



Off Menu – Ep 221 – Elis James (Live)

Ed Gamble

It's time for another bonus Off Menu live tour show release, James.

James Acaster

Very exciting this one. The first night of our double, I mean, some could call it a residency.

Ed Gamble

Yes, a two-night residency at the Royal Albert Hall. From the 9th October 2023. Just to remind you if you didn't listen last week, there will be call-backs in this show to things that happened in the first half when we asked the audience their dream menu. Don't worry about that, it just means that you won't understand that joke, but there's some great stuff in there.

James Acaster

Yes, and our delivery is so good it'll probably be funny anyway.

Ed Gamble

Yes, you'll probably chuckle anyway to be honest knowing you guys. The secret ingredient was runner beans.

James Acaster

Did we say it was Elis James?

Ed Gamble

No, I hate that guy, I'm not going to mention his name again.

James Acaster

Shouldn't really mention it was Elis James, he's a rival podcaster, has about a billion podcasts out there, all of them are awful.

Ed Gamble

Yes. A lot of podcasts about things he's not qualified to speak about. So, let's hear the live Off Menu from the Royal Albert Hall with Elis James.

James Acaster

Elis James.

Ed Gamble

Welcome to the Off Menu podcast, taking the grandma of conversation, getting the bad beef of humour, pouring over the gravy of the internet and creating the wet podcast of wet meat live at the Royal Albert



Hall. Coming to the end. Right, panning to the end, I said the wet podcast of wet meat, which doesn't make any fucking sense.

James Acaster

It made perfect sense, that is Ed Gamble, my name is James Acaster, we own a dream restaurant, and every single week we invite in a guest and we ask them their favourite ever starter, main course, dessert, side dish and drink. Not in that order. And this week our guest is Elis James.

Ed Gamble

Elis James.

James Acaster

Okay.

Ed Gamble

What, you're just laughing to yourself at saying our guest Elis James, we're in the Royal Albert Hall?

James Acaster

It's really funny man, really funny. Me, you and Elis, the Royal Albert Hall, so much to ask him, we've known him for a long time and I'm quite looking forward to it.

Ed Gamble

It's going to be a fun one, so let's crack on. Without further ado, this is the Off Menu menu of Elis James.

James Acaster

Elis James.

Ed Gamble

Here we go. James, what are you doing?

James Acaster

Yes, yes, sorry.

Ed Gamble

So yes. So, we all know that James is the genie in this, never discussed why. So, there's a genie in that lamp now, so we're going to have to get the genie out. I can't be arsed to get up and rub the lamp, so you all need to imagine rubbing it. Imagine rubbing it with your mind hands. Imagine rubbing the lamp, something might happen. Oh, where is he? Where's the genie? Rub, rub, rub. Rub.

James Acaster

Welcome, Elis James, to the dream restaurant, I've been expecting you for some time.



Elis James

Oh.

Ed Gamble

There we are, that's where the money went. We're selling this entire set to panto straight after the tour.

Elis James

It feels a little bit like I'm in a rude panto. You know the rude ones that Jim Davidson does that are called things like Boobs in the Wood.

Ed Gamble

Boobs in the Wood, yes.

James Acaster

Jim Davidson, man, one day we'll get to his heights man. He's another respectable guy. Elis, are you a foodie?

Elis James

I wouldn't say I'm a foodie. I would say I'm, thank you. I would say I'm a very, very enthusiastic eater of food.

James Acaster

Yes.

Elis James

So-,

Ed Gamble

What's the difference, do you think, between those two things?

Elis James

Well I don't cook elaborate dishes, but if you cook me an elaborate dish, I will eat it and I will love you for it. But the enthusiasm-,

Ed Gamble

The intensity with which you looked at me there.

Elis James

Yes.

Ed Gamble

And I would love you for it.



Elis James

But I think the enthusiasm can occasionally be quite irritating. Because I remember in the first couple of weeks of lockdown, Izzy, she was down, she was anxious, she was pissed off, especially in the morning.

James Acaster

This is his wife.

Elis James

And after about-, yes.

James Acaster

Yes.

Elis James

After about fourteen days, I thought, 'I need to broach this.' and I was like, 'What is it? Is it what's happening to our careers? Is it the fact it's a global pandemic and we don't know what's causing this thing?' She went, 'No, no, it's not that, it's when you eat Weetabix. You don't realise you do it do you?' And I said, 'What do you mean?' She went, 'You don't know you do this thing.' And I said, 'What?' She went, 'When you eat Weetabix, with every fucking mouthful, you say, mmm yeah.'

Ed Gamble

The fact that it's fucking Weetabix as well.

Elis James

Yes, so it's like-,

Ed Gamble

Mmm yeah.

James Acaster

What do you have on your Weetabix?

Elis James

Plain.

James Acaster

Plain. Just some milk.

Elis James

Because I'm trying to cut down on sugar. But really, I've switched over to porridge now.

Ed Gamble

And what do you say when you're eating porridge?



James Acaster

Yabba dabba do?

Elis James

No, but sometimes at night, I'll think to myself, 'Less than eight hours to go, then it's porridge time.' I bloody love it. And she used to say as well, 'When you pour squash into a pint glass, you sort of go-, because you can't wait. And you don't seem to be bothered by this pandemic but I am, because for you it's just more Weetabix and squash time.'

Ed Gamble

The little detail in that story that after two weeks you asked your wife what was wrong. Alright what is it? The global pandemic is it I suppose?

Elis James

Because I just thought it was general worry about the pandemic but it was that very specific thing. And then-,

Ed Gamble

You're still not understanding what I'm saying. I'm saying it's mad to leave it two weeks before you checked to see if your partner's okay and what's wrong with her. You go, 'No, you don't understand. I thought it was general worry, so I left it. I checked.'

Elis James

Yes, we were talking about general worries a lot, but that wasn't the headline. The headline act was me going, 'Mmm yeah.' Every time I eat Weetabix. But the fact is if you've said, 'Mmm yeah,' every time you have a mouthful of Weetabix for as long as you've lived, it's a really hard habit to get out of.

Ed Gamble

For as long as you've lived?

Elis James

Yes.

James Acaster

Were you aware that you did it before it was pointed out to yo?

Elis James

No.

James Acaster

No.



Elis James

So then, next morning having had the chat, I've got the spoon, I was fucking trembling. I was like, 'I can't say it man. You can't say it, she's going to lose her fucking mind if you say it. No matter how much you're enjoying this Weetabix you've got to pretend it's a normal cereal man, she is on the edge.' So then I have a mouthful, I'll be like, 'Oh.'

James Acaster

Pretend it's a normal cereal.

Ed Gamble

Yes.

James Acaster

Yes, not a fancy tasty one like Weetabix. Pretend this is just a normal, boring cereal.

Elis James

Just a normal boring cereal, and I like them all, but Weetabix, at the time-,

Ed Gamble

Is that at the top for you, Weetabix, cereal wise?

Elis James

No, I would say historically Special K.

James Acaster

Yes.

Ed Gamble

What?

Elis James

How do you think I'm bikini beach body ready Ed? It's just bowl after bowl of Special K. And I mean, a long time ago, Coco Pops. But Coco Pops, sugar's had a bad press over the last, sort of, 60 years so I've tried to quite radically change the way I eat over the last-,

James Acaster

But you had a lot of Coco Pops back in the day?

Elis James

Back in the, oh, I mean, up to about the, sort of, end of Brit pop.

James Acaster

Coco Brit Pops. Famously.



Elis James

Sorry, I sit-

James Acaster

Why are you sat like that? No, no, keep sitting like that, it's fine, it's nice, I like it, it's good stuff.

Elis James

I'm just having a really good time.

James Acaster

It's nice. It's like we're on T4. Would you ever have Bran Flakes with Baileys?

Elis James

Big fan of Bran Flakes.

James Acaster

Yes, course.

Elis James

With Baileys?

James Acaster

Yes, yes, someone here, that's what their dream meal is.

Elis James

No, I used to eat, over the summer holidays, Bran Flakes, Weetabix, All Bran and Coco Pops in the same bowl.

