



# Off Menu – Ep 216 – Dawn French

## **Ed Gamble**

Welcome to the Off Menu podcast taking the scone of conversation, spreading on the jam of humour, adding the clotted cream of friendship and we've got ourselves a Cornish scone podcast James.

## **James Acaster**

Ooh, now why is Ed saying a Cornish scone? I guess we'll come to that later, listeners. That's Ed Gamble.

## **Ed Gamble**

Yes, yes later.

## **James Acaster**

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

## **Ed Gamble**

Merry Christmas.

## **James Acaster**

Is Dawn French. We win.

## **Ed Gamble**

Dawn French. Boy oh boy, we have won Christmas. Now sometimes we have a guest on and we're like, 'Oh I think we might be in national treasure territory here.' I mean this is the prime piece of national treasure.

## **James Acaster**

Yes this the main.

## **Ed Gamble**

Unless that sounds disrespectful.

## **James Acaster**

The main bit that Indiana Jones will be after.

## **Ed Gamble**

Yes.

## **James Acaster**

The main bounty.



**Ed Gamble**

Yes, the main bounty Dawn French. So excited, obviously we are huge fans of Dawn French. We are very, very excited that she is coming into the dream restaurant.

**James Acaster**

Yes, that generation of comedians that we wouldn't be comedians if it wasn't for Dawn French.

**Ed Gamble**

Correct and take that as you will.

**James Acaster**

Yes sorry Dawn, sorry if that makes you regret everything you've ever done.

**Ed Gamble**

Yes, but what a career, what a back catalogue of work, just buzzing. And we're going to be talking about something she's done very recently, which is her new book, The Twat Files.

**James Acaster**

The Twat Files: A Life of Mistakes, No Regrets.

**Ed Gamble**

Yes I was looking forward to hearing you say that as well. No regrets is one of your favourite catchphrases.

**James Acaster**

I love saying no regrets, it's really funny.

**Ed Gamble**

Yes, really funny. Excited to talk to her about the book. Excited to talk to her about her dream menu and excited to talk to her about her dream Christmas food as well James.

**James Acaster**

Yes it is Christmas. Merry Christmas to all those who celebrate.

**Ed Gamble**

Yes.

**James Acaster**

And we will be asking Dawn what her-, every year I think we've always done this, is there's a little Christmas course that we chuck in there for the Christmas specials. And we will find out what Dawn French has for Christmas dinner.

**Ed Gamble**

We will, very excited, we should get on with it, but we do have to pick a secret ingredient James.



**James Acaster**

This feels bad, I don't really want there to be a secret ingredient for this one because I want to make sure that Dawn French does not get kicked out of the dream restaurant. But as always if the guest picks the secret ingredient, an ingredient which we deem to be unacceptable, they will be kicked out.

**Ed Gamble**

Yes, she will be kicked out, but I think we've picked something that she probably won't pick.

**James Acaster**

Yes, yes we've deliberately.

**Ed Gamble**

We've deliberately ruined our own format.

**James Acaster**

Yes.

**Ed Gamble**

So as to not remove Dawn French from the restaurant.

**James Acaster**

And this week the secret ingredient is.

**Ed Gamble**

Marmite cakes.

**James Acaster**

Marmite cakes.

**Ed Gamble**

Marmite cakes, we just looked up some trivia about The Vicar of Dibley and of course there was the character Letitia Cropley and she cooked weird stuff. And in one episode she cooked Marmite cakes.

**James Acaster**

Like a dessert.

**Ed Gamble**

Like a dessert, Marmite. Even though I think about it and I think Marmite cakes actually sounds quite nice.

**James Acaster**

Yes actually it would be good.



**Ed Gamble**

It would be nice.

**James Acaster**

Marmite and chocolate. I've had a Marmite and chocolate brownie, I've said it many times on the podcast, it was delicious.

**Ed Gamble**

But I don't think Dawn's going to pick that, so I think we're on safe territory.

**James Acaster**

I think we'll be okay, but shall we find out?

**Ed Gamble**

Yes, this is the Off Menu menu of Dawn French.

Welcome Dawn to the dream restaurant.

**Dawn French**

Thank you.

**James Acaster**

Welcome Dawn French to the dream restaurant.

**Dawn French**

Okay this is already quite dynamic and loud, I'm liking it.

**Ed Gamble**

Yes, yes.

**James Acaster**

I like your glasses, you've only just, as we were starting put your glasses on.

**Dawn French**

Yes because I need to read something.

**James Acaster**

And I love them.

**Dawn French**

Thank you. Why?

**James Acaster**

I've not seen that design before, I like how-, I like the metal frames.



**Dawn French**

Yes.

**James Acaster**

I like how the tops are thicker than the rest of it. I like the shape of them, I've not seen that shape of glasses before.

**Dawn French**

Yes, thank you, and do you know what I like? They're very light on the face. I've worn heavy face furniture before now. And this is light and I'm in this school now.

**James Acaster**

Yes, oh, they work. Would you wear those glasses, Ed?

**Ed Gamble**

Absolutely.

**Dawn French**

Would you?

**Ed Gamble**

In a heartbeat.

**James Acaster**

Do people ask to try them on?

**Dawn French**

I won't be lending them to you mainly because of size of head, if you don't mind me saying.

**James Acaster**

I've got a big head?

**Dawn French**

Yes, in a nice way.

**James Acaster**

Yes, yes.

**Dawn French**

A man sized head.

**James Acaster**

Yes.



**Dawn French**

Quite square, yours even squarer.

**Ed Gamble**

Yes.

**James Acaster**

For fuck's sake.

**Dawn French**

But I've got a feeling there would be some stretching.

