, let's not go crazy and then suddenly if it's really delicious you can't stop yourself. Like, how do you stop yourself? And also, the hunger, kind of, comes in strange bursts doesn't it because sometimes you'll have just, like, tiny little portions of things and then quite a big pudding will come out and you'll just, like, gorge yourself mad.

Ed Gamble

It's a different stomach.

Jimi Famurewa

Yes, exactly. The pudding stomach of course. Yes, I'm still not great at that and it's always a strange thing to have got to the end of one of those days and you're, sort of, like reeling and you've been eating this amazing, complex, sophisticated, interesting food and I do have, like, at the end of the day quite-, you know, sometimes it'll just be like a pronounced craving for like a blueberry muffin from Starbucks or something like that. Like, I sort of want to return back to normality and yes.



Ed Gamble

I always think Master Chef is even more nerve wracking from like a judge perspective for you guys because you've got to watch them bring it through the door and then bring it to the table which terrifies me every time I see that. They're like shaking and bringing over the plate.

Jimi Famurewa

Yes, yes, it is strange and I guess that comes back to the balance of, you know, being positive and trying to be kind and, like, I'm-, I don't know, I just always try to like actually remember that it is just a person. All the mechanics of TV. Obviously, you're there to be critical to a degree and you're there to, sort of, like have a bar of excellence or whatever it may be but yes when people come in, quite often they've got like, you know, an ice pack on from where they burnt their hand. Like, they're literally trembling, covered in stains of food and stuff and it's like, you just, sort of, want to be like, 'It's okay. You're going to be alright.' But yes, that is, kind of, it is pretty brutal and judging someone face to face is a very different thing like I think, you know, to go back to our point about reviews like I definitely had that experience of when someone brings their food up to you and you say something even mildly negative about the presentation, their faces just drop and it is like-, it's pretty, yes, it's pretty tough but I don't know, I think everybody-, it's strange isn't it. We all watch those shows because we want people to be, kind of, like judged in a certain way but yes, I think there's a line isn't there.

Ed Gamble

I can just leave that to Tom Kerridge. Yes, leave it to Kerridge.

Jimi Famurewa

You just get to be like, 'That was great, can I have another, yes?'

Ed Gamble

He loves it.

Jimi Famurewa

Yes. 'Any word from Ed?', He's just licking his plate, yes. He's fine. Yes. It can be weird because I think sometimes, especially when I first started being a critic-, like, written reviews. You think of criticism of being like, you know-, what's his name Anton Ego in Ratatouille and that to be a good critic is to be exceptionally harsh but I wonder if maybe, sort of, post-pandemic as well that's, kind of, fading away a little bit and the, sort of, panto villainy is not really what people want. But, you know, you need to, kind of-, people do, kind of, like seeing somebody-, people like the catastrophe of things going wrong, the jeopardy, the peril, those things and we, kind of, need to gesture towards that a little bit sometimes.

James Acaster

I think often the reviewer nowadays becomes the thing as well like a product in and of themselves and so then they have to have a persona and I think a lot of the time it's easier just to be the mean one who winds everyone up and people get annoyed about.

Ed Gamble



It's more fun to be a villain, right?

James Acaster

Yes.

Jimi Famurewa

Yes, yes, oh massively yes. It feels like the thing that people think of when they think of critics, right? It's like that you're devastating and that you come in and, you know, the imperial march is playing as you walk in. It's like, come on, I'm going to really kick the shit out of this soufflé but yes quite often you just-, maintaining a sense of proportion, like, levity but then we all do sit there at home, don't we? And we're like, you know, we could literally be arm in a bag of crisps or whatever and have just ordered a Deliveroo and we're like, 'Oh, he's messed it up. Oh, look at that. Yes, sauce is a bit thin, isn't it? Bit thin. Ah, no, he's forgotten it.' And it's, kind of, part of it, isn't it? That you can be the armchair expert in that way but yes, no, it's good fun. It's such a-, I don't know about you, Ed, but it's such an absurd thing to be doing, isn't it? Like, to be just like-,

Ed Gamble

Yes, such a lucky thing to be doing like eating fantastic food and going like, 'Yes, oh, I like that.'

Jimi Famurewa

Yes, more please.

James Acaster

I've only ever been to the banquet and you have to write down your favourite dish at the end. Of course, there's loads of people there and, you know, you go around the table and no one's written the same thing a lot of the time and you're like, 'Oh, yes, it's not actually that one is the best.'

Jimi Famurewa

Yes, yes, yes.

James Acaster

It's just down to everyone going their individual thing and critics are just better at writing.

Jimi Famurewa

Yes.

James Acaster

Just know more words to describe food than we do.

Jimi Famurewa

I think it's a fair point but I think there is that thing of-, you get to almost, like, set the standard in some ways and I think sometimes if I'm writing a review or if I'm describing something on Master Chef and I've not necessarily liked it, I'm aware that that's quite subjective but it is almost like you are a, kind of, like-, I don't know, food lawyer or something. You're having to, like, convince other people that-, you



need to make a convincing argument basically. So, that even if people disagree with you, they can, kind of, see where you're coming from. And yes, you're right, like, it's so, so subjective and so, yes, it is all about who can convince the other person but I've definitely had it where I've been like, 'That's amazing.' And then the other critic's like, 'That is terrible.' And I think, like, you know, particularly being relatively new to this world as I was a few years back, you, kind of, are a bit, like, questioning maybe what you think and you don't want to get things wrong but I think you, sort of, come to realise that, you know, your perspective and your approach to things has value, doesn't it? And I think that that is, kind of, like a really, sort of, positive thing and I think you can see it in the way that these shows are cast. There's different sorts of chefs, different sorts of cuisine and there's a, kind of, a broader span of opinions and it's not just, like, this isn't fancy French food so therefore it is terrible. Like, do you know what I mean?

James Acaster

Also, speaking of writing-, you've got your new book out. *Settlers: Journey Through the Food, Faith and Culture of Black African London*.

Jimi Famurewa

Yes, so it's not completely about food but there's a lot of food in there and it's, kind of, a bit of a memoir, bit of social history and it's, kind of, like about the, sort of, broad culture that raised me really and that I grew up in Nigerian background but then also there's a lot of crossover with people of Ghanaian heritage, people of Sierra Leone, people of other parts across the African continent and so I just-, kind of, like, it's split up into different chapters. Some looking at food, some looking at things like religion, some looking at education and I, kind of, tell a little bit of my own story and experience of that specific world and, you know, the importance that faith held in my mum's eyes as I was growing up and things like that. And I, kind of, just join the dots and contextualise it like go back through history. A lot of research. I mean, I wish I'd picked something more straight forward. I definitely thought mid-way through writing it but no, I think what I also wanted it to feel like was quite alive and quite fun and, you know, vibrant and reflect-, like, you know, we've all-, I think if you live in any, kind of, like-, I mean, you could say major city around the world but certainly in the UK and certainly in London, there's African communities that we've all, kind of, seen and, 'Oh, that bingo hall is now like a Pentecostal church.' Like, that's interesting and you go somewhere like Ridley Road market and you, kind of, get that explosion of colour and life and, you know, the different things that are being sold there. You think, 'Oh, what are the roots of that' and there's all these fascinating little, kind of, historical nuggets that I, kind of, sort out. I've talked about my own experience of them and I just, kind of, tried to like join the dots in a hopefully quite entertaining way.

James Acaster

It is lovely how positive you are, I was noticing it while you were talking. You smile while you talk, no matter what you're talking about. I was like, I don't think I ever do that.

Ed Gamble

No, no, no, you don't.

Jimi Famurewa

Yes, I don't know.



Ed Gamble

I meant to tell you, you don't.

Jimi Famurewa

The opposite actually. You're telling, like, a really positive story and scowling.

James Acaster

And I was listening to what you were saying but I was thinking-

Jimi Famurewa

But it's just the smile as well.

James Acaster

He's such a happy guy.