James Acaster

Hang on, all in the same bowl?

Elis James

All in the same bowl.

James Acaster

Did you have a name for that cereal?

Elis James

Yes, cereal time.

Ed Gamble

All Bran, Weetabix and Bran Flakes did you say?



Elis James

And Coco Pops.

Ed Gamble

Oh and Coco Pops.

Elis James

Yes.

Ed Gamble

So, that's like the fun?

Elis James

I used to do it with my cousin and then-

Ed Gamble

Good to know what clips we're going to get out for the trailer of this episode.

Elis James

Yes. I thought a lot about my choices and I've realised how much the way I eat has changed. Because it's no disrespect to my mother, but we used to have the same meal on every night. There was a rota, like a seven-day rota.

James Acaster

I remember this. I remember you had a routine about it.

Elis James

Yes.

James Acaster

And if you are going to list the foods that you had.

Elis James

Yes.

James Acaster

Then I would like you to do it in the way that you did it in the routine years ago, which was you did it like a Top of the Pops run down.

Elis James

Yes, yes I'd forgotten about that. Monday night, chicken tonight.

James Acaster

Yes, but this isn't how you did it is it? You went, 'Friday night,' that's the way you did it. I think everyone-



Elis James

I feel like chicken tonight, well you're lucky because you're having it tonight, it's Monday night and it's always chicken tonight.

James Acaster

Yes.

Elis James

Thursday night was pizza because my mother had aerobics.

James Acaster

Yes.

Elis James

So, we needed something quick. Friday night, obviously fish. And, sort of, when I went to university I was exposed to new tastes.

Ed Gamble

What was the first new taste you were exposed to at university?

Elis James

Black pepper.

Ed Gamble

Wowee. Where were you going to university, Delhi? This is incredible.

Elis James

I lived with a girl called Caroline, who'd been privately educated, and she was a really good cook, she used to like to cook. I lived with her, lovely girl, I lived with her in second and third year, and her boyfriend Chris and she used to love to cook. She introduced me to risotto, that was great. She also introduced me to coriander.

Ed Gamble

Wow, wow.

Elis James

Yes, she made a carrot and coriander soup, and I was so overwhelmed by it that at the end of the bowl, I kissed her on the cheek. And said, 'Thank you. What the fuck was that?' And she was like, 'It's carrot and coriander soup, Elis,' and I was like, 'Well now I'm going to eat it every day for the rest of my life.'

James Acaster

So, we always start with still or sparkling water, Elis.



Elis James

Still. Yes. When you've had lemonade, sparkling-

James Acaster

Which I imagine for you, what was that, post grad thing?

Elis James

Oh yes. When you've had lemonade-

James Acaster

Yes.

Elis James

Sparkling water is so profoundly disappointing because it's got the same mouth feel as lemonade but it tastes like lemonade that's gone off, and I've never really been able to get over how disappointing that is. So, and it, kind of, dries your mouth out as well. It's not even a thirst quenching drink. So, I don't really trust people who like sparkling water actually. I kind of thing, 'What's your game?'

James Acaster

Bit suspicious of them.

Elis James

Not sure.

James Acaster

There's a lot of people here who you seem to be, like, saying what they've been thinking all their lives and they're quite excited about this.

Elis James

I'm a, kind of, man of the people really.

James Acaster

Yes.

Elis James

Yes, and I think that still water out of a glass bottle just feels classy, you know? When you think, 'This is living isn't it?'

Ed Gamble

Yes, there goes the man of the people.

Elis James

Yes, yes, and it feels really heavy and you're like, 'I'm in a top, top restaurant here.'



Ed Gamble

You know, you give yourself away in the top, top restaurant when you're sat there just going, 'Woah, look at that. Feel that. Feel that.'

James Acaster

Who do you feel like? When you say it feels classic, what are you imagining when you've got the bottle of sparkling water? What great figures in history do you feel-

Elis James

Oh, no, no, no, no, no, it's still water in a glass bottle is what feels-, sparkling water can get fucked, I don't care.

James Acaster

Sorry, still water in a glass, go on.

Elis James

But like, still water in a glass bottle. Plastic bottle is fine, I'll have tap, make a saving. But when they do, occasionally, you'll order still water and then they'll bring it in a glass bottle and they're charging you, and that's quite annoying. But still, if it's a glass bottle I think, 'I'm earning. That's alright, that's okay.' It's very thirst quenching lovely.

James Acaster

Does Izzy like it when you have a glass bottle of still water, or does that annoy her as well? When you're going around going, 'This is classic,' with every mouthful.

Elis James

I think I've had to dial down my general enthusiasm for that kind of thing because it's, sort of, charming for the first hour you know someone and then it becomes grating quite quickly. So, I haven't heard that over the last 42 years of my life, so yes, so, still water.

James Acaster

Where's Izzy tonight?

Elis James

She is doing a gig that, fun fact, I was meant to do that I pulled in order to do this.

Ed Gamble

Supposed to be doing a show with your partner and then you got offered this and you immediately dumped her.

Elis James

Yes.



James Acaster

And what has she brought along to the show to represent you as we speak across London?

Elis James

Four pairs of my torn pants that I haven't thrown out and I don't really wear unless it's a real emergency. But for some reason, I don't know what it is about my physiology that does this. My pants tend to tear in the gusset area, but they look like they've been slashed at by a, kind of, like a tiger or a bear or something.

James Acaster

Yes.

Elis James

So, they're going to be on a table representing me because I did pull out of the gig to do this, because I quite fancied doing the Royal Albert Hall.

Ed Gamble

Why do you keep them? Yes, that's the question, why do you keep them?

Elis James

Well, I mean, in the '80s-

Ed Gamble

What?

Elis James

People used to use pants as dusters, do you remember this? No? Anyone else remember that? I think there's one person over there who remembers it, and I kind of think, yes, every now and then, I'll get the Mr Sheen out.

Ed Gamble

So, do you use those pants as dusters?

Elis James

No, I don't do any dusting, but when I get into dusting, the pants are ready.

James Acaster

Poppadums or bread? Poppadums or bread, Elis James? Poppadums or bread?

Elis James

In an Indian restaurant, poppadums, in any other kind of restaurant, it has to be bread doesn't it? I know that's not the question, but this is my dream restaurant and I will say what I want.



James Acaster

You're getting heckled, are you getting heckled by people on the front?

Elis James

So, it's got to be bread.

James Acaster

Yes.

Elis James

And it's got to be crust, French bread, that is so crusty it makes people laugh out loud when they bite into it.

James Acaster

What? Is that a thing? Is that a thing? It's so crusty that people laugh out loud when they bite into it?

Elis James

Sometimes.

Ed Gamble

Yes, but you make some weird fucking noises when you eat anything.

Elis James

Yes.

Ed Gamble

Yes.

Elis James

You should see me eating chocolate. I mean, I'm really trying to eat less sugar and I will go for weeks without eating any chocolate at all. And then there'll be a set of circumstances that means there's chocolate in the house, or cakes. It was my daughter's birthday last week and a birthday cake was made and, I mean, my God, it's like it's midnight and I'm eating it over the sink. It's a kind of woodland animal noise. It's like, 'Elis, what's going on down there?' 'Nothing, nothing, nothing.'

Ed Gamble

What's your, sort of, body position while you're eating this? Where are you?

Elis James

Hunched. Lights off. I was doing a gig and someone brought Tony's Chocolonely to the stage door, and I was like a hostage. Like, I ate it in about fifteen seconds in the corner, away from everyone else so I didn't have to share it. It's like, really, really sad. So yes, I make noises and I'm not going to apologise for that.



Ed Gamble

When you laugh, when you have the crusty French bread, if it's really crusty, you'll go-,

Elis James

Yes.

James Acaster

You'll laugh to yourself. What's making you laugh? The taste or just how-, is it so crusty that you think, 'This is hilarious how crusty it is,'?

Elis James

Just the audacity of the crust. When you're like, 'What are these guys bloody thinking? This is mad.'