**James Acaster**

Yes, yes.

**Dawn French**

And I can't risk that I'm afraid.

**James Acaster**

Yes, yes, yes.

**Dawn French**

Because stretching leads to slippage and we all know what goes-, it's a slippery old slope.

**James Acaster**

Yes, yes, yes. Stretching leads to slippage, doesn't it?

**Ed Gamble**

I don't think I-, I hope I don't need glasses because I have a very small nose and small ears, so I think I'd struggle to keep them on my face.

**Dawn French**

You've drawn my attention now to your nose and ears.

**Ed Gamble**

Yes, quite small nose and ears, right?

**Dawn French**

Yes quite small ears, can you hear me?

**Ed Gamble**

Yes just about, there's a bit of a delay, but yes, yes, I can yes. So, whenever I wear sunglasses they sort of struggle to stay on my face because of my small nose.



**Dawn French**

Do they? Did you get them from a mouse, your ears?

**Ed Gamble**

My father's a mouse.

**James Acaster**

Yes, you know how people like grow human ears on mice's backs, Ed had mice ears grown on the side of his head.

**Dawn French**

Yes, excellent.

**Ed Gamble**

Yes I'm an experiment, I'm a big experiment.

**Dawn French**

You're growing them for mice, wonderful.

**Ed Gamble**

Yes.

**Dawn French**

Wonderful, how generous.

**James Acaster**

How you doing, Dawn?

**Dawn French**

Do you know, I'm alright.

**James Acaster**

Yes?

**Dawn French**

I mean if you want to know the absolute truth, do you want to know the truth?

**Ed Gamble**

Yes, yes, yes.

**Dawn French**

I've got a wobbly knee and this is honestly the bane of my life. Because I wanted to-, well, I wanted to get to dying without any faults.



**Ed Gamble**

Yes, yes.

**Dawn French**

You know the odd cold maybe or something, or a pimple. But now I seem to have the big stuff that means you have to have butchery done to you.

**Ed Gamble**

Yes.

**Dawn French**

And so I've got this really dodgy knee, which happened as a result of doing a stunt.

**Ed Gamble**

Really?

**Dawn French**

Yes. You may not know this, but I have in my life pretended to be a vicar.

**Ed Gamble**

Yes, we're aware.

**Dawn French**

And when I pretended to be a vicar, I also jumped in a puddle, you may not know this, you're very young.

**Ed Gamble**

It's a very, very famous scene in a very, very famous sitcom.

**Dawn French**

Yes, a very famous scene.

**James Acaster**

I think we're the exact right age for it, but yes, yes, yes.

**Dawn French**

Okay, so when I did the jumping in the puddle, that was all perfectly good. I did have a secret wee, just telling you that.

**Ed Gamble**

In the puddle?

**Dawn French**

It was warm and it was November, come on.





**Ed Gamble**

Yes, yes.

**Dawn French**

That's allowed, no one else was going in after me, it's all fine. So I've then been asked to jump in endless other puddles.

**Ed Gamble**

Yes.

**Dawn French**

So I went on Paul O'Grady's chat show and he-, this is a million years ago. And it's a flat concrete floor, it's a TV studio. How they're going to-, they're asking me to jump in a puddle to finish the show and I'm agreeing. And they had built a hill, so that there could be a puddle at the top of the hill. Hill out of scaffolding and Astroturf. I mean it's a disaster, it's a disaster.

**Ed Gamble**

Yes, so how many puddles have you had to jump in post jumping in the puddle in The Vicar of Dibley?

**Dawn French**

Many, many.

**Ed Gamble**

Every year for Comic Relief they call on you.

**Dawn French**

I nearly always say yes. But when I did jump in that 10 foot one, I jumped 10 foot, no actual water inside it. Why did I say yes to that?

**James Acaster**

What you just jumped a 10 foot drop?

**Dawn French**

I just jumped. Well yes, I mean there was a small plastic membrane type thing. Because they couldn't put water in it, they put 2 inches of water on top of the plastic membrane. Slightly vulva like if you don't mind me saying.

**James Acaster**

Yes.

**Dawn French**

Screams please Dr Freud. I jumped into that, but then from there onwards nothing, nothing, nothing. 10 foot drop, heavy drop onto-, this left me-, this is all for the sake of comedy, I've donated my knee to comedy.



**Ed Gamble**

And comedy that you've done before as well.

**Dawn French**

Comedy I've done before.

**Ed Gamble**

Nailed it the first time.

**Dawn French**

And didn't need to do it again. Showing off frankly.

**James Acaster**

That's astounding. So now you've got knee problems because of the Paul O'Grady show?

**Dawn French**

Now I've got knee problems because of that. You get arthritis where you've had-, yes let's blame Paul O'Grady who's frankly dead.

**James Acaster**

Yes.

**Dawn French**

Let's blame him.

**James Acaster**

To be frank.

**Dawn French**

He won't mind, he won't mind.

**James Acaster**

No, he won't mind that.

**Dawn French**

He won't mind, he was a nice friend, he won't mind, he'd take it on the chin.

**James Acaster**

Yes, yes. So that's the reason why now you've got a wobbly knee.

**Dawn French**

Yes, got a wobbly knee and in a minute, well not a minute, several minutes, somebody's going to put a new one in there.



**James Acaster**

Wow.

**Ed Gamble**

Wow.

**Dawn French**

And here's an interesting thing, see what you think about this. This problem started many years ago and when I first went to see the knee surgeon, he said, 'You're going to need a complete replacement knee in there one day.' And I went, 'Let's see.' Then I went to see him a couple of years ago and he said, 'Right, now I've done some closer looking with machinery scans.' Or whatever they call it, 'And now you will need a partial knee.' Because the technology is such that now it's not an entire knee. So then I said, 'Going by this trajectory, shall I just keep going and never need a knee? Will I just not need any knee at any point?' He said, 'No that doesn't work that way.'