Jimi Famurewa

Yes, just trying to, like, apply to if I was like a policeman or something. Just grinning, 'And I'm afraid we are going to have to arrest you.' Yes-

Ed Gamble

I'd take it, 'Okay, okay officer Jimi.'

James Acaster

Yes, I would, straight away.

Ed Gamble

Will you talk to me in the car on the way to the station?

Jimi Famurewa

'Don't worry, I'll keep grinning.' Maybe that is a bit of a cultural thing like I think of like my mum who is a real formidable character, you know, tiny, very driven woman but she's also hilarious as well and, you know, sort of, piss-taking is kind of like our family love language or whatever. Like, it is kind of in there where, you know, maybe part of it does come from relatively difficult circumstances at times and immigrants and you're sort of struggling a little bit but there is always this, kind of, life and not taking things too seriously and having a little bit of a grin on your face. But, yes, maybe it is one of those things that I've probably-, it's probably Master Chef that's just made me be like, 'If I just keep smiling, they won't hear me telling them that their potatoes are over seasoned.'

James Acaster

Well, we always start with still or sparkling water?

Jimi Famurewa



I'm going to go sparkling and I always think, like-, because obviously I go to a lot of restaurants in my job and people are always like, 'Still or sparkling, still or sparkling' and I'm a bit of a flitter really. Like, I'll have still, I'll have sparkling but I do like sparkling because it feels like a little treat, like a little bit of fun. Little fun, sort of, party bubbles and all that and yes water is an interesting one because I will normally just say tap to be honest like very pointedly and then you worry that the person you're with is like, 'Oh, got ourselves a cheapskate.' There is that thing, isn't there. It feels weirdly loaded and I don't know if you've had this at certain restaurants where you say tap and it's almost like they hoard the tap water, they keep it away from you. You don't get a bottle for yourself, it's like they want to shame you.

Ed Gamble

Yes, you just get a tiny little glass.

Jimi Famurewa

Yes, yes, yes. They're just like, 'Oh, okay, tap, yes, we'll see. You're not getting the jug yourself, no, no. We're going to like, yes.' So, yes, but I think sparkling, yes, like bit of ice, bit of lemon in there sometimes as well. Yes, it feels in it's own way like the kind of thing that I wouldn't necessarily always have in at home whereas still water is, you know.

Ed Gamble

It's coming out the taps.

Jimi Famurewa

Got it coming out the taps mate so, yes, it feels like a treat, put you in that, kind of, mindset. That little bit of effervescence. Yes.

Ed Gamble

Do you think-, Because I think when I'm judging Great British Menu, I will have sparkling water more often. I feel like it's more of a palate cleanser in between different people's dishes.

Jimi Famurewa

Yes, that's a very good point.

Ed Gamble

It clears the mouth, it cleans the mouth.

Jimi Famurewa

Yes, sort of, carbonated quality just, kind of-, yes, there probably is something in that. Yes, but I don't know about you-, I glug a lot of water on those days as well because, you know, they're always topping up your glass.

James Acaster

It's the salt they're putting in there.

Jimi Famurewa



Yes, yes.

Ed Gamble

Chefs use-, crazy, the amount of salt.

Jimi Famurewa

But I'm pro salt. Massively pro salt.

Ed Gamble

Oh, I'm pro salt, don't get me wrong.

James Acaster

But if you didn't have the water you'd be screwed.

Ed Gamble

Yes, yes.

Jimi Famurewa

If I'm really, sort of, given the choice, if I really think about it-, I'll, kind of, have whatever's there but yes, fizzy. Fizzy baby.

James Acaster

Poppadoms or bread? Poppadoms or bread, Jimi Famurewa? Poppadoms or bread?

Jimi Famurewa

Oh, wow, immaculate pronunciation once again.

James Acaster

While having to do the poppadoms or bread.

Jimi Famurewa

While having to do the poppadoms or bread.

James Acaster

He did it.

Ed Gamble

I know, that's done now.

James Acaster

My finest hour.

Ed Gamble

That was going to be the tense one.



Jimi Famurewa

And is there build up as well where it's, kind of, like, 'Oh, James hasn't been talking for a little while.'
Where it's like-

James Acaster

No, this one, I caught myself. As soon as I thought to myself, you're going to have to do poppadoms or bread soon, I thought just do it straight away, do it right now.

Jimi Famurewa

I think I-, No, I don't know if I should say it. Well, I think he basically said at the time that, like, Jamie Oliver, who I, kind of know a bit-, the poppadoms or bread, it was a moment for him, it was an experience for him and maybe the genie that he, kind of, was not prepared for poppadoms or bread maybe. Did you even ask him?

James Acaster

Yes. Well, he was prepared actually.

Ed Gamble

He was prepared because he chose poppadoms and then some people-, because we recorded at his place and some people brought in a selection of different poppadoms.

James Acaster

Yes, it was not-,

Jimi Famurewa

Oh my God, wow. Well, I've not got anything in my bag, I'm afraid, to present to you but to return to the question, it's got to be poppadoms. It's got to be poppadoms. Yes, I feel almost similarly to the sparkling water thing, there is a feeling of-, I don't know, like, it's special. Bread is great, obviously sourdough is on every restaurant menu with a, kind of, fancy whipped butter next to it. I'm seeing a lot of-, there's a lot of, like, glazed dinner rolls at the moment as well.

Ed Gamble

Is that the new bread coming through?

Jimi Famurewa

It's the new thing, mate. Just a little-, that's why you got me here now for the- Mainly for, sort of, you know, yes, bread forecasting.

James Acaster

Is there certain stuff that you just get very tired of where you're like, 'I swear to God, if they've got truffle on this again, on this menu.'

Jimi Famurewa



Yes, it does happen where-, and I think actually it can probably seem quite unfair to restaurateurs. Like, there are these things that become real obsessions of chefs and then, you know, people like me that write about food just, kind of, lose it out of all proportion because there's like another wild garlic mayo like, you know. There is a lot of-, but I guess it's like anything, isn't it? There's trends and there's things that really bubble up and then suddenly everyone will be like, 'Absolutely not mate.' And we only need to look back through food history or recent food history to see. But yes it can just get a little bit much at times, yes.

Ed Gamble

When do you think popping candy is going to be over? I think I talked about this on like the first episode of the podcast.

Jimi Famurewa

Yes, it is, yes, they do love it don't they?

Ed Gamble

Popping candy and every time you see someone on a TV show put popping candy in something, someone will eat and go, 'Oh, this chef's got such a sense of humour.' No, they don't. What are you talking about?

James Acaster

This chef needs to grow up.

Ed Gamble

Yes.

Jimi Famurewa

Yes, there's a whole family of those though aren't there where it's, kind of, like-, nostalgia. But, yes, poppadoms, absolutely poppadoms. Yes, I just think there's just something very fun about them and I always feel like when we order, like, an Indian takeaway, I've got a weirdly specific thing. Like, we'll have the poppadoms at the start but I like if there's a few left afterwards just as a little, you know, when you've finished, just to pick at at the end. You know, that's, kind of, part of it and there's just a few little shards kicking about, just something to do with your hands. Yes, so, yes, definitely poppadoms. All the dips, mango chutney, all that. Yes.

James Acaster

Is there a place where like-, does the best poppadoms?

Jimi Famurewa

Yes, there's a couple that I can think of at, sort of, both ends of the spectrum. So, there's one near me in South East London, Babur. Got to shout them out, absolutely legendary Indian restaurant, it's been going like over 30 years now and their poppadoms are great. Really good mango chutney with, like, proper big pieces of mango in it, bit of spice in it. Not that real, kind of, gloopy, synthetic-, which has it's place to be fair like I've definitely had it with my friends where-, I don't know, this was, like, a bit of a



lightbulb moment because they were like, 'Oh, yes, I want to go for a curry, I want to go for a curry.' And I'm suggesting all these, like, 'Oh, yes, let's go to Gunpowder.' Let's go to like all these-, you know, all these restaurants that are contemporary takes on a specific region or whatever but they absolutely wanted the old school very, kind of, basic and it's, kind of-, and I feel like those memories and those associations are so powerful for people that they don't really want it mucked around with. There's a restaurant chapter in Settlers actually where I talk about, you know, the increased prominence of West African influenced food and African influenced food and that authenticity question and I do think, yes, we all have these things where we just don't want it mucked around with and people have it with things like fish and chips or whatever and it's like, 'No, I do not want it elevated. I want it slightly rubbish like what I'm used to.'