James Acaster

Yes.

Elis James

That.

James Acaster

Yes.

Ed Gamble

How much crust would there have to be for you to stop laughing?

James Acaster

Yes.

Ed Gamble

How long would the crust go on for if you're going, 'Oh.'

James Acaster

Not funny.

Elis James

French bread the day after.

Ed Gamble

Yes.

Elis James

If anything, I'm solemn.



Ed Gamble

Yes.

Elis James

Because it's quite chewy then and you're like, 'Oh, this is disappointing isn't it?' But when it's straight out the oven, when it's warm and it's crusty-

Ed Gamble

You're just laughing imagining it aren't you?

Elis James

I am.

James Acaster

This isn't an act by the way, before we came on tonight in the dressing room we order some sushi and Ed and I were just eating our sushi and Elis was eating it going, 'I'm so happy. Look at us. We're in the Royal Albert Hall eating sushi.' Kept clapping his hands and rubbing them together.

Ed Gamble

Yes.

Elis James

Yes.

James Acaster

All the time.

Elis James

And doing this, 'Oh.'

James Acaster

Yes, so happy. It's nice man. Butter?

Elis James

No. Gets in the way if anything. What an odd podcast you've created. Food at the Albert Hall.

Ed Gamble

Yes, that fucking, that deserves a boo. Butter gets in the way of bread?

Elis James

No, I mean-

James Acaster

This is, there's one person here woo-ing you who's quite excited.



Elis James

Butter's superb on toast.

Ed Gamble

You know toast is bread, right?

Elis James

Yes, yes, yes, but like, I'm not toasting the French bread, it's straight out the packet.

Ed Gamble

Okay, okay, cool, alright, yes.

James Acaster

Yes.

Elis James

It's the '80s, Ed.

Ed Gamble

Oh, is it one of those part baked ones that you put-, you take-,

Elis James

No, no, no, no, it's just from the packet from Tesco. I'm eating it in a trolley, it's 1983, I'm young.

Ed Gamble

So, you know this is your dream meal, right?

Elis James

Yes, yes, yes.

Ed Gamble

You could be in France, you could get this from a boulangerie in France, but you're having it from a 1983 Tesco.

James Acaster

The French bread.

Elis James

Do you know what? Going abroad hadn't occurred to me actually when it came-,

Ed Gamble

To your dreams.



Elis James

When it came to the dream restaurant.

Ed Gamble

But going back in time did? I would say this about you, and that is absolutely true about you, that you prefer the past to foreign travel.

Elis James

You say that, it's like the first time I tried Nutella. I remember I was at a mate's house.

Ed Gamble

40th birthday.

Elis James

He said, 'Try some of this.'

James Acaster

Who said this to you? Who said this to you?

Elis James

It would've been my friend Real Lenny, and he said, 'Try some of this man.' And I said, 'What is it?' And he said, 'It's a chocolate spread.'

James Acaster

We discovered it in Eton.

Elis James

Yes, no, no, I had it on a spoon and I was like, 'Where's this from?' And he said, 'France,' and I remember thinking, 'I have got to travel more.' This is mad. Chocolate on toast. This is just insane, but you're right. And to be honest, you're doing two nights aren't you?

James Acaster

Yes.

Elis James

I think I need to come back tomorrow night with some quite radically different choices because it hadn't occurred to me that obviously, I could travel, yes, shit, shit. Oh.

James Acaster

But you don't want butter. You still don't want butter on it?

Elis James

No, it makes the French bread sort of slimy, so I want-,



James Acaster

Slimy?

Elis James

Yes. I want to taste the bread. When you were a kid, did you used to put your hand into it and take the dough out and then it was just leaving the crust?

James Acaster

But then what have you got to laugh at if you're not eating the-,

Ed Gamble

Yes.

James Acaster

If you're just eating the inside with a straight face?

Elis James

You're saving the laughs to the end then.

James Acaster

Oh yes, all the laughs at once.

Elis James

You're just laughing at crust.

James Acaster

Absolutely losing your mind at the end just eating the crust.

Ed Gamble

So, do you eat all the dough, you're like, miserable eating all the dough.

James Acaster

Yes.

Elis James

No the dough-,

Ed Gamble

And then just fucking pissing yourself eating the crust.

James Acaster

Floating on the ceiling like Mary Poppins laughing.



Elis James

No, no, no, the dough is good but they're, kind of, two different things aren't they?

James Acaster

Yes.

Elis James

Two different experiences.

James Acaster

Yes.

Elis James

So, I would save that for different moods, different vibes. So, I would eat the dough in the trolley.

Ed Gamble

What?

Elis James

When I was being pushed around in a trolley.

Ed Gamble

Oh sorry, so you've not just gone back in time, you are the age you were then?

Elis James

Yes, yes, yes, yes.

James Acaster

You're sitting in the trolley. Elis, why did you think this wasn't information we needed? So, you're a little boy in Carmarthen, you're sat in the trolley as your mother pushes you around Tesco in the '80s, and as you're being pushed around, you're reaching your baby arm, which is probably not even as deep as the-

Elis James

Yes, yes, yes, I can get about half way down.

James Acaster

Yes, inside, and you're pulling out the white doughy insides and eating them.

Elis James

And then we get to the till and my mother apologises and says, 'Don't worry, I can pay for it.'

James Acaster

Yes.



Elis James

And then flash forward to being at the Royal Albert Hall in 2023 and I'm thinking, 'Fuck, why haven't I gone to New York with my choices?'

James Acaster

But you want to be that age, eating the inside with your arms and then go home and eat just the crusts and laugh your head off.

Elis James

Because that's the happiest I've been eating bread.

James Acaster

Yes, yes, yes.

Elis James

I think, it's never really been that good since, I don't think.

James Acaster

Great.

Ed Gamble

Yes, it's not one we've had before.

James Acaster

No, we haven't had that before, funnily enough. And your dream starter, Elis, this is your menu proper now. We get to know the real Elis James.

Elis James

Right then, well-,

James Acaster

He's brought notes.

Elis James

Because the way I've eaten has changed quite radically, I'll give you what I'm going to choose now, and then I will talk to you about some of the things that didn't make the cut. That to be honest, tell the story of the real me.

Ed Gamble

Okay, honourable mentions.

Elis James

So, my dream starter is salmon sashimi with ginger.



James Acaster

Now.

Ed Gamble

Now, the ginger thing we should probably explore.

James Acaster

Yes, before we move on, let's talk about ginger, because when we ordered the sushi pre-show, after we'd made the Deliveroo order, you got unhappy for the first time. We hadn't seen you unhappy, and you were like, 'Oh shit. I didn't order ginger.' And you went, 'Can I have all the ginger please guys?' And you started pleading with us.

Ed Gamble

James really had to try and calm him down because he was head in hands.

James Acaster

Yes.

Ed Gamble

'God, I mean to order extra ginger.'

James Acaster

And I had to say, 'Don't worry Elis, I remembered that you like ginger,' because I bumped into you once at Paddington Train Station and you were eating a wasabi take away and you were going on at me about how you love the pickled ginger.

Elis James

Yes.

James Acaster

So, I knew that you liked that anyway, so we'll save it all for you. And then when it arrived, I think you checked about three or four times, 'Please guys, don't eat any of the pickled ginger, I really want it.' So-,

Ed Gamble

When he really freaked out about it, when it was on its way and it was too late.

James Acaster

Yes.

Ed Gamble

James had to really just say, 'There will be plenty of ginger, we've ordered quite a lot of sushi.' And you went, 'Can I have all of it?'



James Acaster

Yes, yes.

Elis James

Because there is no such thing as enough. Like, when I go to Wasabi, I will order maybe 25 packets of the little gingers.

Ed Gamble

What?

Elis James

Yes, easy.

Ed Gamble

But you know what it's for? You know it's a palette cleanser in between.

Elis James

I don't care what it's for, mate. Addicts don't care what it's for.

James Acaster

I think half of those ginger packets would have cleansed the palette in between the other packets of ginger right, for you?