**James Acaster**

Did you have to tell him about the puddle?

**Dawn French**

No, actually I haven't admitted to that. Because I don't know, I'd feel foolish. Whereas I'm with you and you're a couple of twats and I'm quite happy to-, I'm happy to be foolish with you guys and admit my shortcomings. But to a surgeon you want to be grown up don't you?

**James Acaster**

Yes, yes.

**Ed Gamble**

Did you say you were reading a book?

**Dawn French**

I said I ruined it by doing ballet.

**James Acaster**

Because he might say, 'Well you don't get a knee then. If you've jumped in a puddle on the Paul O'Grady show.'

**Ed Gamble**

'No knee for you.' Yes. Now you called us a couple of twats there, which we liked. Any other guest we'd be offended, but of course from you it's a great compliment.

**Dawn French**

With me it's a gentle slap.



**Ed Gamble**

Exactly because you've written a book called The Twat Files.

**Dawn French**

I certainly have thank you.

**James Acaster**

Which it's not about other twats really is it?

**Dawn French**

No, it's me being a twat.

**James Acaster**

You're reclaiming the word twat.

**Dawn French**

I am.

**James Acaster**

And talking about times you've been a twat.

**Dawn French**

And do you know it's really an alarming amount.

**Ed Gamble**

Yes it's a big book.

**Dawn French**

It's a big book and I honestly promise you that that is about a third of the amount of stories in there, it's shocking, it's shocking. When I first thought, 'Ooh this is quite a good conceit to tell stories about your life, or mainly stories about work.' That's what I set out to do the tour. I thought I'll talk about-, I don't want to just do lovey anecdotes, but I might tell stories behind the scenes. I did a bit in Harry Potter and I filmed a scene with a hippo, why don't I tell people what actually happened with the hippo? You know that kind of thing. And then I thought, 'Actually I was a bit of a twat that day.' So then I told that story, then I told another story and I thought, 'Oh god I really have been a twat, like I'm a massive twat and I didn't know it.' You know when there's always one twat in the room and you look around and you can't see one? That's when you know you are the one.

**Ed Gamble**

Oh not it is me.

**James Acaster**

What actually happened with the hippo.



**Dawn French**

That is continual for me. I'm a twat wrapped in flesh, that's me. I know that sounds wrong, so sorry.

**James Acaster**

No no we love it.

**Dawn French**

That starts to sound offensive, but it's not.

**Ed Gamble**

That must have been bitter sweet going, 'Oh I think this would be a really good idea for a book.' And then you start thinking about it and it just came too easily.

**Dawn French**

Yes too easily.

**Ed Gamble**

Yes, now I understand.

**Dawn French**

But don't we love the joy of owning up to your utter idiocy?

**Ed Gamble**

Absolutely.

**Dawn French**

I think it's a basic human need to tell stories of idiocy. I mean comics do it all the time and actually mates do it don't they? You know it's like I love it if a mate says to me, 'You'll never believe what I did.' And tells me some stupid foolish thing they did. It's almost an act of trust.

**Ed Gamble**

Yes.

**Dawn French**

When somebody does that. And I think, 'Well I'm not going to judge you for it, I am going to laugh at you because you've invited me to, but now I'm going to tell you a story. I'm even going to try and trump you with-, not trump at you obviously. But I'm going to try and trump you with my idiocy and then we're loving each other a bit.'

**Ed Gamble**

Also I don't like any comedy where the comedian wins.

**James Acaster**

No.



**Ed Gamble**

I need the comedian to be, 'I've been a twat and here's why.'

**Dawn French**

Absolutely and where's the fun in success actually? There's nothing to be said is for success.

**Ed Gamble**

Absolutely.

**Dawn French**

What I would say is if you have been only successful and there's no such thing really, but if that's all you ever talk about, you are just an arsehole basically. You're not even a twat, you're just an arsehole. So let's forget that because we don't-, I don't really care about people's successes, that is the problem with all the filters and the stories about yourself. Look where I am, I look good, look at my interesting hair. Look at me, I'm here. I know these people, all of that to me is-, because I'm old and so that is like ooh. It's a bit boasting and weird, I don't like it. And you're just saying aren't I great? Aren't I great? I don't like you, I don't like you if you're telling me that. I don't know how to connect with that, I don't know people that are just great. Everybody I know is a twat and I want to meet other twats, there where I can connect properly with my folk.

**James Acaster**

Yes it is weird, so yes I've never heard anyone say, 'Oh have you followed such and such on Instagram? Their life looks so great, I really like them.'

**Ed Gamble**

Yes never.

**James Acaster**

I really think they're brilliant, I like them. I've only ever heard people go, 'You've got to follow such and such, they're fucking knob heads.'

**Dawn French**

What a wanker.

**James Acaster**

Yes they hate them.

**Dawn French**

Absolutely hate them, jealous of them and what we know is it not true? We know that, but why are we buying it then?

**James Acaster**

Yes.



**Dawn French**

Why are we buying it and trying to be as untrue and as fake as that? So I'm trying to sort of-, I'm just trying to own the lovely imperfection. That honestly I can tell you it's liberating, massively liberating. And maybe it's something that comes with age where you don't feel like you have to impress people anymore, or you have to give the best of yourself or anything. Because you know-, we're going into weird territory here, my brain's going to weird territory. It's like the difference between porn and proper lumpy, slightly whiffy sex. Where it's real and with the real person, really flawed person. I mean I have been known in my life to just go, 'Look, before we go any further, can I show you all of this? Let me just show you all of this.'