Ed Gamble

Yes because there's a few of those restaurants now in London that are like West African influenced fine dining which I absolutely love but I didn't grow up with African food so I can imagine if you're, like, used to certain things. This tiny little portion and you're just like-,

Jimi Famurewa

Yes and then of course you've got the people that are perhaps more used to the food being like, 'Where's the rest of it? What the hell is this? How much for a bottle of Guinness?' So, yes, poppadoms, Babur is really good and then to, sort of, almost undercut what I've been saying, there's a place called BiBi in London which is, like, really good high end Indian and they do, like, these cheese poppadoms that are essentially giant Quavers. So, yes, I would have, like, maybe half and half. Maybe some Babur ones and then some fancy cheese papad on the side as well.

Ed Gamble

I went to BiBi a few weeks ago. Phenomenal.

Jimi Famurewa

Oh my God, it's really good, isn't it?

James Acaster

I remember you went, I remember you saying. Yes.

Ed Gamble

Oh, it's so good.

Jimi Famurewa

It's really good, isn't it? Really good.

Ed Gamble

Great cocktails as well.

Jimi Famurewa

Good cocktails. Lovely.



Ed Gamble

Yes, it's fantastic.

Jimi Famurewa

No-, and that to me is like the best expression of that because he's somebody that had worked on a lot of different restaurants almost, kind of, like cooking other people's cuisines and BiBi is him, kind of, applying that technique to this food that he clearly has like a real, sort of, personal connection to as well. Yes, it's really good, would massively recommend.

James Acaster

Well, let's get into your dream menu proper, exciting.

Jimi Famurewa

Yes, oh my God.

James Acaster

The dream starter?

Jimi Famurewa

Here we go. Dream starter. You must get so bored of people saying, 'Can I slightly bend the rules?' But can I slightly bend the rules and, like, I want to have a trio of small sandwiches. Like, slider sized-, like, so it's still a starter but there's three very specific, sort of, almost slider, two or three bite-sized sandwiches that I want. One of them is the mackerel peda from Mangal II which-, they did it throughout the pandemic, like, when it was, kind, lockdown and you could only do takeaway. And this is a restaurant in Dalston, like, very acclaimed Turkish inspired restaurant run by the two sons of the original owner so they've, kind of, modernised it. Amazing, pillowy Turkish bread, beautifully charred piece of mackerel. A dill mayo in there as well, outrageously good and I think it's one of those things that you can't get it anymore, like, they bring it back occasionally but it's got that, kind of, scarcity, specialness about it. So, a little one of those. A little Dexter cheeseburger from the Plimsoll, it's another restaurant in London in Finsbury park. The greatest burger I've ever had, I think. Almost feels a little bit like it's got-, and I could just be imagining this but it's got, like, a wimpy quality to it. There's something quite nostalgic about the burger sauce in there as well. It's a smash burger so it's got the crackly edges and just really gorgeous and I think also as a reviewer, I reviewed the first kitchen residency that they did and I remember the burger-, we didn't even order it at first and then we ordered it and I tried it and I think it's almost like one of those things, you know, to have the courage of your convictions because I was like, 'I feel like this is like a crazily good burger' but what can be applied to all sorts of different types of reviewing is you're doing it in this vacuum like you don't know what other people think of it so it is this, kind of, leap of faith and so I remember being like oh no, I've got to really make a big deal of that burger because I think it was delicious but I'm not sure and then it became this huge thing and, you know, like, everyone was talking about the burger so I think that's quite a nice one-, the professional link. And then the final one is a teeny tiny KFC Zinger Tower burger which I've just got a very specific nostalgia for it. I used to work at various places in Bluewater, the giant shopping centre in Kent and I'd work at, like-, I worked at Ted Baker for a little bit. I've said previously in, like, pieces of writing that it



was like Glengarry Glen Ross or something. They're all like, 'We've got to shift these store cards' and I, kind of, really hated it but I would go for a KFC after. There's something about the hash brown and the cheese. There's just this, sort of, wrongness to it that I just absolutely love.

James Acaster

Yes, that would be my order. I went through a stage when I was, like-, I don't know, eighteen-, going to KFC every Friday with my friend Graham. Northampton KFC, they always had extreme sports or snowboarding on the TV and we'd watch that. I'd always get a Zinger Tower burger meal and it was a revelation. I mean, the cheese, the sauce and the hash brown.

Jimi Famurewa

Yes, it's the sauce-, a, kind of, salsa-y type thing or-,

James Acaster

Yes and then obviously the actual chicken is the bit that's got the zing.

Jimi Famurewa

Yes, yes, yes, yes. There's heat in there, you're getting the zing.

James Acaster

They're making it a bit spicier. I never was going to order anything else.

Jimi Famurewa

Yes. I just don't really know how they arrived at it, like, you know a lot of the fast food items like they're inspired by something or oh, it's the Texan one or whatever but-,

Ed Gamble

Or a knock-off from another fast food chain, yes.

Jimi Famurewa

Yes but like how did a hash brown and a slice of cheese and spicy sauce get in there. Like, yes-, and I do feel like I really love, like, sort of mini burgers and, like, tiny, kind of, things that invite you to eat quite a few of them. Do you know what I mean? It's almost like a challenge like if you just have a plate of them. But yes, three of those-, those three-, quite sort of personally meaningful.

Ed Gamble

Great, I'm so happy that Mangal II's got a shout out.

Jimi Famurewa

Yes.

James Acaster

Never been there.



Ed Gamble

And the Plimsoll. I've still not been to the Plimsoll but I went when it was Four Legs at the-

Jimi Famurewa

Yes, yes, the Compton Arms, yes.

Ed Gamble

Fantastic.

Jimi Famurewa

Yes, really, really good.

Ed Gamble

Absolutely loved it, yes.

Jimi Famurewa

And the burger's the one thing or one of a couple of things that never leaves the menu and everything else changes. It's such a good burger. It's, kind of, hard to-, I don't know, it's weird, isn't it? Because burgers are like pizza where there's all these endless debates around the best and again to go back to our point, it can just be incredibly subjective can't it and people are like, 'That's not a good burger, like, this is.' But, yes, I would defy anyone to try that burger and not just-,

James Acaster

What's the bun?

Jimi Famurewa

It's like your standard glossy-, is it brioche? I'm pretty sure.

Ed Gamble

Brioche-y but I don't think it's so sweet that it's-,

Jimi Famurewa

It's not mega sweet, it's not mega sweet.

James Acaster

Brioche buns in a burger-

Jimi Famurewa

And actually, it's not one of those ones that just, kind of, disintegrates as well. It's, like, a good bun. Maybe-, yes, maybe it's more of a, kind of, potato roll.

Ed Gamble

I went through a stage with Mangal II where I'd go, have a great meal, come back pissed and book it for three weeks later.



Jimi Famurewa

That is a really good sign. I've definitely sat at certain restaurant tables and-, particularly when it's very good and there's a bit of hype around it maybe-, you're like, let's book again, like, when you're at the table. That is, kind of, really the ultimate side. Or even if you don't book-, like, I do think-, I don't know, when you're reviewing you can get really lost in the ways of like, 'Is this good? Am I sure this is good?' Because quite often the people I go with, they're having a great time. They're like, you know, drinking loads of wine, 'This is amazing' and so you have to be that, kind of, I don't know, that slightly colder-, I was going to say shark-like but maybe that's bad. But yes, you, sort of, have to be like, 'Is this actually good?' But one of the things that I always come back to is if you're already planning a return visit and trying to think of reasons or people that you'd love to take there, that's a pretty good sign, yes.