Elis James

Yes. So, there was a Japanese restaurant near us that closed down, sadly, and on the last day they were open, the guy who owned it, in his van, drove down with all of the ginger they never got round to using, kilograms of the stuff, and said, 'I've never met a guy who likes ginger as much in my life. Please take it.' We had kilograms of it in the fridge because I will eat it first thing in the morning, at lunch time. There's nothing I won't eat it with.

Ed Gamble

So, he knew, as soon as they shut down, he was like, 'All that ginger's going to that guy's house.'

Elis James

Yes, yes, yes, yes.

Ed Gamble

You already had a reputation for liking ginger too much.

Elis James

I would go and pick up a takeaway and as I would walk in, he would say, 'Don't worry, we've got it.'



Ed Gamble

What sort of things do you say when you're eating the ginger? Do you have a little catch phrase for the ginger?

Elis James

Just a chilling kind of silence.

James Acaster

But you didn't always, like, there was a time when you didn't eat anything like that because you had to do an actual deliberate project to make yourself like that stuff, right?

Elis James

Yes, I had a very, very childlike palette until I was about 35, and then on the radio show I do with John Robbins, because he really, really, loves-, oh that's depressing.

Ed Gamble

That's good man, that's four in 5,000.

James Acaster

Nice that.

Ed Gamble

Across the UK that amounts to a lot of people.

Elis James

Well, he loves spicy food and I never saw the appeal of it, because I thought, 'Why would you want to eat food that hurts? Like, what's the point? It's mad.'

Ed Gamble

You're the one laughing at crusts, mate.

Elis James

So, he said, 'No, no, genuinely once you get past the stage of it being unpleasant, you become euphoric.' And I now, as someone who now likes spicy food, there are certain curries that make me feel euphoria. So, but I had such a bland palette, I had to start off with ginger biscuits, and then I moved onto English mustard.

James Acaster

Yes.

Ed Gamble

That's a big jump.



James Acaster

Yes.

Elis James

It is. I had experienced an English mustard before.

Ed Gamble

Well done.

Elis James

I'd had it on ham.

James Acaster

I think there are some students in France passing around a pot of English mustard, 'Where's this come from?' 'A place called England.' 'We need to travel more.'

Elis James

And then I started buying the weakest chillies in Tesco and then putting them on salads and things, and then I got, project spice, it took about nine months. I got as far as vindaloo.

James Acaster

Just slipping in there that it was called project spice, hasn't mentioned that yet.

Ed Gamble

Yes, not mentioned that.

Elis James

So, I got as far as vindaloo, and now I've dialled it down to, sort of, madras or jalfrezi if I'm in an Indian restaurant.

James Acaster

And that's when you're euphoric?

Elis James

No, there's a prawn mustard malai curry, and it's not hugely spicy, it's probably less spicy than madras, but the euphoria from that has lasted, on occasion, three days. Where I'll be walking along and I'll just, like, have a flashback to how much I enjoyed the curry, and then I'll give it a quick round of applause and then on I go. So, the pickled ginger was part of project spice and I just fell in love with it and my God, what a meal.

James Acaster

It's your favourite thing.



Ed Gamble

So, this is your starter, but you don't think it represents who you are, necessarily.

James Acaster

Salmon sashimi with pickled ginger.

Elis James

I thought for a long time about barbecue spare ribs from a Chinese restaurant, because that is one of those meals that when the spare ribs come out, you're like, 'We're having a good time now.'

Ed Gamble

But you have said that about every food we've talked about so far.

Elis James

Yes, that is true. But I love rocket, so I was thinking of rocket and Grana Padano cheese maybe.

James Acaster

Just rocket?

Elis James

I love rocket.

James Acaster

Yes, you have it on its own.

Elis James

But, to be honest-

James Acaster

Love rocket, sounds like a name for a dick or something. Go on.

Elis James

What I really want, as much as I like sashimi, salmon sashimi and ginger, what I really want is a big plate of sausages. But for the table.

Ed Gamble

That is, that's it.

Elis James

Yes.

Ed Gamble

You came alive when you said that.



James Acaster

Yes.

Ed Gamble

Fuck this salmon sashimi bullshit, big plate of sausages.

James Acaster

You clearly want a big plate of sausages.

Elis James

Have you ever been to Betty's Tea Rooms in Yorkshire?

Ed Gamble

Popular, I've never been.

Elis James

You've never been? Have you ever been?

James Acaster

Yes. But in where?

Elis James

There's four of them. There's-

James Acaster

I feel like, was there one in Harrogate or something?

Elis James

There's one in Harrogate.

James Acaster

Yes, I've been to the Harrogate one.

Elis James

There's one in Ilkley, Northallerton, I can't remember, York maybe, York right. They're all in Yorkshire, yes.

James Acaster

Yorkshire, yes.

Ed Gamble

That's the county.



James Acaster

Big fan of your puddings in Yorkshire, not everyone is.

Elis James

It's a 45-minute wait to get in.

James Acaster

Yes.

Elis James

And it's been there since about 1911, so the waiters and waitresses are dressed like it's just before the First World War and they-

Ed Gamble

So you love it, obviously.

Elis James

Yes, they make a really nice cup of tea.

James Acaster

Absolute boner for the past.

Ed Gamble

You're dressed as a baby scooping the middle out of the baguette.

Elis James

I was there at the weekend and my daughter had sausage, beans and chips and I finished her sausages, because she'd finished, I wasn't-

Ed Gamble

Look over there, yoink.

Elis James

Yes, yes. No, it wasn't like, 'Well I paid for them, so technically they're mine.' There was none of that, but they were really nice sausages and after the second or third bite, I just thought to myself, 'Why am I not eating these three times a day, every day?' And then I thought, 'Alright then. I'll mention that for my starter.'

Ed Gamble

A big plate of sausages.

Elis James

A big plate of sausages.



James Acaster

So, what kind of sausages are these? Because there are a lot of different types of sausage. Bet it's bog standard, straight forward bangers.

Elis James

Bog standard sausages.

James Acaster

Yes, yes, yes.

Elis James

So, I will eat a pork and leek, but really it's a Cumberland sausage. The kind you would buy in a newsagent.

James Acaster

Yes, yes.

Ed Gamble

Newsagent sausages.

Elis James

But cooked to perfection.

Ed Gamble

Oh yes.

Elis James

So, dark brown like in Fireman Sam, you know when Elvis is burning the sausages. Just before the point he's at.

James Acaster

Yes.

Elis James

There. Those are the sausages I want on a big plate, but for the table.

James Acaster

And do you want any sauce, or does that get in the way of the sausages?

Elis James

Ketchup.

James Acaster

You'd like some ketchup.



Elis James

Yes, so ketchup but-,

James Acaster

Did you say Fireman Sam was making them, or did I mishear that?

Elis James

In the original opening titles, Elvis, who is very bad at cooking, is trying to fry some sausages and he's burnt them. But he's actually not burnt them drastically, he's not far off.

James Acaster

Yes.

Elis James

So, I think to myself, a minute less and he's basically made perfect sausages there. So, I want a minute less than Elvis in Fireman Sam's sausages for the table.

James Acaster

But do you want-,

Ed Gamble

Do you want Elvis to cook them?

Elis James

Elvis to cook them.

James Acaster

Do you want Elvis from Fireman Sam to cook them for your dream-,

Elis James

Well, I think he'll fuck them up, won't he? So, I want him to be there-,

Ed Gamble

So, he can learn.

Elis James

But then for someone with a steady hand on the tiller to go, 'No, no, no, no, no, now's the, take them off now.'

Ed Gamble

Was your daughter excited that you were doing this podcast?

James Acaster

Oh yes, I forgot about this.



Elis James

I told her yesterday.

James Acaster

How old's your daughter?

Elis James

She's nine. I said, 'I'm doing quite a bit show tomorrow night.' She went, 'Oh yes.' I said, 'Yes, I'm doing a live podcast with Ed Gamble and James Acaster.' And she went, 'Ed Gamble?' I said, and she's met James lots of times, right, I don't think she's met-, I don't think you've met-,

Ed Gamble

No, not properly no.