**Ed Gamble**

See what you're working with yes.

**Dawn French**

'Here are all the lumps, the one's that are supposed to be there, here's the other ones that aren't supposed to be there, quite alarming, just get used to it. What do you think? Interested in a visit or not a visit? Because this is what it is and I'm interested in your weirdness, so let's have a go at it.'

**James Acaster**

At what point of the evening is this? Is this before you go on the date?

**Dawn French**

This is very early on. I would-, I quite often would-, this is back in the day obviously before marriage, I don't do that anymore. I will hand out a card which says where would you like to visit? Upstairs, outsides, upstairs, insides, downstairs, outsides.

**Ed Gamble**

You had these printed out?

**Dawn French**

Golden, golden thing which might cost you dinner, downstairs insides. Or do you prefer-, do you smoke? No, do you? I'll get things sorted, I'm quite organised.

**Ed Gamble**

Yes, yes, yes, yes.

**Dawn French**

But I do like real stuff. Real bodies, real people, real mistakes, real everything is what I'm interested in.

**James Acaster**

Also I had no idea that was a real hippo that you were in a room with. I assumed they'd CGI'd you as the lady in the painting?



**Dawn French**

Oh no there was a hippo.

**James Acaster**

And there's hippos behind you. I didn't think you were really with a real life hippo?

**Dawn French**

I was with a real life hippo. But here's the thing, I'm going to tell you something that I talk about on stage now, which I'm not supposed to do but I am going to tell you. So I was asked if I was happy to work with animals and then I was told by the director that there was a hippo. I didn't-, I just said yes because I wanted to be in the film. I didn't think about it until the day when I was taken into the great hanger at Leavesden Studio and left in a pen in the middle with sawdust. And an unpleasant man came and he was the animal wrangler and he came and shouted at me about-, and I really did obey, I do obey shouty people, which I shouldn't, I shouldn't do that anymore. Who, he shouted at me and told me that I must not run, whatever happened I must not run. And he said they were going to be bringing in a live creature and to pay it some respect. Stand still, do not run, did I understand? And I went, 'Yes I understand, I understand.' He then explained to me that the script called for a female hippo, but this was a male hippo, 'Do not run.' That's already ominous. Then he said, 'This hippo may want to sniff your privates, do not run.'

**Ed Gamble**

Had you sent the hippo the cards before?

**Dawn French**

I was wavering then because I thought I don't think that's part of the contract.

**Ed Gamble**

No, no.

**Dawn French**

When you said do you like working with animals? I wasn't imagining this, this is too much. Then he said, 'This hippo may want to mate with you and if it does, if he does, his skin will start to foam. Be on alert, look out for that, tell me, do not run.' So then I-, I thought oh god, I'd like to run now because I didn't-, I-, so they went out and they backed in the trailer with the hippo and I could hear it thumping about inside. I was genuinely terrified. He went in to bring it out and do you know what? It was the size of a Labrador, So the word they had all neglected to use concerning the hippo was the word pygmy. It was a pygmy hippo.

**Ed Gamble**

Don't run.





**Dawn French**

Don't run and I tell you something it did sniff my privates and I'll tell you another thing, its skin did not foam, I failed, I failed to ignite the ardour of a pygmy hippo and that's a fact. But I really care about that, that's still to this day. I feel failed.

**James Acaster**

Yes that is quite a diss from the pygmy.

**Dawn French**

I failed but it was tiny, so the script called for me to hide behind it. Which when I read I imagined a hippo sized hippo, not a pygmy sized hippo. But the only way to do that scene was to be on all fours behind it. So to try and hide my fairly bulky self behind a tiny, little hippo, it was-, it's ridiculous. And when you see it you don't even-, as you say it could have been CGI'd. You don't even-, you sort of see the hide of it, you don't even really see what's going on.

**Ed Gamble**

What if they're worried that the hippo's going to want to mate with you and then they're asking you to get down on all fours?

**Dawn French**

I know, I know.

**Ed Gamble**

Encouraging it a bit.

**Dawn French**

I know, who's caring about me and my wellbeing and what could have happened?

**James Acaster**

Absolutely no one is caring.

**Dawn French**

What could have happened?

**James Acaster**

Yes.

**Dawn French**

I could have been the mother of very tiny hippo babies. It would have been against god, it would have been against everything moral, everything.

**James Acaster**

Yes it would look like-



**Dawn French**

And I would not have been allowed to run because I'd have been obeying and staying still.

**James Acaster**

I reckon you could outrun a pygmy hippo surely?

**Ed Gamble**

Yes.

**Dawn French**

Do you know? I don't think I could with my wobbly knee, this was a few years back, but even so.

**James Acaster**

Thanks to O'Grady, hippo's going to catch you.

**Dawn French**

Yes thanks yes. Thanks to you O'Grady, I have to mate with a hippo.

**James Acaster**

We always start the dream menu with still or sparkling water Dawn.

**Dawn French**

Yes I know exactly what I'm having there.

**James Acaster**

Yes?

**Dawn French**

Can you guess?

**James Acaster**

I think you would have still water.

**Ed Gamble**

I think sparkling Dawn.

**Dawn French**

I think you're right Ed.

**Ed Gamble**

Yes.

**James Acaster**

Ah okay.



**Dawn French**

Sorry about that, sorry about that, but I quite enjoy the gassiness and I quite enjoy the burping that follows, I quite enjoy that. And also it feels posh doesn't it?

**James Acaster**

Yes, yes.