James Acaster

Are we seeing some loopholes for your dream main course?

Jimi Famurewa

I think my main course is hopefully not going to need any loopholes or bits of rule bending and having, sort of, been in a bit more of a restaurant space, I think this one's going to be a bit more linked to home and it's a Nigerian dish and it's basically stewed beans which does not sound that appetising. The Yoruba name for it is ewa riro. I think I got that right, like, Nigerian, Yoruba people-,

James Acaster

My speech impediment is absolutely-

Jimi Famurewa

Absolutely. Yes, yes.

Ed Gamble

The menu back at the end-, Ewa riro is going to absolutely fuck him up.

Jimi Famurewa

Ewa riro. Yes. Jimi Famurewa's ewa riro. You've got to call it that as well, yes. Kofo Famurewa's ewa riro. But yes, it's amazing and I think it's one of those things you probably would've-, if you've eaten some West African food or people that are listening they would have encountered a dish like it.

James Acaster

To look at it written down. Benito's just written it down, I've just looked at it, glancing. I'm fucked, I'm absolutely fucked.

Jimi Famurewa

Oh my God, it really is like I've done it deliberately. If you've had-, there's a Ghanaian dish, red red, which is like a similar, kind of, bean dish but it's really cooked down. Like, you cook them in a pressure cooker, it's these beans, there's stew in there-, tomato, pepper stew, onions. Normally got some heat going through it, some scotch bonnet and you have that with fried plantain and it is one of those things



that probably because-, and this is, you know, related to writing the book and seeking to, like, understand my culture because, you know, having been born in this country and growing up here I've got this, kind of, really powerful heritage and it's very present in my life but it feels inaccessible in some ways and you're constantly being told, 'You're not really Nigerian,' like, you know-, but I think in terms of food it really manifests because, I mean, I could maybe try them but I just don't think I could get even close to, like, my mum cooking them. They're almost a bit like refried beans, like, if you've had Mexican refried beans and they've just got such depth and waves of flavour it's so comforting. It's basically cooked down to like a mush, not the most photogenic of dishes but yes with, kind of, caramelised, sweetened fried plantain on the side as well, it is such a good combo. And it is the thing that I really-, and, you know, I guess through like the pandemic and stuff, we had an opportunity to all realise, 'Oh, wow, I could never eat this dish again because the person-, you know, my supplier i.e. my mum is not around.' So, it really clarified, like, what you really wanted, didn't it? And what you really, sort of, loved. Yes, I absolutely love it. It's such a simple dish but one that I feel like in a dream restaurant, that'd be the kind of thing I'd go far and maybe that tells its own story in terms of being a restaurant critic and having all these quite fancy foods, that's the thing I want.

James Acaster

And would you ever have it with jollof rice?

Jimi Famurewa

Well, yes, so jollof would probably be-, if there was like a leader board of, you know, the candidates for this main course, jollof would probably have been in the conversation but some people do it. Like, there is a, kind of, amazing chaos to a Nigerian spread, like, a buffet. Like, my mum makes a roast dinner and it's got-, you're like, 'Hang on, none of this goes together. What the hell.' And there's an element of, you know, there's potatoes, there's rice, there's plantain, there's a few different types of meat, there's another kind of rice. So, you could, kind of, do it. I wouldn't mix the two. I, kind of-, and maybe that's one of my, sort of, weird rules that I'm just like-, I just want to, like, appreciate the beans. I want to have rice, like, jollof is a beautiful thing but it's, kind of, a separate thing. And yes, jollof-, it's crazy the degree to which it's, you know, Ikoyi, which I mention in Settlers, they've got jollof rice on their menu and it's a two Michelin star restaurant now. It's, kind of, crazy to have something that you grew up eating suddenly become part of, you know, the cultural conversation stuff.

Ed Gamble

And it's a small portion as well.

Jimi Famurewa

Yes, yes.

James Acaster

Is that a Nigerian restaurant?

Jimi Famurewa

It's a very small portion, did you go? Have you been?



Ed Gamble

I've been a couple times, yes. I love it, I've not been to the new space but I went a couple of times when it was in St James's. I love it.

Jimi Famurewa

Yes because they do an amazing plantain dish as well, don't they?

Ed Gamble

With the scotch bonnet powder on the top.

Jimi Famurewa

Yes, the raspberry, yes.

Ed Gamble

Oh, I went there-, the first time we went there, there was a couple in there and-, very fancy couple and then their childminder turned up halfway through with their five year old daughter and dropped her off and you just saw the waitress like start panicking. She came over and she was like, 'Will she be eating anything?' And they went, 'Yes, she'll have the same as us.' She went, 'I don't know if she'll like it, I'm not sure we can make her anything else.' It was like, 'No bring her whatever' at this, like, tasting menu restaurant-, what those plantain with-, I mean, that stuff on the top is super fiery. This kid immediately in tears, like, she went bright red. Oh God.

Jimi Famurewa

Yes, no, those beans man. They are really, really good.

James Acaster

The main reason I brought jollof up and Ed and Ben know is because a long running thing on the podcast has been debate as to what the best jollof rice is.

Jimi Famurewa

Oh God, yes, yes.

James Acaster

Now, obviously, people usually say the one that they were brought up on, whatever one they had. But you're a food critic. So, we might get the definitive answer here and I know that people will still be saying he's going to be biased and say Nigerian but-,

Jimi Famurewa

Just get to end the jollof wars, right?

James Acaster

But, you know, we've not had a food critic on before who can weigh in on this debate.

Jimi Famurewa



I genuinely do believe that all jollof is good. I feel like, you know, the jostling and the arguing over different nation's jollof. But, you know, again I probably will be biased but I do feel like-, I wouldn't say it's better but all I will say is that Nigerian jollof is the one that I know, the one that I've, kind of-, that I would cook, the one that I've eaten the most but I genuinely do feel that like to pit one against the other is to, you know, miss the point of jollof, it's all good man. Yes. Why are we arguing about-, why are we arguing over which jollof's better? We could be eating jollof. So, yes-, and I think it's funny. It's a funny one, jollof rice, isn't it? Because I think everyone has a slightly different view of it but it's fascinating to introduce it to people that haven't really eaten it all their lives and they're like, 'This is amazing.' And so, I feel like I just try to keep that in mind, really. But yes, sorry to not be able to call the truce that you wanted on the jollof wars. I should've just said, 'Nigerian's the best, these guys don't know what they're talking about, that's not jollof.' I think the thing that's probably true is that Nigerian's are probably like the loudest in terms of saying that our things are the best, that tracks as, kind of, like our, sort of, behavior.

Ed Gamble

I've never really had jollof before but there's a food stall in a market near me called Jollof Mama and I went there and got a portion of that. I mean, that was a big portion. I had the afternoon of my life, sitting there eating this huge bowl of jollof rice and I just had to sit in the park for like an hour and a half and let it all digest.

Jimi Famurewa

I think the other thing that's really fascinating about a lot of African restaurants in particular and, like, West African restaurants is that you get given enough food not just for that meal time, like, there's such a sophisticated doggy bag operation at a lot of Nigerian restaurants. It's to feed you for the next few days, into the week. So, I, kind of, love that attitude and that feels really recognisable to me. I'd go round to my aunties and uncles or whatever or I go to my mum's now and it's like, you know-, I mean my mum-, I don't know anyone that like drives around with, like, you know stacks of Tupperware in their boot just in case so that they can, kind of, divvy up the portions of rice that they're ferrying around most of South East London. But, yes, no it's a beautiful thing. I don't know, I guess sometimes there can be a little bit of a frustration-, not frustration but it's almost like a victim of it's own success in that it appears on every West African influenced menu, it's the thing that everyone knows, it's the thing that everyone talks about and so there are other dishes in the repertoire that other people don't necessarily know as much, that I don't even know as much and I think it's that thing where something is almost like a victim of it's own success but I think it's a really exciting time for not just African influenced food but Caribbean influenced food.