Elis James

She went, 'Ed Gamble?' I said, 'Yes.' And she went, 'Ed Gamble?' I said, 'Yes,' and she went, 'Oh my God. Everyone at brownies has got a crush on Ed Gamble.'

Ed Gamble

Everyone at brownies.

Elis James

I said, 'What about James Acaster?' She went, 'Oh he's been mentioned.'

James Acaster

Well you didn't tell us that earlier.

Elis James

'He's been mentioned.'

James Acaster

Good to know I'm in the conversation.

Elis James

You're part of the conversation, because she went on a brownie camp and her tent flooded, so she was put in with much, much older brownies and they just talked about-, she said it was boring, they just talked about sex and crushes and Ed Gamble.

Ed Gamble

I love that you said they were much older brownies, as if that makes it any better. Oh yes, they were much older brownies.

Elis James

But you're part of the conversation, James.



James Acaster

Yes.

Ed Gamble

Yes.

Elis James

You were absolutely part of the conversation.

James Acaster

Yes, they're talking about it, but they're waiting for their tent to be put back up, 'Anyone here fancy James Acaster?' Your dream main course Elis, because my ego can't take any more of this.

Elis James

Consider chicken madras.

James Acaster

Yes.

Elis James

Considered the prawn mustard malai curry that makes me feel euphoric for three days. But I've actually gone, I considered bolognese.

James Acaster

Yes, course you did.

Elis James

I think bolognese is nice. Not enough people are saying this.

Ed Gamble

But then, if we're looking at the menu as a whole, you've come on and said, 'Oh, I'm doing great with food now, I eat better food now,' and your menu so far would be a plate of sausages and spaghetti bolognese.

James Acaster

Plus, you can't choose something that you've only been eating for a week. You discovered it pretty recently.

Elis James

The menu makes no sense at all.

Ed Gamble

That's fine.



Elis James

As a main, I've gone sea bass with steamed vegetables, steamed greens in fact, and dauphinoise potatoes. Because I had steak and dauphinoise potatoes in a place in Crystal Palace, and at the end I shook hands with the waiter to tell him that it's literally the best thing I've ever eaten in my life. I think he thought I was taking the piss but I genuinely wasn't.

Ed Gamble

So, was that the first time you'd had dauphinoise potatoes?

Elis James

I think it might have been actually, yes. And I was like, I thought I'd done potatoes, I've had crisps, I've had chips. But this is on a different fucking planet man. Boiled. Roast. I thought I'd done them all. And to be honest, with potatoes, this winds me up actually. We, kind of, perfected potatoes years ago, skin on chips, skin on fries, what the fuck is that? Triple cooked chips. Just cook them once properly. Why? Disgusting.

Ed Gamble

But it makes them crispier on the outside and fluffier in the middle.

Elis James

But I don't want that from a chip, that's the maniac's choice?

James Acaster

Are you sure?

Elis James

Yes.

James Acaster

I mean, that's pretty much how you like your bread. Thought you'd be laughing your head off eating some triple cooked chips.

Elis James

Fries are great. Chip shop chips are great.

James Acaster

Yes.

Elis James

Oven chips have their place.

James Acaster

Yes, in the oven.



Ed Gamble

In the fucking bin.

James Acaster

Sorry yes, in the fucking bin.

Elis James

But yes, but dauphinoise potatoes, just amazing. Because it's my dream restaurant though, alongside the sea bass, because sea bass is nice and light, because I'm there with all my friends, and you're there, you're both there.

Ed Gamble

We're both there.

Elis James

Yes, yes, we're going to go clubbing after, so nothing too heavy.

Ed Gamble

I'll bow out after the meal, if that's alright.

Elis James

Okay, so-,

James Acaster

Who else is there? You said all your friends are there.

Elis James

You.

James Acaster

Yes.

Elis James

And Ed.

James Acaster

Ed yes.

Elis James

Izzy's there.

James Acaster

Izzy, yes.



Elis James

Widdecombe.

James Acaster

Okay. Josh Widdecombe's there.

Elis James

Yes, yes. And Paul McCartney. And he likes me in my dream.

James Acaster

Yes. He likes you.

Elis James

He loves my stories and I'm keeping it together and we're having a really great conversation.

Ed Gamble

Can I just check, are you still a baby at this point?

Elis James

No. But he really respects me.

Ed Gamble

Yes.

James Acaster

Paul McCartney famously respects anyone who for a starter eats a full plate of sausages.

Elis James

Well, you say that.

James Acaster

Yes.

Elis James

But I once read an interview with Paul McCartney where he said, when he's in a top restaurant, he's like, 'You know, if I want a bowl of cornflakes, I'll just ask for a bowl of cornflakes.' So, that's the level he's at.

James Acaster

Yes. Also the level he's at is vegetarian.

Elis James

Yes. Alright, a big plate of Quorn, Linda McCartney sausages.



James Acaster

Yes, that's going to bring back bad memories, you can't do that.

Elis James

Alright, Quorn, alright then, blood tofu sausage shaped meal food stuffs.

James Acaster

He's lost his mind we did it. Mission accomplished, end the show, he's had a breakdown.

Ed Gamble

Tofu shaped meals? You want tofu shaped meal?

Elis James

No, sausage shaped tofu meals. Alright, okay, Paul McCartney, he's on the table next to us, so he can't see what I'm eating, but he can hear what we're saying and every now and then he leans over.

Ed Gamble

But never looks at you. Just like that.

Elis James

Yes. 'That sounds like a really good point actually, yes.' But he can't see what I'm eating, because alongside the sea bass, I'd like a small disk of steak with English mustard, because I think English mustard is the world's greatest condiment, yes. But I don't want a whole portion, because I'll be too full for my pudding then. So, I just want a little bit.

Ed Gamble

A disk of steak.

Elis James

Just a little disk, like a sort of, 50p sized.

James Acaster

50p? The size of a 50p?

Elis James

Because otherwise, obviously, I've got the dauphinoise potatoes, the sea bass, I've already had a lot of French bread. I've had my sausages, I'm going to get full very quickly.

James Acaster

Sure.

Elis James

So, this is just to taste.



James Acaster

I mean, never mind, we turned you into a baby earlier but we can't make you not full.

Elis James

Well for our ten year anniversary, we went to a Michelin starred restaurant.

James Acaster

Yes.

Elis James

And-,

Ed Gamble

Do you remember what restaurant it was?

Elis James

It was Trinity in Clapham.

James Acaster

Is this you and Izzy or you and John Robbins?

Elis James

But it was a tasting menu and Izzy knew someone who works in the kitchen and because we told them it was our anniversary, they treated us. We got more than we should have done. And it was our ten year anniversary and I ate so much, very sad to say, I was then unable to fulfil my physical promises I'd made. Because I'd eaten-, because they just kept bringing puddings and it felt rude to say no.

Ed Gamble

But it didn't feel rude to say no to her?

Elis James

What it meant was, I was in the car park leaning against a wall.

Ed Gamble

Hang on, what?

Elis James

Just, just-,

Ed Gamble

Wait until you get home, for fuck's sake.

Elis James

No just, just-,



James Acaster

You know it's on her anniversary man.

Elis James

Just exhaling because I was so full. Like a, 'Oh. Woah. Okay.' Because I was so full, so I'm desperate to avoid that scenario.

Ed Gamble

Because are you planning on having sex with your partner after the dream meal?

Elis James

Well, I just never, it was actually very unpleasant being that full.

James Acaster

But it was in the back of your mind on your anniversary, 'Oh we'll probably have sex later.'

Elis James

Yes, I mean, it was part of the conversation, yes, absolutely, yes.

James Acaster

Hey, we've all been part of the conversation. And you're now in the car park thinking, 'I'm going to have to-'

Elis James

I just thought, 'This is not happening for days, the way I feel.' So, since then, I promised myself I would stop over-eating, because it's actually very-

Ed Gamble

Was it just the way it made you feel, you didn't feel sexy, or was it more of an actual physical impediment?