**Dawn French**

I know it's a rip off, I know it's wrong, I know it's expensive, I know all of those things. But if I'm going to deny myself foie gras for all the right moral reasons, I'm going to have the sparkling water. Sorry are you disappointed now?

**James Acaster**

No.

**Ed Gamble**

No he's annoyed that he guessed wrong is what's happened.

**Dawn French**

Ah okay.

**Ed Gamble**

Yes, yes, yes.

**Dawn French**

Forgive yourself.

**James Acaster**

Yes because I thought I was being really clever because all of the stuff you were saying earlier. Difference between twats and arseholes and successful people.

**Dawn French**

I know, but I am a twat.

**James Acaster**

And I thought, yes.

**Dawn French**

I'm saying I am a twat, so I'm allowed the sparkling water.

**James Acaster**

Yes, yes absolutely you're allowed.



**Dawn French**

Because it is mainly twats that drink sparkling water isn't it?

**James Acaster**

I guess-, is it mainly twats or is that arsehole territory? The successful people?

**Dawn French**

No I think it's twat territory.

**James Acaster**

It's just twat territory yes.

**Dawn French**

Yes it's forgivable, yes.

**James Acaster**

Yes, yes, yes.

**Ed Gamble**

Would you like to jump into a puddle of it?

**James Acaster**

Oh Ed.

**Dawn French**

Ooh.

**James Acaster**

Oh Ed Gamble, I apologise Dawn.

**Dawn French**

There's something I've never considered, but if you want to organise it Ed, I'd be there.

**Ed Gamble**

Yes it's your dream restaurant, we've got a genie here you know.

**Dawn French**

Could it be real water in a real proper puddle? Not silly, studio puddle where you nearly die.

**Ed Gamble**

Yes, there's no membranes involved.

**James Acaster**

Yes, we're not going to do the drop.



**Dawn French**

No hippos, no scaffolding, just plain old fizzy water, just loads of it, gallons of it.

**Ed Gamble**

Yes gallons of it straight in, yes.

**James Acaster**

Would you like as well-, because I think this would be good if Richard Curtis jumped into a big load of sparkling water and had to do it as many times as you've had to do it over your life.

**Dawn French**

Richard Curtis was really so far behind the camera watching from a long distance like the coward he is. But he wrote it, come on with Paul Mayhew-Archer, it was their idea. I'd love to take the credit, but I can't.

**James Acaster**

So they should be jumping into the?

**Dawn French**

They should, but not with me, I want to do it on my own thanks. And there is a joy you know? There is a joy with little stunt moments like that. And I think there's something in me that is sort of British and also trained by my brother, that if you refuse a challenge you will be forever labelled a girl, so I'm not having that. I am not a girl, well I am, but I'm not in his-, a girl. And I will do any challenge to beat my brother. I cannot-, I mean my brother's nearly 70 now, I'm 66. If I'm sitting next to my brother we have to have a fight, physical fight. It really does alarm his children, my children, everybody because it's quite full on and it is serious. It starts with Chinese burns you know and it moves on from there. It's about being in the back of the car together for years.

**James Acaster**

Yes.

**Ed Gamble**

You still just slip into those roles.

**Dawn French**

There's just a little dig and then another one and it should stay light hearted, but it doesn't, it gets quite violent.

**Ed Gamble**

Gets out of control.

**Dawn French**

And I'm prepared to bite, so I'm just saying that to you if you win.



**James Acaster**

Yes, he's going for the knees every time. Well I hope you win the next one.

**Dawn French**

Yes thank you, I will, I've got plans, I've got plans.

**James Acaster**

Poppadums or bread? Poppadums or bread Dawn French? Poppadums or bread?

**Dawn French**

Oh my god. I think it might be bread, yes it's bread. Although it's unwise isn't it because you're full?

**Ed Gamble**

That's always the danger that you fill up on bread.

**Dawn French**

Yes and because it's arrived first, you're hungry, you want it badly. I quite like the poshy, focaccia type of bread, I quite like that. Or, 'Ooh, would you like a brown one? Or a white one? Out of a basket.' With a forky thing, tongys thing.

**Ed Gamble**

Tongs?

**Dawn French**

Yes I quite like that and if they're warm, ooh, like that.

**James Acaster**

Well I'm a genie waiter in this scenario, so I could make you not full again for the main.

**Dawn French**

Oh could you from bread? Oh my god.

**James Acaster**

After the bread I can reset you.

**Dawn French**

That's my dream thing. I once gave up bread in an effort to lose some weight. I gave up bread for a year and I gave up cheese the same year. And then Satan who works at my deli made cheese bread and then I was lost.

**Ed Gamble**

The ultimate temptation.



**Dawn French**

That was it.

**Ed Gamble**

Yes.

**Dawn French**

I gave in immediately.

**James Acaster**

Unfortunate that Satan worked at the deli.

**Dawn French**

Yes, yes, yes and that was it.

**James Acaster**

Bad luck.

**Dawn French**

I love bread.

**James Acaster**

It's good cheese bread?

**Dawn French**

Yes I mean you wouldn't have Poppadoms unless of course you're at an Indian restaurant surely?

**James Acaster**

Yes, but some people.

**Dawn French**

I mean I don't know if he's been asked this before?

**James Acaster**

Yes, yes yes.

**Ed Gamble**

Some people have still picked Poppadoms and they've not picked Indian for their dream meal, but yes. Some people just love Poppadoms you know?

**James Acaster**

Some people have picked prawn crackers.



**Dawn French**

Well you might as well have crisps if you're going to do that. Bring your own crisps and get started with those before the bread and I wouldn't advise it.

**James Acaster**

No?