And I think people are really discovering the links between the two and there's a broader appreciation of different ways of doing things and yes, just, kind of, it goes back to that point of maybe feeling like, 'Oh, wow, there are rules of-, oh, this is what a restaurant critic, sort of, looks like and acts like or knows about' and they know all about fancy French food. So it's, kind of, really fun to be on Master Chef and someone's cooking something that's West African in origin and I can, sort of, hold forth on it in a way that, you know, my other, kind of, co-judges aren't and it's a really exciting time to be like, 'Oh, wow, that's really cool. This is something that I know about and it's becoming part of, like, the shared culture.'

Ed Gamble



They did need that.

James Acaster

Your dream side dish, Jimi?

Jimi Famurewa

Oh, wow, okay. So, this is returning a little bit to the maverick of the first dish. I'm going to keep it West African and Nigerian specifically and I'm going to keep it quite spicy as well. I'm going to have some beef suya as my side dish. It's probably more of a snack or a starter but it's definitely not a main and I think because the main that I've chosen, the beans, is quite, kind of, simple, it's quite restrained, there's no meat on it-, and suya, for those that do not know, is a, kind of, like addictively fiery barbecued beef that's traditionally sold by the roadside and little outdoor grills in Nigeria. It's northern Nigerian in origin and it's in this dry spice rub which is called yaji specifically or suya spice. And that's got peanuts in it, so it's, kind of, mixed with ground peanuts with dried pepper, like, chilli pepper, it's got some ginger in there and it is like the most addictive thing you have ever had in all your life. Genuinely, it's out of control. Something about the combination of sweet, roasted peanuts and quite intense heat with charred strips of beef or you can have it with chicken. You get it in newspaper if you have it traditionally in, like, Nigeria and it's, kind of-, it's quite primal, you're ripping it out the paper with your hands. Cold beer as well and I think that'll be a good little match up and it's the sort of thing-, it is one of my absolute favourite Nigerian dishes and I think I write in the book that the first time I tried it actually was some that had been smuggled into the country by a relative who had, like, frozen it. I still don't really know how they did it-, had frozen it in, like, a tin or something, hidden it in their bag so that it escaped detection and then got it to the UK and then it, kind of, defrosted and then they gave it to us. And I mean, the fact that I'm still eating this like it's essentially been in someone's suitcase but yes it's amazing and it's a really, really good dish.

Ed Gamble

Oh, it sounds great.

Jimi Famurewa

Even it hasn't been muled into the country it still tastes good.

James Acaster

Are their places you can get it in the UK?

Jimi Famurewa

Yes, there's really, really good-, I think you can get it all over and there's a place that delivers nationally actually called Alhaji Suya which I would massively recommend. They're in Peckham and they've got a couple of locations but they've got a main one in Peckham and, yes, they're really, really good. They use really tender meat, they're yaji, their spice, is like-, they give you an extra little baggy of it for the hardcore and I would also recommend Chishuru which is quite an acclaimed restaurant that's in London by a chef called Joké Bakare and she does, like, really nice bavette steak with the spicing on top. So, that's, like, a little, sort of, edging towards bougieness version of it but it still is delicious.



Ed Gamble

We were going to go there once.

James Acaster

Were we?

Ed Gamble

Yes I think it was before COVID. We booked it to go.

Jimi Famurewa

Yes, in Brixton?

Ed Gamble

Yes, I think we were going to go there and then everything got shut.

Jimi Famurewa

You should go, she's amazing. She's such a good cook and, like, it's funny because I've eaten suya on TV shows and also, like, spicy dishes as well and it is a weird thing isn't it where I feel like I do like spice but I don't know if it likes me as much as I like it. There's a really growing body of evidence of me just, like, sweating and just looking like, 'What are you doing?', you know, I don't know. It was funny growing up because a lot of my friends would have that thing of wanting to get the hottest curry and when Nando's arrived and I'd be, sort of, like ribbed if I didn't go extra hot at Nando's and I think growing up with food that could be quite hot and with a lot of spice and stuff, I just didn't really understand that real, 'Oh God, you've got to get the hottest one' but yes, I don't know. How are you guys with-, are you spice boys?

Ed Gamble

I love it.

James Acaster

Love it.

Ed Gamble

Absolutely love it but I wouldn't-, it's certainly not for any masculine proof reasons. I just genuinely love it.

James Acaster

As long as the flavour's there.

Ed Gamble

Yes.

Jimi Famurewa

Yes.



James Acaster

And they're married together, brilliant. Delicious. If there's no flavour and it's just really hot.

Jimi Famurewa

Yes, just, kind of, like a blunt heat.

Ed Gamble

I like it to take me to the absolute edge.

Jimi Famurewa

Oh man, yes.

Ed Gamble

When I start sweating and getting tingly.

Jimi Famurewa

Yes, I think that's part of it, isn't it? It's almost, like, physical. There's another end of the spectrum in terms of cuisine but Thai, there's a few, like, Speedboat Bar, I don't know if you've been there-,

Ed Gamble

We went. That's another place I went and then the next week I went back with him because the one dish at Speedboat Bar where they were like, 'Do you like hot food?' Like, 'Yes.' And it came and it got me so close to the edge but I know when I've gone over the edge because I start hiccupping and I'd just started to get the hiccups. It's the Chinese sausage and the mustard green salad. Oh, it's amazing.

James Acaster

The prawn ceviche stuff there was off the chain. I really want those again and I remembered after-, because we were talking about them the other day, how much we liked the food there and then I remembered the drink that I had that me and Jamie Demetriou ordered and it was, like, that beer-,

Ed Gamble

Jelly beer.

James Acaster

Jelly beer like a frozen beer that had, like, ginger and honey in it. Holy hell.

Jimi Famurewa

Oh baby.

James Acaster

Like that's a dangerous drink. I was gulping that down like it was juice.

Ed Gamble



I was all ready that restaurant because it used to be the Taiwanese place which I loved.

Jimi Famurewa

Which The Bao Guys did.

Ed Gamble

Yes, which is like the most beautiful restaurant I've ever seen.

Jimi Famurewa

Xu was it? Xu.

Ed Gamble

Yes, that's it yes. It was just a stunning menu but that is everything is like taking you to the edge of spice there.

Jimi Famurewa

Yes, proper, sort of, pulse pounding. I think when you do it because-, Plaza Khao Gaeng, the, kind of, precursor to that which is in Arcade below Centre Point-, and that was my-, like, you know-, and they'd bring out little, sort of-, like, afterwards you'd have these little like milk-, almost like little shots of pink milk that are, kind of, meant to tame the spice type thing but you know that way when you're just like, 'I want more' and people look at you and they're like, 'Are you sure you want more?'

Ed Gamble

You don't look well.

Jimi Famurewa

You, sort of, look like-, I don't know if it's a good idea. But, yes, it's so addictive and yes, Suya definitely ticks that box for me. It's just such a rush, it's, kind of, like-, you know, to the point where there is a little bit of a thing in Nigeria especially and in Nigerian culture where it's a bit-, my mum's a little bit like, 'What is in that stuff?' Like, she finds it a little bit, kind of-, she's not sure about it.

Ed Gamble

She's suspicious.

Jimi Famurewa

She's suspicious and there's all these rumours about various, kind of, you know-, I think-, I mean I did write a piece about it. There's various rumours of, like, it being almost a bit of a natural Viagra type thing like that there's, kind of, weird, sort of, added things in there so just be aware of that before you have some.

Ed Gamble

So, where can you order this from?

James Acaster



Also, those rumours were started by someone who was eating suya and got a boner, right? That's just the person who started that rumour.

Ed Gamble

Must be the suya.

James Acaster

It's a natural Viagra guys, I'm hard as a rock here.

Ed Gamble

It's not that I'm an unstoppable pervert.

Jimi Famurewa

It was the suya. You didn't actually have any of the suya. What?