Elis James

It was a physical impediment.

Ed Gamble

Yes, yes, yes.

Elis James

Ed, I wanted to die. I'd pushed my body to its very limits.

Ed Gamble

So, you want a 50p sized bit of steak?



Elis James

Yes. But top restaurant quality, that's another thing I say to Izzy. Because she now does most of the cooking. It's actually flipped, it used to be me, but over the last couple of years it's become Izzy's started to cook more, and I will often, to keep her confidence up, I will say, 'That is restaurant quality.'

Ed Gamble

Fucking hell. Such an amazing image of your home life building up in our head now.

Elis James

That is restaurant quality.

Ed Gamble

Restaurant quality.

Elis James

Yes. So, this is top quality steak, but only a small amount so I can have it with English mustard and then we can move on.

Ed Gamble

Okay, and that's next to your sea bass. Now, can we get, we need to get into the nitty gritty with the veg here. So you've got steamed-

Elis James

Spinach.

Ed Gamble

Okay.

Elis James

With a little bit of nutmeg, green beans.

Ed Gamble

Okay.

James Acaster

Okay, someone's going to need to Google something for us. Don't move on. We need to Google, you've got your phone out, you know what I want you to Google, I don't have to say it to you.

Ed Gamble

Can you tell us more about the green beans?

Elis James

Well, I really like my greens. I like kidney beans. Sorry, something fucking mad is happening in this room. I cannot put my finger on.



Ed Gamble

Yes, you leave your fingers off it for now.

James Acaster

Have we got an answer?

Elis James

Because I like spinach, I like cabbage. Yes.

James Acaster

It's fine, you're in the clear, carry on.

Ed Gamble

You're in the clear, carry on.

James Acaster

Carry on talking.

Elis James

I feel like I'm trying to walk across an icy lake.

Ed Gamble

As long as you walk and don't run.

Elis James

Tenderstem broccoli, but I would like the chef to discuss them with slightly more enthusiasm than you two must have on your advert at the start of the podcast.

James Acaster

That's a good advert.

Ed Gamble

Yes, we had to, originally, James wasn't around, I had to record that by myself. You've never felt more fucking insane than recording an advert for broccoli alone.

James Acaster

My sister thought that advert was fake, was a prank. She's like, 'You can't do an advert for Tenderstem broccoli, it's like doing an advert just for cake.' Just like, I'm not going to go to that, because we give a website address at the end, she's like, 'I'm not going to go on that website. It's just going to be a picture of you, Ed and Toast dressed as broccoli.'

Elis James

Well, I love my greens so it's with greens and dauphinoise potatoes and then a disk of steak with English mustard, but only a small one so I'm not too full. Because it's a big night.



James Acaster

Are you factoring your dream side dish into that or is there a different dream side dish?

Elis James

Different dream side dish.

James Acaster

Okay, well let's move onto that and hear what your different dream side dish is.

Elis James

Okay, I mean, the two that almost made the cut, special fried rice, shredded chilli crispy beef. But I thought, what genuinely makes me happy?

James Acaster

Why do I feel like we're looking at a bowl of sausages now? Absolutely no, this is heaven.

Elis James

I thought, 'Sod it, it's my dream restaurant,' so for my side, I'd like a box of Milk Tray.

James Acaster

Elis, being here with you tonight's very special. Royal Albert Hall, someone's finally chosen Milk Tray as their dream side dish.

Ed Gamble

Can I ask?

James Acaster

No, no questions needed.

Ed Gamble

I respect the choice, but you're not fucking anyone after this meal.

James Acaster

I beg to differ. Fuck you Spencer.

Ed Gamble

I hope you guys are very happy together. Am I at least in the conversation, Elis?

Elis James

I don't want to break those brownies' hearts, that's the thing, so-

James Acaster

Don't want to break those brownies' hearts. Jesus.



Ed Gamble

Can I check, with the Milk Tray-,

Elis James

Yes.

Ed Gamble

Are you reading what each chocolate is before you eat it or are you just-,

Elis James

I know. I know. It's actually a box of Milk Tray with a difference. It's normal two tier but there's actually a third tier and the third tier is just the Turkish delight ones, which get an insanely bad rap. Like, I like Turkish delight, but actually the cheaper end of Turkish delight is the nicer stuff.

James Acaster

Agreed.

Elis James

Fry's Turkish delight is way nicer than the stuff that's covered in what looks like cocaine.

James Acaster

100%. I would take a Fry's Turkish delight or a Milk Tray Turkish delight over that powdered stuff any day.

Elis James

The powdered posh stuff.

James Acaster

Yes.

Elis James

Yes, it doesn't even compare and I always think that for some reason, Turkish delight in Milk Tray, it's like at Christmas people leave it, it's always one of the ones that's left at the end of the, sort of, festive period. I love that one, so I would have a whole tray of that one because there's never enough of it.

Ed Gamble

That's the top layer for you?

Elis James

That's the top, it's actually the bottom layer that's the treat at the end. So I've worked my way through-,

Ed Gamble

That's the treat at the end, after the two other layers of chocolate.



James Acaster

I'm actually getting emotional here, this is beautiful. It's really great to hear, I never hear-, Elis, I didn't expect this from you and this is wonderful.

Elis James

So, I've had the top two layers, I like them all, but then I've got a very similar attitude to Turkish delight Milk Tray as I do to pickled ginger, you can never have enough, and so then there's a whole layer at the bottom there, and that's when we move onto pudding.

James Acaster

Absolutely love it.

Ed Gamble

Are you eating all of that just straight away, or are you going back and forth? Are you having a mouthful of sea bass then a bit of Turkish delight?

Elis James

No, there's a sabbatical of about ten minutes when I don't talk to anyone and that's when I'm eating the Milk Tray. So, for the sea bass, we're having conversation, we're swapping stories, we're all sorts of stuff, we're having a great time. We're laughing, we're talking about our childhoods.

Ed Gamble

McCartney's leaning.

Elis James

McCartney's, 'That sounds like a really good point.' But then there's a, kind of, ten minute sabbatical where everyone goes on their phones and I'm just eating the Milk Tray.

Ed Gamble

But you're still at the table with us?

Elis James

Yes, yes. Then I return to the fray refreshed, revived, and I say, 'Sorry, it's my dream restaurant and I will eat what I want.'

James Acaster

Yes, I love it Elis. Deserves a round of applause. Your dream drink, Elis James.

Elis James

Dream drink. I've become a real coffee dickhead over the last probably three or four years. So, I don't like craft beer, I don't really care about beer, even though I drink it. I don't really care about wine. But coffee, so I would like a V60 hand-brew coffee, made with Panamanian Geisha beans, made specifically by the coffee-based YouTuber James Hoffmann. So, he is world-,



James Acaster

A lot of people really get that.

Elis James

He's World Barista of the Year 2007 and now he's a coffee YouTuber, and he's brilliant.

Ed Gamble

I mean, you don't need to tell me about him, I obviously subscribe.

James Acaster

I have no idea who this person is.

Elis James

I've watched all his videos. I really love his videos. So, he will do videos where he'll tell you the best way of making French-pressed coffee, or aero-pressed, or a V60, or, you know, the best way to make espresso and this kind of stuff. He'll talk about grinds and temperatures and all sorts of stuff, and he'll talk about different equipment. Sometimes you used to be able to buy, like, coffee-making kits which would be quite popular at Christmas in the '60s, and someone will send one in and say, 'This has been in my garage for 58 years.' And he'll go, 'I'll drink it.' And then he'll make coffee with the kit and follow the instructions and then at the end of it say, inevitably, that is absolutely disgusting. He is the absolute don. And I once saw him in a coffee shop I really like, so I thought, 'Okay, well I'm going to keep on coming here because if he's coming here then it's obviously a good place.' And they make-, Geisha beans are the most expensive beans you can buy really, and I've bought the beans for at home but I've never made it as nice as when I'm in this café. So, he's making the coffee, right? Now, I read a review that Grace Dent wrote in The Guardian about a coffee shop in King's Cross that was selling cups of coffee that were £16. £16, and I thought, 'I've got to try this.' So, I cycled up to King's Cross from my house, took about an hour, turned up and they'd sold out. I was texting my friend, Sian, who's a comedy writer, and she was working on a comedy show in Cardiff, and she was in the writer's room and she just text, like, 'What are you up to?' And I said, 'I've cycled to King's Cross to try this £16 coffee and they've sold out.' But she was in the writer's room with a load of other comics that I knew, and I didn't know that she was relaying this information to the writer's room. Within about two minutes, I had, like, twenty text messages, 'When did you turn into a cunt? The fuck is wrong with you? £16, are you mad?' But it's my vice. So, I only have, like, two cups a day, but I take it quite seriously. However, if you want the real me-,

James Acaster

I mean that really felt like the real you, just then. It got so intense. You held the Royal Albert Hall in the palm of your hand for that whole thing, just talking about grinds and beans.