**Dawn French**

No, save yourself for the actual food. I don't think my menu would exist in a restaurant, but we're in your special, magic restaurant aren't we? So it just does. Nobody would serve me these things in this order.

**James Acaster**

That's great.

**Ed Gamble**

That's what we like.

**Dawn French**

They're not particularly weird, they're just not what you would get.

**James Acaster**

They wouldn't be on the same menu?

**Dawn French**

No correct.

**James Acaster**

And for your bread course, do you want that devil's cheese bread?

**Dawn French**

Oh you bitch. Yes I do please.

**Ed Gamble**

Yes you are a bitch though.

**Dawn French**

Well only-, I can only have it because you're promising me I won't fill up.

**James Acaster**

You won't, you won't fill up.

**Dawn French**

Alright because that would be my entire meal ordinarily yes okay.





**Ed Gamble**

Satan's cheese bread.

**Dawn French**

Alright thank you.

**James Acaster**

Yes, Satan's cheese bread.

**Dawn French**

Yes lovely.

**Ed Gamble**

Your dream starter?

**Dawn French**

Now this was problematic for me because I was thinking of all the things I love as starters and I do really love starters. But I remember and this is slightly twaty really because I remember having this starter in a restaurant ages ago. So I was trying to remember what my favourite starter was and I've never had it since and I loved it, so why have I not ordered it since? Or why haven't I made it for myself at home? You know when you have a little epiphany and you think, 'This is food I really love, why don't I eat it?'

**Ed Gamble**

I've been wasting my life.

**Dawn French**

Or why am I trying to have other inferior starters when this is what I really want.

**Ed Gamble**

Yes.

**Dawn French**

So this was thinly sliced pear, ripe, don't start giving me unripe. Thinly sliced ripe pear with really excellent ham. With a balsamic drizzle on the top, it's posh, I can't even remember where I had this, but it was so divine. I'm starting to slobber now, I'm tasting it now, it's so divine. And it was that kind of ham that none of us can aspire to know where it comes from. Serrano-y, or something, you know what they're called, not Parma, but a version of that, Iberico, something like that you know?

**Ed Gamble**

Iberico's the best stuff though.

**Dawn French**

Is it the best?



**Ed Gamble**

Oh for me yes, that's the Spanish one, that's the one I get really excited about.

**Dawn French**

Is that when you get a whole side of it? And slice a tiny bit?

**Ed Gamble**

Yes, yes, yes, yes.

**Dawn French**

Yes it's like that, but very thin, paper thin slices and then the drizzle.

**James Acaster**

Sounds great.

**Ed Gamble**

Just to let you know that all my family are the same. My brother went on a school trip once to Spain and came back with a leg of Iberico ham.

**James Acaster**

Course.

**Dawn French**

Oh I love your brother.

**Ed Gamble**

He'd spent all the money he had for little tourist treats and little souvenirs and came back with a leg of ham.

**Dawn French**

That's good.

**Ed Gamble**

Yes.

**Dawn French**

And they do last a long time don't they?

**Ed Gamble**

Yes, yes.

**Dawn French**

Or do they? Because my husband's before now, got one of those, where you buy the thing it goes on.



**Ed Gamble**

You've got to buy the rack and the, yes.

**Dawn French**

The stand and you screw it in, it's quite butchery, it's quite, 'I own a deli now in my own house.' Which you don't and he started cutting it at Christmas once and then kept on cutting it. And we were still eating it several months later and I was worrying, but then he kept saying, 'No mould is good.' Is that right with ham? Ham and mould, do they go together?

**Ed Gamble**

Ham and mould. Well I don't-, maybe.

**Dawn French**

Cheese and mould go together.

**James Acaster**

I'd say if Ed doesn't know.

**Ed Gamble**

But I guess you can just-, with that you can cut the mould off and then it's fine underneath.

**Dawn French**

You see sloughing off mould to get to the ham you want, it's not, that's not appetizing is it?

**Ed Gamble**

No, especially after months of eating the ham.

**Dawn French**

Months of it. I know. And it wasn't the really good one that I'm talking about, which I don't even really know the name of it, let's call it magic ham yes, magic ham.

**James Acaster**

Magic ham with the thinly sliced.

**Dawn French**

Marvelous though. Don't you fancy the thought of it?

**James Acaster**

Oh it sounds delicious. I think-, but again I get what you mean, pear in a savoury dish or a starter. Every time I've had it it's amazing, but I never think to have it, or-

**Dawn French**

I never think to do it at home, or even if you're going to try to impress people at a dinner party.



**James Acaster**

Yes.

**Dawn French**

This would be a lovely thing, pears, they think pears. And if you really want to impress them, you might put walnuts, I've seen that before now.

**James Acaster**

When you said pear, I thought there's some walnuts coming.

**Dawn French**

Did you?

**James Acaster**

I got quite excited that there might be some walnuts coming, but then I don't think I would necessarily add that, walnuts to the dish you described. I think that's nice and simple.

**Dawn French**

Yes as it is.

**James Acaster**

As it is.

**Dawn French**

But would you have the drizzle?

**James Acaster**

Yes.

**Dawn French**

The balsamic drizzlette, or whatever they call it?

**James Acaster**

Yes I'd have the drizzlette and I'd have the ham from wherever it's from.

**Ed Gamble**

Definitely.

**Dawn French**

What we wouldn't have is what often happens in posh restaurants, which is just spit on the top called foam.

**Ed Gamble**

Oh yes, yes, yes.



**Dawn French**

Where it's really the chef has just spat on it.

**James Acaster**

Yes, getting away with it.

**Ed Gamble**

It's spit if somebody hasn't drunk enough water as well isn't it?