Ed Gamble

So, this place in Peckham-, do they deliver it, like, cooked? Is it all done? So, it's almost like jerky but-,

Jimi Famurewa

Yes, well there is one that's more jerky like and that's called kilishi and that's, kind of, dried, almost like a biltong with the peanut-y spice to it. The Peckham place you can either get it, like, warm to go or they do a version that you can heat up at home. Yes, they ship it so far, yes, it's really good. Jay Rayner, my Master Chef colleague, I got him to go there and he absolutely loved it, like, parked up in his car outside eating suya with a little baggy of extra Yaji which I really enjoyed that mental image of him just, kind of-, I think he might have been in a Zip car which makes it even funnier for some reason.

James Acaster

Is there any stress ever involved in that when you're a food critic and you recommend a place to another food critic?

Jimi Famurewa

Oh God, yes, massively. Yes, yes and I think any recommendation not just to, like, food critics but you do-, you must feel it, mustn't you? And I think there's an element of like if they don't like this as well, maybe we're done. Like, you know, there is a strange thing isn't there. You, kind of-, because it's such a great feeling when someone gets it and they get the same response but I think we've all had that thing of, like, 'Oh God, you've got to go there' or you hear and they're like, 'Oh, we weren't sure' and they had a bad experience for whatever reason but yes, there's definitely pronounced-, like, if I recommended somewhere to another food critic but it's very-, I don't know, it's rare that you'd, kind of, nudge someone to go somewhere. Like, it can be very like, 'What did you think of that?', 'Oh, you like that,' like, you know, in a nice way but there is that slight caginess edging towards competitiveness sometimes where it's, kind of, like you keep your cards close to your chest. You're not necessarily recommending places.

Ed Gamble



See I'm the complete opposite. Whenever I recommend somewhere I'll be like, 'It's the best meal I've ever had so there's no way they're ever going to enjoy it as much as I said I enjoyed it.'

Jimi Famurewa

Yes, always good to build it up to an absurd degree so it's just like-

James Acaster

I need Ed to send me a list of places. I need to go to some new places so if at some point Ed you could send me a list of recommendations.

Jimi Famurewa

So, the perception would be that you're, like, eating out all the time but you're not, right?

James Acaster

I go through stages of it a lot but, like, Ed is really good at finding new places, going there and, you know, he can describe a restaurant in London without saying a name and you'll know what it is. Whereas, I basically have a handful of places. Whenever anyone asks me for recommendations, I'm like, 'Here's five places and they're all places that Ed told me about' and they tend to be the ones that, yeah-, I end up going-, there's about four places I really like local to me and I just to go to them on a bit of a loop. I need to-, I'm at the point now where I need to break out of that.

Jimi Famurewa

But I think that's good as somebody that maybe doesn't-, maybe this is part of the job because you're always moving ever forward and on to the next thing, the ones that I really love and really cherish are the ones that you can always go back to and, kind of, like that's how you build up proper love for a place where you're like, 'Oh, they've got that special on,' 'Oh, that tasted slightly different today,' 'Oh, that was a bit hotter this week' or whatever and you, kind of-, and also, that certainty of, 'Oh my God, I'm in this restaurant, everything's going to be alright.' So, I think there's absolutely nothing wrong with that, just going to the same places. So, you're fine, carry on.

Ed Gamble

Yes, you'll be alright.

James Acaster

It's alright but, like, you know, especially doing this pod, you hear loads of recommendations and you're like, 'I've got to go to this place' and I can't remember all of it but I'll remember that Ed said to every single one of them, 'Yes, I've been there.' So, I'm like, right, if Ed can send me a list of stuff, that'd be really useful.

Ed Gamble

Happy to.

James Acaster

Your dream drink, Jimi?



Jimi Famurewa

Oh, my dream drink. It's a fascinating one this. Do people mostly pick booze or do they not?

James Acaster

Yes.

Jimi Famurewa

Does it tend to-, do they?

Ed Gamble

It's a lot of booze.

James Acaster

Mostly.

Jimi Famurewa

I don't know if it's maybe part of the picking a real dish of my childhood as a main or that nostalgia but I was just thinking soft drinks like a lot of the time. The traditional obvious way to go to match up with that main and side would be a Supermalt which is-, I'm sure you've had previously but it's a real obsession, particularly in West Africa and it's weird because it's like, Danish, brewed in Denmark. And I think it was originally designed for the armed forces in Nigeria, like, Nigerian soldiers to, kind of-, because it was a way to quickly get them B vitamins and all this stuff. So, it's slightly strange.

Ed Gamble

It's sort of like Viagra as well, right?

Jimi Famurewa

Yes, yes, yes. That guy again is like, 'Oh careful of the Supermalt guys, I've got a boner again.' 'Not sure if it's the things you're eating and drinking' but yes so that would be the obvious way to go but I'm going to go for another soft drink which I just, kind of, a weird obsession and love and a nostalgia for and it is an Orangina. An ice cold Orangina. I don't know what it is, I had a real, sort of, beloved uncle who sadly is no longer with us but he would also get us Orangina and maybe it's the adverts, shake the bottle, wake the taste, was it? Or something like that?

Ed Gamble

Yes, it was exactly that and you know it. Stop trying to pretend that you don't exactly know what the advert is.

Jimi Famurewa

Is it shake the bottle, wake the taste?

James Acaster

Is it what I say to myself every day?



Jimi Famurewa

My mantra. But yes-

James Acaster

That's what the Viagra guy says.

Jimi Famurewa

Yes, just something about an ice cold Orangina. The fact that it had the illusion in my mind, in my, kind of, youthful '90s kid mind of, 'Oh, this is really fresh, it's got bits in it' and it's, like, but obviously-

Ed Gamble

And the bottle.

Jimi Famurewa

Yes and the bottle, yes.

Ed Gamble

Shaped like an orange for God's sake.

Jimi Famurewa

Shaped like an orange, this is really good for me.

Benito

Could you say that again?

James Acaster

Can you say it again? Say shake the bottle, wake the taste.

Jimi Famurewa

Shake the bottle, wake the taste. Imagine if that was-

James Acaster

Are you asking me to shake the bottle, wake the taste?

Ed Gamble

Calling the Orangina hotline.

Jimi Famurewa

So, yes, I love Orangina and I, kind of, almost want to like, you know-, I don't know, you know, those specific circumstances where you're desperate for a drink, it's really hot and then, yes, an ice cold Orangina. Oh, yes. Yes, I feel like that would be a decent match up with the mains. Yes.

Ed Gamble



See interestingly, people do pick booze a lot of the time. You're our third episode of the day, no one's picked booze today.

James Acaster

No one's picked booze today.

Jimi Famurewa

Yes.

James Acaster

All picked soft drinks, all picked soft drinks that are in glass bottles.

Jimi Famurewa

Oh God, what's going on?

Ed Gamble

It must be because it's a hot day.

Jimi Famurewa

It is a hot day. You've got us in this hamam as well. Just anything cold really, anything cold.

James Acaster

You know, what I was hoping for as well because you were saying childhood thing, you'd picked a few things that were from Nigeria and today we've had-, someone picked Nigerian Fanta.

Jimi Famurewa

Oh, okay, yes.

James Acaster

Someone picked Pepsi from Uganda in a glass bottle and I was, like, come on. If this is three in a row in one day of African sodas in glass bottles, this will be the weirdest hat trick we've ever had.

Jimi Famurewa

Really strange. Yes, I mean, I do like Nigerian Fanta and African Fanta as you'd probably call it.

James Acaster

Well, when we Googled it today, it was saying it's Nigerian Fanta.

Jimi Famurewa

Specifically Nigerian Fanta, yes. Oh, okay. Yes, alright, I'll just own the, kind of, Nigerian exceptionalism then. Our jollof is the best and the Fanta is ours.

Ed Gamble

Ghanaian Fanta stinks.



Jimi Famurewa

Yes. Get that out of here.

Ed Gamble

I'm not-, have we had Orangina before?