Elis James

To accompany the coffee, I would like a can of Grolsch and a pint of Ribena.

Ed Gamble

That's all sides of Elis.



Elis James

Yes, yes, yes.

James Acaster

Now I do know you love Grolsch. We're on a text group together, the three of us, and you regularly will bring up how much you love Grolsch.

Elis James

It's just, you know what you're getting.

Ed Gamble

Yes, a bad beer.

Elis James

No, beer that tastes like beer. It doesn't taste like pomegranate and pasties, or on a podcast I do, we used to sell Beer 52. Have you ever drunk that stuff? It is absolutely horrific. It's like, 'Oh this one's great, it tastes like mango and fags.' 'No, I think I'm alright actually.' 'Oh, there's a lovely tobacco undertone to this one and peaches,' no, no, no, no, no, I want it to taste like lager.

Ed Gamble

We've been sponsored by Beer 52 again and we very much love them and if they want to come back and sponsor us some more, that's great and you know, I have tried the beers and I really like them. I had a lovely stout that was blueberry, maple syrup and waffle flavour.

Elis James

That tastes like the Turin shroud and dust.

Ed Gamble

I drink all of that stuff, I love it.

Elis James

Oh, no, no, no, no, but coffee is the one area where I get really pretentious, so I would like a pretentious coffee but then washed down with a nice can of Grolsch.

Ed Gamble

I collaborated with Signature Brew on a sour beer which was rhubarb crumble and custard flavour.

Elis James

That is, you are ill. That is mad. That's a mad sentence.

Ed Gamble

It was called, Let's Get Eddy to Crumble.



Elis James

Humans have been making beer for 20,000 years.

Ed Gamble

So, it's about time they fucking up their game.

Elis James

Rhubarb and custard crumble?

Ed Gamble

Yes, and I did another one with Volt Brewing, who are great, they're an Edinburgh based brewing company that was apple and guava flavour.

Elis James

Oh my God. No, no, no, no.

James Acaster

I mean, you're essentially having a Grolsch with a Ribena. That sounds pretty much like what is being made here. Surely this is cutting out the middle man, this is in one drink.

Elis James

I've realised, well, I've had it pointed out to me-

Ed Gamble

That's not the same thing.

James Acaster

I wonder who by.

Elis James

That I don't really care having lots of different tastes at around the same time. So, we went on a brilliant holiday to Portugal, it was the best holiday I've ever been on, and it was the breakfast buffet and they had everything. They had absolutely everything. On the second day, Izzy's very good, she doesn't go on her phone in front of the kids. So, we were eating breakfast but she was on her phone, and I said, 'What are you doing?' And she went, 'Oh I've set up a WhatsApp group to criticise your breakfast choices. Because it was all there.'

Ed Gamble

Yes.

Elis James

So, I had bacon, sausage, egg, melon, cucumber, spinach, almonds, cheese.



Ed Gamble

All on one plate?

Elis James

All on one plate.

Ed Gamble

You know, that's the issue. That's the weird thing.

Elis James

Olives. Yes, yes, yes.

Ed Gamble

Olives, yes, don't forget the olives.

Elis James

So, she said, 'You've got lots of traditional acceptable breakfast there, but all on the same plate. So, why don't you go have the fried section first, and then go back for the cucumber and blah, blah, blah,' and I was like, 'Yes, but you know, I'm on the holiday of a lifetime. The kids want to go to the beach. Let's just get it done and then we can move on.'

James Acaster

Is that what you said after your anniversary meal as well? Walked right into that motherfucker.

Elis James

Yes. Mackerel, that was in the mix.

Ed Gamble

So, with these three drinks, you've got the coffee, you've got the Grolsch, and you've got the Ribena. We know you like weak squash, Izzy told us that on the live episode we did with her.

James Acaster

Oh she absolutely destroyed you.

Elis James

The weak squash came about because I was trying to wean myself off the stronger stuff.

Ed Gamble

Why?

Elis James

Because the levels I was drinking it at were insane and had to be stopped. So, I had such a sweet tooth that I thought, 'Okay, well I'll move onto sugar free squash.' So it's water but it's got a bit of taste. But



this is the dream restaurant, so I've gone back to Ribena Toothkind and Ribena Light and all that kind of stuff is just-

Ed Gamble

It is funny the way he says tooth, right?

Elis James

Yes, yes, sorry.

Ed Gamble

I wanted just to acknowledge that because it felt quite tense in the room where everyone was going, 'Is he saying tooth? Does he mean tooth?' Toothkind.

Elis James

Sorry, it's an accent thing, sorry. Alright. Toothkind, which sounds insane. But the Ribena Toothkind is just disgusting, so if you're not going to drink the proper stuff there's no point drinking it, I think.

James Acaster

Yes, well no, although I reckon if you stopped drinking normal Ribena for five years, it might be the Toothkind would taste like normal Ribena.

Ed Gamble

Are you sip, sip, sip, or are you whole drink, whole drink, whole drink?

Elis James

In sequence. Coffee, beer, Ribena, coffee, beer, Ribena, coffee, beer, Ribena, coffee, beer, Ribena, end.

Ed Gamble

Get it done and move on.

Elis James

Yes, pickled ginger, cleanse the palette, bosh.

James Acaster

We arrive at your dream dessert, Elis James, very exciting, you've already chosen Milk Tray, I know I'm in good hands here. What are we talking?

Ed Gamble

So, you're already positively twitching because of sugar at this point.

Elis James

Yes.



James Acaster

Caffeine. It's everything-

Elis James

Well now, if I was in a nice restaurant, I would probably go cheese board.

Ed Gamble

What a fucking twist. Drew him in. Oh Milk Tray, Milk Tray, oh well done Elis, well done. Bam, cheese board, in your fucking face.

James Acaster

It sounds like this is-, I don't think this is the final thing.

Elis James

So, I really love blue cheese.

James Acaster

Sweet Christ Elis.

Elis James

Really like blue cheese.

James Acaster

Yes.

Elis James

All these new tastes, amazing. I like strong cheese, I like weak cheese.

Ed Gamble

Yes, some of the weak cheeses are my favourite.

Elis James

Well, I mean, that takes me back, as a student. Oh God, this is embarrassing. As a student I-

James Acaster

Yes it is fucking embarrassing.

Elis James

I used to argue that all cheese tasted the same, it was either weak or strong. That is the foolish position that I used to maintain 25 years ago, okay, but I've moved on and accept that cheeses have different tastes, qualities, vibes. However, this is the dream restaurant, and because it's a dream restaurant, my dream pudding is Little Chef's Mississippi mud cake.



James Acaster

Hello. A lovely choice.

Ed Gamble

I believed in you Elis, I was with you.

Elis James

I think it might've been, was it Mississippi or Alabama mud cake?

James Acaster

Mississippi, it will be Mississippi, surely.

Elis James

Well, I actually googled the Little Chef menu today to try and find out definitively but it hasn't been in business since 2006, so sadly no one had uploaded the menu as a fond farewell to Little Chef.