**Dawn French**

It is, it is. Or it's somebody that's drunk, that's what it is.

**Ed Gamble**

Yes. It's the chef's, it's the chef's spit yes.

**Dawn French**

Yes alcoholic spit.

**James Acaster**

It's never good enough.

**Dawn French**

On your food that apparently makes it posh, I'm not accepting that.

**James Acaster**

No, no I don't think it ever really holds its own.

**Ed Gamble**

No.

**James Acaster**

The foam stuff.

**Dawn French**

No it's foam, don't call it foam.

**Ed Gamble**

You want drizzlette.

**Dawn French**

I want drizzlette, thank you.

**James Acaster**

Or you can have the drizzlette, the magic ham and the ripe pear.



**Dawn French**

Yes ripe pear and maybe in the centre of the table for those who want to be crazy, walnuts.

**Ed Gamble**

Yes some walnuts there.

**Dawn French**

And do you think it'd be a good idea to crush them? Or would you put whole walnuts?

**Ed Gamble**

I think it depends if-, sometimes it's like raw walnuts on there right? And so I find raw walnuts sometimes strip my mouth out a bit.

**Dawn French**

Do they?

**Ed Gamble**

Yes they're just a bit like-, I get a weird texture in my mouth, but a roasted walnut, all day long, I love a roasted walnut.

**Dawn French**

But that's quite a lot of effort isn't it? But we're in a restaurant, it's alright, we can have that because somebody else has put the effort in, but I'm definitely doing this at home. At one of my many, many dinner parties that I haven't had for 20 years, I'm going to impress people with that.

**Ed Gamble**

Who would be at your dinner party?

**Dawn French**

Well you guys obviously now that we're best friends.

**Ed Gamble**

Thank you.

**Dawn French**

Fatty Saunders always and her husband, the other one. And I don't know, Marie Curie maybe, Charlie Chaplin, you know the usual, the usual.

**Ed Gamble**

The usual gang, yes.

**James Acaster**

I recently opened the drawer of our-, we've got a TV at home.



**Dawn French**

Well done.

**James Acaster**

And it's on a cabinet and I opened one of the top drawers of it and there was a bag of walnuts in there.

**Dawn French**

Why's that?

**James Acaster**

And I thought, 'Oh my girlfriend's gone mad and I'm going to be able to point out.' Instantly I was like, thinking that this is going to be great, I'm going to win this, 'Why's there a bag of walnuts in the TV cabinet?' Thinking that she'd go, 'Oh I'm going mad, you're right.' But she was like, 'Because sometimes you and other people put their glasses just directly on the cabinet and it leaves a ring and if you get the walnut and you rub it over the stain it goes away.' I was like, 'What?' And then she showed me and it absolutely worked. She was like, 'Here's a ring that you put there once, you put there the other day. Get a walnut, rub it over it, it's gone.'

**Dawn French**

How does she know this stuff?

**James Acaster**

Yes I know and I've never-, well I was going to say I've never looked so stupid, I regularly look as stupid as that.

**Dawn French**

Yes, well you're a twat, you are a twat.

**James Acaster**

Yes I'm a twat and I walk into those things all the time.

**Dawn French**

But big respect to her.

**Ed Gamble**

I should also let you know James' girlfriend is Kim Woodburn from How Clean Is Your House.

**James Acaster**

I love her.

**Dawn French**

Even further respect there.



**James Acaster**

Call me Mr. Woodburn.

**Dawn French**

I am scared of her, are you?

**Ed Gamble**

Yes she's scary.

**Dawn French**

Yes. None of our houses could ever be clean enough, they can't. And also the very tight hair. I've got a feeling the face will fall off when the hair comes down, sorry Kim, please don't hurt me. I've got a feeling that's what-, I think the whole face is held up.

**James Acaster**

It's a very messy house.

**Dawn French**

With that scrunchie at the top.

**James Acaster**

If the face falls down.

**Dawn French**

That scrunchie's pulling a lot of weight, yes.

**Ed Gamble**

I suggest using some white vinegar to get my face off the floor.

**Dawn French**

Yes. Or if my face falls off, well maybe I'll just a walnut to wipe it up.

My main course could be controversial. It's a pasty.

**James Acaster**

Okay.

**Dawn French**

I'm made of pasties and if I could have one every single day of my life I would, but they probably would have to be made by the people that I love. So in the magic restaurant, could I have a pasty made by own mother who's no longer with us?

**Ed Gamble**

Absolutely.





**Dawn French**

Okay, she's with Paul O'Grady. So yes it would be my own mother's pasty. A good second is my husband's mother's pasty, but it would never beat my own mother's pasty. A third would be almost anybody else in my family's made a pasty, it goes down, down, down the line to Ginsters.

**Ed Gamble**

Ginsters is bottom isn't it?

**Dawn French**

That's when you-, if you're up against it, on a service station or something like that.

**Ed Gamble**

But they, Ginsters know they're bottom.

**Dawn French**

They do know, but they still-, they still support Argyle and if you go to Argyle you have to buy a Ginsters, or not. Or in Plymouth where I'm partly from, there are really good pasties called Ivor Dewdney's, know to us as Dewdies, but that doesn't sound right does it? You don't want to eat a dewdie.

**Ed Gamble**

No, a dewdie pasty, no.

**Dawn French**

But there's no doodie in it, but Ivor Dewdney's pasties are the ones we prefer to Ginsters, so what you do if you're going to an Argyle match is you get an Ivor Dewdney pasty, you stick it down your front and you smuggle it in. Because Ginsters support, they sponsor Argyle, so really you're supposed to buy theirs, but you don't, so you've got the hot pasty. The amount of chest burns I've had from Ivor Dewdney's pasties, secreted down the front bosoms. I haven't got any back bosoms by the way, but I'm saying front bosoms like that indicates I might have back bosoms. Oh actually I think I might have by now, I think I might have, you can have a look for me later and see.