Jimi Famurewa

Have you had it?

James Acaster

Alex Horne of Taskmaster chose Orangina as his water.

Jimi Famurewa

Of course he did, of course he did. Yes, no, I love Orangina. Yes, even like the name and-, I've got to say, to go back to the Nigerian Fanta thing. I don't really do masses of sweet drinks these days. I just don't really, I don't know-, I, kind of, find it fascinating people that have a Diet Coke every day. Like, no judgement, but I'm just a bit like, 'Oh my God' like, yes. I just can't really do it anymore and that was-, the notion of drinking water in my childhood was like, 'What the hell are you doing? Why are you drinking water?' Just, like, put some squash in it for God's sake. You know, I would never really drink water and I feel like, you know, don't know, that weird way where you, kind of, betray your younger self as you grow older. Because I'm all about just water now really or like teas and coffees and so, yes, in terms of the dream restaurant and the dream meal, an Orangina would feel-, there'd be something maybe slightly illicit about it, maybe even more so than booze because, you know, there's obviously a lot of wine and drink around. Do you have wine on the Great British Menu?

Ed Gamble

No, we only have booze if the chef brings it with their dish. So, like, quite often the desserts will have, like, a cocktail with them or if they really work.

Jimi Famurewa

That old classic, 'And I've brought you a shot as well, guys'.

Ed Gamble

Or you do it, like, Spencer Metzger from the Ritz, he brought in, like, an 80 quid bottle of Bordeaux with the main course. Oh, right, yes, this guy means business. A main course that got through to the banquet when it's the BBC who are in charge of the budget and it was shit wine.

James Acaster

Tesco wine.

Ed Gamble

Yes.



Jimi Famurewa

Yes, so I feel like maybe the lack of a boozy option for my drink choice probably is related to work because there is a lot of, 'Oh, wine and a cocktail' maybe and whatever and I think, yes, there's something quite nice about just having a, kind of, soft drink. Like, yes.

Ed Gamble

Especially to cut through the spice of the-

Jimi Famurewa

Yes, kind of, I think that'll work. The other thing that was in the running but I don't know if this would have really gone. You mentioned Bao earlier but their peanut milk.

Ed Gamble

Oh my God, I love it.

Jimi Famurewa

Oh my goodness, yes.

James Acaster

Not had this at Bao. I've been to Bao but not had the peanut milk.

Jimi Famurewa

Really, really good.

Ed Gamble

Do they only do it in the café or do they do it everywhere now?

Jimi Famurewa

I thought they did it in every one but I could be wrong. They might have shuffled the pack.

Ed Gamble

They definitely do it at the Bao café in kings cross.

Jimi Famurewa

It's really good and that would have been a nice little, sort of, echo of the nuts, the peanuts in the suya as well. So, you know, that would be my other option and it's so good. Because it's, kind of, a drink that's basically a, sort of, pre-pudding as well. It's, kind of, like this is really good stuff.

James Acaster

Now you're talking my language. One of the best phrases in the English language. Pre-pudding.

James Acaster

Well, let's get on to your dessert in that case.



Jimi Famurewa

Yes, oh my God.

James Acaster

Do you know what? Do you know what? I think we can allow-, we let people have more than one drink in the past. If you want Orangina as your dream drink but you want a peanut milk as the bridge between your main course and your pudding?

Jimi Famurewa

Oh my God.

James Acaster

You can have it.

Jimi Famurewa

I've just remembered that I was going to ask for more rule breaking at the end. Should we see how we go?

Ed Gamble

Let's hear it, I want to hear it.

Jimi Famurewa

It'll be after the pudding because do you let people have a coffee?

Ed Gamble

Yes.

James Acaster

Yes.

Jimi Famurewa

Come on, it's a very specific kind of coffee. Okay, so my pudding. I would like an ice cream sundae and I want it made with two very specific types of soft-serve ice cream. One is the toasted rice gelato from a place called Superiority Burger, have you been there? In New York?

James Acaster

No.

Ed Gamble

No.

Jimi Famurewa

They've moved into bigger premises now and it's a, kind of, vegetarian burger place run by a guy called Brooks Headley who used to be in bands like punk bands and stuff but worked as a pastry chef.



Amazing, tiny little place, real, sort of, like punk spirit to it. They'd have all these, kind of, changing veg-based dishes and also, like, the greatest gelato you've ever had in your life. I went to New York in 2019, went there and, yes, I had this toasted rice one that was just unbelievable. It was like rice crispy cereal milk but, kind of, you know, even better than that sounds. So, with that in my ice cream sundae and then also a Wendy's Frosty which I-, America was, like, a really formative, I don't know, place? I would go there quite a lot as a kid because I've got family, uncles and aunties dotted around the states in places like Miami and places like that and so I really remember going to America and just-, I was obsessed with America as a lot of, kind of, '90s children were.

I think maybe even more so as an immigrant kid, you're sort of like, 'Oh wow, America's so cool' and having relatives in America was this really big thing and it just completely lived up to my insane building it up and promise and I just really remember going to Wendy's, it was like, 'Oh my God, their burgers are square.' Like, what? Like it just does nothing to it but it's, like, 'They're square burgers,' and having a Frosty which I was also fascinated that it wasn't-, there wasn't a flavour, it was just the Frosty was the Frosty and I think it's a bit of chocolate and a bit of vanilla. Slightly, off-putting almost, like, off-grey colour but just so nice. So, sort of, creamy and delicate so I'd have an ice cream sundae with those two mixed in and I just love a sundae, I love the idea of-

James Acaster

You want sauce or cream?

Jimi Famurewa

Yes, I'm going to have some sauce. I'm going to have some, sort of, like hot fudge sauce on top and then maybe we'll crumble a bit of the Marksman's brown butter custard tart in there. We will have a little bit of a Happy Endings ice cream sundae crumbled in there. The malty one which I think is like genuinely one of the most perfect, kind of, puddings that you can get. So, yes, little bit of crunch and then these two soft-serve ice creams and then just roll over and fall asleep.

James Acaster

Yes. Sounds like a good Sunday, also, that's the second self-designed sundae we've had today.

Jimi Famurewa

Oh, really. What is going on today?

Ed Gamble

It is mad today.

James Acaster

And the same person shouted out the Frosty.

Jimi Famurewa

Did they?

James Acaster



Which is the first time that's ever-, we've never had it before.

Ed Gamble

We've never had it before, never had it mentioned.

James Acaster

On the podcast, two in a row. He's probably still out there.

Jimi Famurewa

Yes, he was like, 'Say Frosty' and then, yes, loads of r's next to w's as well.

James Acaster

Yes, just chuck them in as much as you can.

Ed Gamble

Wendy's Frosty, yes, there's some w's and r's flying around in that.

James Acaster

It's not my biggest worry at the minute on this menu. But I mean it sounds delicious and nice the Happy Endings get a shout out that is-, I had that one-, the ice cream sandwich just recently.

Jimi Famurewa

I think we had to forcibly stop ourselves from buying it. Me and my wife. You know when you're just a bit like, 'This is getting a little bit out of hand,' where you both independently bring one home as a treat and you're like, 'I got Happy Endings ice cream,' she's like, 'I got them too.' Yes, but they're so good. I mean, they're all great and Terri who runs Happy Endings is awesome, she's, like, a good thing as well but I think that's-, it's amazing that you can just, like, obviously in quite fancy shops but that you can just buy that in a shop. Something that kind of perfect and beautifully put together. They're really good.

James Acaster

Yes, they've got a stand in Victoria park and sometimes I go on walks and then end up in Victoria park and I find myself naturally walking towards it, hoping it's going to be open but then anytime it's closed I always think, 'That's for the best.'

Jimi Famurewa

Yes, need to be, sort of, saved from yourself. I've actually not had one in ages because I think it did just get a little bit out of hand where we were having them like really, really regularly. Just, like, when you have to forcibly ban yourself from having something like it's-, I don't know, is it good? Is it bad?