Ed Gamble

I think it's more likely to be Mississippi mud cake because of the alliteration. I don't think they're going, 'I wish we could use three Ms but unfortunately the recipe's from Alabama.'

Elis James

That, oh my God.

James Acaster

Take us there.

Elis James

You could have it hot or cold.

James Acaster

Yes, oh.

Elis James

But there was no wrong choice.

James Acaster

What would you go for, Elis James?

Elis James

I started off assuming that hot was the right answer, and then the ice cream would start to melt on it. But actually, once I'd gone cold I thought the fondant icing now has got real heft. And the heft is actually fantastic. Did you used to eat the French fancies in the '80s? Did you ever eat fondant French fancies?



Ed Gamble

Yes, I know what you mean, but why do I have to have eaten them in the '80s? You know they're still available now.

James Acaster

We've established Elis was eating only French things in the '80s.

Ed Gamble

Yes. And he only eats puddings that have three words and they all start with the same letter.

Elis James

But I don't eat them any more.

Ed Gamble

No, but you only ate them in the '80s.

Elis James

Well-,

Ed Gamble

Brit pop?

Elis James

Up to Blair.

Ed Gamble

Okay, yes.

Elis James

But the Mississippi mud cake from Little Chef. We used to eat in Little Chef quite often as kids.

James Acaster

Wasn't it just like a roadside thing?

Ed Gamble

Yes, it was a motorway service station restaurant.

Elis James

Yes, yes.

Ed Gamble

Which services would you drive to to-,



Elis James

There was one in St Claire's near Carmarthen and we used to eat in that one quite a lot.

James Acaster

Did they have your table ready for you?

Elis James

I remember once we went there one week night and my mother made us wear our school uniforms so we looked smart.

Ed Gamble

It was gala dinner night at the Little Chef.

James Acaster

People announcing you as you come in. 'The James family.'

Ed Gamble

What else would you get from Little Chef? Will you just quickly reel off your Little Chef menu for us?

Elis James

Well, the burger was massive.

Ed Gamble

Are you sure you weren't just a child?

Elis James

No, the burger was the size of the plate. Then there was the Olympic breakfast. I think one of the reasons I'm not a foodie is that when I was growing up, I'd never met a foodie. I didn't meet a foodie until about seven or eight years ago. Because when I was growing up, if you ever mentioned a restaurant. If people would say, 'Oh, we had Sunday dinner in the Phoenix in Gorslas on Saturday.' People would go, 'Was it nice?' And they'd go, 'Yes, the portions were massive.' So, the way everyone discussed food was always based on portion size.

Ed Gamble

Yes.

Elis James

I think the way we eat in the UK has changed almost unimaginably in the last certainly twenty years, 25 years. So, Little Chef there was the Olympic breakfast. I can't remember what they called the burger but it was massive. My favourite burger would've been Wimpy, which I actually still think is better. It was better than McDonald's and it was better than Burger King and you got it on a plate, with lovely finely diced onions. So, I tended to have the Olympic breakfast when I was eating at Little Chef, followed by the Mississippi mud cake, and then the little barley sugar lollipops that you get at the till if you'd been a good boy and cleared your plate.



Ed Gamble

Yes.

James Acaster

I forgot about the barley sugar lollipops at Little Chef. That was good.

Ed Gamble

So, if you've been a good boy and you've eaten all your Mississippi mud cake, you'd get a fucking lollipop would you?

Elis James

Yes.

Ed Gamble

Where do you think your sugar addiction came from, Elis?

Elis James

I mean, now, I would say I would class myself as a healthy eater. Apart from Betty's birthday, I haven't eaten chocolate for weeks. It's just I can't have it in the house because if it's in the house, I'll eat all of it very, very quickly. So, I can not buy it, but I can't own it for a long period, if you know what I mean. That sounds bad.

Ed Gamble

I guess, I've never heard anyone use that term before. I've never bought chocolate and considered myself a chocolate owner. It's always a transient relationship, right?

James Acaster

Yes, you can never truly own chocolate, the Acasters know this, we talk to each other.

Elis James

But, you know, some people will have the same pack of biscuits in the house for five days.

Ed Gamble

Yes, those people are fucking psychopaths.

Elis James

Yes, and that's what I can't, I can't do that, so I either don't eat it, or I eat it chillingly quickly.

James Acaster

Obviously, I'm disappointed, because we've had a lot of stories from your childhood.

Elis James

Yes.



James Acaster

And I was hoping you'd talk about the farmer who lived next door who used to bring round tomatoes for you, because that's my favourite story from your childhood that I'm now trying to tee you up for.

Elis James

Oh yes.

James Acaster

About Sean the dog.

Elis James

We had a dog called Sean the dog.

Ed Gamble

James has given away some of the details of the story.

Elis James

And I'm going to change his name.

Ed Gamble

The dog's?

Elis James

No.

James Acaster

So like, they know it's called Sean.

Elis James

So, Mr Davies next door used to bring us tomatoes.

Ed Gamble

Okay, Mr Davies we're going with.

Elis James

Yes.

Ed Gamble

The other Welsh surname. So, his real name's Mr Williams.

Elis James

And Sean the dog had jumped over the fence and Mr Davies had a goose.



James Acaster

Called Petra.

Elis James

Yes. And there was a bucket of water in Mr Davies' garden, and Sean, he meant no harm, he was a puppy, he just was very excitable. And he worried and panicked the goose to such an extent that the goose put its head in the bucket of water and took its own life.

James Acaster

I'm going to read your menu back to you now, see how you feel about it. You would like still water out of a glass bottle, poppadums or bread, you want crusty French bread that is so crusty it makes people laugh out loud when they bite into it, from a 1983 Tesco as a child sat in the trolley eating it. Starter, you would like a plate of Elvis and Fireman Sam sausages for the table, with ketchup. Also, you'd like for yourself some salmon sashimi with pickled ginger. Main course, sea bass with steamed greens, spinach with nutmeg, green beans, Tenderstem broccoli, dauphinoise potatoes and a 50p-sized disk of steak with English mustard on it. Side dish, a box of Milk Tray, third tier just Turkish delight. Drink, V60 hand-brewed coffee made with Geisha beans, made by coffee-based YouTuber James Hoffmann, and a can of Grolsch and a pint of Ribena. Dessert, Little Chef's Mississippi mud cake brackets cold. How do you feel about that?

Elis James

What a night, can you imagine eating that stuff? Oh my God. And then there's the special fried rice, the shredded chilli beef that almost made the cut.

Ed Gamble

Yes.

Elis James

Food is fantastic. Isn't food great? Oh my God.

James Acaster

It is. It truly is.

Ed Gamble

After the dream meal, we're all going clubbing, right, that was the plan?

Elis James

Yes, yes, yes.

Ed Gamble

You're going clubbing after that are you?



Elis James

We're going clubbing yes, but we've got a nice VIP roped off area where we're going to sit with our trousers down because we're full.

James Acaster

Don't think the rope's doing us many favours there.

Ed Gamble

That was fantastic. That was the Off Menu menu of Elis James.

James Acaster

Elis James everyone.

Ed Gamble

Thank you so much for coming to our first Royal Albert Hall show. You've been absolutely fantastic, thank you very much, goodnight.

James Acaster

Good night, good night, goodbye.

Ed Gamble

Well there we are, we were mean about Elis at the beginning but he was a good guest wasn't he, at the Royal Albert Hall?

James Acaster

He was a fantabulous guest. And also, I suppose we should encourage people to listen to Elis James and John Robbins on Radio 5 Live or wherever they get their podcast and they can listen to the socially distanced sports bar and Oh What a Time, wherever they get their podcasts as well, I suppose we should.

Ed Gamble

Yes, I suppose so, and I think Elis and John are going to two podcasts a week soon, so there's going to be a lot of Elis and John content.

James Acaster

So, if you enjoyed Elis then and you don't listen to his podcasts already, I mean, what a treat you've got. He's already released enough episodes for the rest of your life.

Ed Gamble

Thanks for coming on the show, Elis, and thanks for listening you guys. Bye bye.

James Acaster

Bye.