Ed Gamble

It's a compliment to them.

Jimi Famurewa



I think it is. Yes. I'm all about puddings. It's a strange thing and this is, kind of, a bit of a food world thing where everyone's always quite often tripping over themselves to tell you how little of a sweet tooth they've got and how much they don't really like puddings and it's always seen as this mark of sophistication like, 'Oh, I don't really like puddings.' It's, like, 'Come on. Come on, puddings are great.' Come on.

James Acaster

Bunch of dickheads, man. All that, I don't have a sweet tooth. And you're right, when every time that-, we've had that phrase said many times this podcast.

Ed Gamble

Yes, we have. Yes.

James Acaster

I don't have a sweet tooth and they always say it like that's a good thing or something or that makes them interesting. It doesn't make you interesting, most people say it who come on here so you're not more exciting if you're an adult than still goes out their way to have an ice cream sandwich.

Ed Gamble

Who happens to go on a walk to Victoria park every single day. The same spot.

James Acaster

My feet go where they go.

Jimi Famurewa

Oh back here again? Okay.

James Acaster

Here we go, it's closed. I'll try and jimmy open the shutters and see if we can crawl in.

Ed Gamble

Jimi does that so much it's named after him.

Jimi Famurewa

Yes, that's true. Yes, I say I had to forcibly stop myself from buying them, there was a bad scene with some jimmyed open shutters.

Ed Gamble

There was a restraining order.

Jimi Famurewa

Yes, yes, yes.

James Acaster



Oh, yes, you have a coffee order at the end of this?

Jimi Famurewa

Oh, yes, my coffee order. So, the coffee that I'm going to get and I wonder if you've had this, it's from a place called Forza Win which is in South London, Camberwell.

James Acaster

Benito's got his head in his hands, he loves it so much clearly.

Jimi Famurewa

And it is the custardo.

James Acaster

Is that what you thought he was going to say, Benito? The custardo? Yes, he says yes.

Jimi Famurewa

Oh my God. It is a shot of espresso with-, they make their own custard basically, you know, sort of, like a frozen custard type thing and it is unbelievable. It is out of control the, sort of, the combo of like amazing-, you know, like-, I always quite like the thought of, like, an affogato and I think oh, yes, to go back to that idea of, 'Oh no, I don't really do puddings,' like it feels a little bit like the interesting artist choice. Like, oh, an affogato. But they always slightly disappoint me but a custardo feels like what an affogato should be like it's amazingly creamy, sweet, rounded custard with this beautiful intense shot of coffee in it and it's so nice. It almost tastes like eggnog or something like that and yes, so that'll be my little-,

Ed Gamble

Oh, well, we're going there now.

James Acaster

Yes, clearly I want that.

Jimi Famurewa

Forza Win, it's absolutely inspired.

Ed Gamble

We've been there.

James Acaster

Have we? What's it called this place?

Jimi Famurewa

Forza Win. Forza Wine's up on the front which is very good but yet Forza Win which is now in Camberwell, used to be in Peckham-, and a custardo there, one of their custardos just to, kind of, cap this insane meal for a man that already eats too much. I suppose I must be but sometimes I'm like, 'Am



I a good eater?' Like, I'll be midway through a meal and I'll be like I'm already full and I'm like, I should probably be a better eater than this but-,

Ed Gamble

Yes, but it's what you do at that point that makes you a good eater or not.

Jimi Famurewa

That's true, that's true, yes. Yes, that's true, yes.

Ed Gamble

Some people stop.

Jimi Famurewa

Yes, some people would stop, yes. Yes, some people would stop.

Ed Gamble

You can't stop. You've got a sundae and a custardo to have.

Jimi Famurewa

But yes, custardo, oh, so good.

James Acaster

Well, I'll read your menu back to you now. See how you feel about it? You'd like sparkling water. Poppadoms or bread you would like half from Babur poppadoms and half from BiBi cheese poppadoms with all the dips. Starter, a trio of small sandwiches. You want the mackerel from Mangal II, the Dexter cheeseburger from the Plimsoll and a KFC Zinger Tower burger. All nice and small slider size. Main, ewa riro. How was that?

Jimi Famurewa

Yes, yes, bang on.

James Acaster

I said that right?

Jimi Famurewa

Ewa riro. Yes. Let's hear it again?

James Acaster

Ewa riro.

Jimi Famurewa

Yes and it's Kofo Famurewa's ewa riro.

James Acaster



What's her first name?

Jimi Famurewa

Kofo.

James Acaster

Kofo Famurewa's ewa riro. Oh fucking hell, that is hard to say. I'm not doing this for laughs.

Jimi Famurewa

Ewa riro.

James Acaster

Kofo Famurewa's ewa riro.

Jimi Famurewa

Yes.

Ed Gamble

Hey.

James Acaster

I don't know, I don't know. With caramelised plantain. Side dish, beef suya. Drink, ice cold Orangina and then a peanut milk from Bao to bridge over into our dessert which is an ice cream sundae and has toasted rice gelato from Superiority Burger, Wendy's Frosty, the hot fudge sauce, a Marksman brown butter custard tart crumbled over it and Happy Endings ice cream sandwich, the malted one jammed in there. And then at the end of all that, the custardo from Forza Win.

Jimi Famurewa

Yes, amazing.

Ed Gamble

That's a pretty outstanding menu.

Jimi Famurewa

Oh my God.

James Acaster

I mean-,

Jimi Famurewa

I'm really pleased with that.

James Acaster

I'm absolutely definitely having the custardo.



Jimi Famurewa

Yes.

Ed Gamble

We've got to go.

James Acaster

But I really want beef suya because I've never had that before. I mean, hearing that back are you thinking like, 'Yes, that would be-, what a night that would be'?

Jimi Famurewa

Yes, I'm pretty pleased with that. I've got to say, you know, thank you for allowing me the rule bend on the starters. I just-, I can even see those little sandwiches, do you know what I mean? I can really envisage it and I just think it would be a great way to kick it all off.

Ed Gamble

Maybe organise like a fundraising charity dinner or something where you get all those guys in to make little sandwich versions of all this stuff.

Jimi Famurewa

Yes, so what have you got us here for Jimi? Right. We're just going to do it really small, alright?

Ed Gamble

Who are we raising money for? I don't know yet.

Jimi Famurewa

We'll work that out. No, I'm really, really pleased with that, thank you for indulging me, that was-, oh my God, that's made me quite hungry. Maybe I am a good eater after all.

Ed Gamble

Well, we expect a good review.

James Acaster

Thank you Jimi.

Jimi Famurewa

Thank you.

Ed Gamble

There we are. As expected, brilliant episode, brilliant menu. Lovely man.

James Acaster



Benito is so happy that the custardo got a shout out. It's nice to see Benito as happy as this after an episode.

Ed Gamble

Yes, never happened before.

James Acaster

Never happened that it's been-, well, never been happy after an episode but also never has there been a shout out of something that he loves this much.

Ed Gamble

Benito's face after every episode is very much the face of a man who's thinking, 'How am I supposed to edit that shit?'

James Acaster

Yes. He's figuring out in his head, how many of these do I have to make which means I won't have to make them anymore? But there you go. But also thank you to Jimi for all your food recommendations but also for not saying cauliflower rice.

Ed Gamble

Thank the lord.

James Acaster

Yes, we appreciate that means we didn't have to kick him out and we can once again plug Settlers by Jimi Famurewa. Journey through food, faith and culture of Black African London. That is out now in paperback.

Ed Gamble

It's out now on paperback-,

James Acaster

That means he's already slammed it, he's already knocked it out the park on hardback. Bloomsbury Continuum.

Ed Gamble

So, go and get that. Give it a read. I certainly am. Thank you very much for listening-,

James Acaster

Or audiobook.

Ed Gamble

Or audiobook. Thank you very much for listening to the Off Menu podcast. We will see you again next week.



James Acaster

Yumma, yumma, yumma.

Ed Gamble

Glob, glob, glob.