**James Acaster**

Yes I'll start the card.

**Dawn French**

Anyway when I was younger and smuggling them it was all down the front. And, 'Ooh the heat, the heat, oh got to suffer it, suffer it until half time.' And then out with the pasty.

**Ed Gamble**

Until half time?

**Dawn French**

Yes until half time because it's got to stay warm, so you're keeping it warm.



**Ed Gamble**

You're desperate for someone to get a goal so you can scream?

**Dawn French**

Just for it all to be over, so you can eat your pasty. So an Ivor Dewdney's is really excellent, but my own mother's pasty made with your own mother's love and that's the whole principal folded in. And the history of the pasty, come on? Do you know about them at all? What do you guess?

**James Acaster**

I know that I've definitely been told it and then forgotten it. Is it something to do with the people who were going to work and they wanted all of a meal in one thing, so they invented the pasty? But I can't remember where they were going to work.

**Dawn French**

And where were they going to work do you think?

**James Acaster**

Like the pits.

**Dawn French**

The mines, yes the mines, tin mines.

**Ed Gamble**

Yes correct, correct.

**Dawn French**

In Cornwall and places like that.

**Ed Gamble**

And you're supposed to throw the handle away right?

**Dawn French**

Yes, so the ends are for just holding because your hands are covered in arsenic, which are down the mines. Mine are not covered in arsenic, I'm just eating a pasty from the shop. But their hands were covered in arsenic, so you would eat one side of the pasty, which was your meat and potatoes and then there's a dividing line, other side of the pasty, apple and custard. And can I tell you, you're going down the mine at five o'clock in the morning, you're having your lunch at one o'clock, still warm, how?

**James Acaster**

In the bosoms.

**Dawn French**

Because I think-, well not the bosoms, a lot of these guys didn't have bosoms.



**Ed Gamble**

It's nice to get some history of the miners you know, a lot of them didn't have bosoms.

**Dawn French**

I don't know if this is just legend, but it's something to do with making a vacuum out of the pastry. You make one layer and make the pasty. You make another layer and you suck out the air and plug it. And that is like a thermos pasty, that's the story. Whether it's just a long story and we've all fallen for it I don't know.

**Ed Gamble**

That's amazing that.

**James Acaster**

I like it.

**Dawn French**

Yes, so that's where the pasty, that's the history of it, but there are many wars lost and won about what's contained therein. Because I once went on tour to Australia and lots of Cornish people went to live in Australia because of mines and stuff. And they lived in a-, oh what was the? What is the place called? There's an area of Australia near Adelaide where lots of Cornish people ended up and they're more Cornish than the Cornish could ever be. You know that thing when people have gone away and it's like Irish Americans are so Irish. Anyway they all settled in this one area and I was on a show a bit like the Australian version of The One Show. And I was in Sydney and we were talking about it and they suddenly brought up the pasty thing because I'm from Cornwall. And they-, Munter, that's what the place is called, that sounds wrong doesn't it?

**Ed Gamble**

Yes, it sounds really wrong.

**Dawn French**

And they put me through live to Munter to Jethro Wethern or whatever his name was, who's the third generation of Cornishmen there. His great grandfather came over on the Mayflower or something, whatever. And he said, 'Dawn, we've made you a proper pasty. Obviously you're there in Sydney, we're here, but we're going to cut it open for you and show you the pasty. We've been making it here for generations and we'll send it to you.' I said, 'Ooh lovely, lovely.' And I genuinely was-, I'd been away for a while, I thought, 'Ooh lovely, I'd love a pasty.' And he cut it open and do you know what I saw? Do you know what I saw? The effrontery of it all, carrot. No, thank you, you don't put carrot in a pasty. Turnip, if you want to call it that, fine. Swede, turnip or swede, acceptable, skirt beef, acceptable, onion, acceptable, pepper, salt, potato, acceptable. Even a dollop of clotted cream, acceptable to make the gravy. Carrot, never, get out.

**Ed Gamble**

It wasn't just carrot, right?



**Dawn French**

No, but it was a lot of it, it was staring at me. So then I had to make a decision about-, because I've been well brought up, I've got good manners, I hope. And I thought, 'Fuck off.'

**Ed Gamble**

You thought fuck off?

**Dawn French**

I thought that, I didn't say it. And I went, 'Ooh, that's interesting.' Like that and then he said, 'Well we'll send you this pasty.' And I couldn't help it, I just had to say, not a rude thing. I just said, 'I'm so sorry to say this, but that seems to have carrot in it.' And he said, 'Yes, yes, carrot, always carrot.' I went, 'No, no, no, no, not always carrot, no, never in fact carrot, never.' And he said, 'Yes, this is how grandfather.' And I thought I'm insulting all of his lineage, this is dreadful. But I said, 'No, no there's no.' You can call a pasty anything you like, put anything, put small hamsters in it if you like, but don't call it a traditional Cornish pasty. Call it a hamster pasty, call that a carrot pasty, but don't call it a traditional-, and we had a little fall out on air. And it caused a bit of a-

**James Acaster**

Is this on YouTube? Can I watch it later?

**Dawn French**

I don't-, you might be able to. And what you will watch is me trying to contain myself.

**James Acaster**

Yes, yes.

**Ed Gamble**

So he was convinced that's traditional?

**Dawn French**

Absolutely convinced.

**Ed Gamble**

Is that traditional for the Cornish people of Munter I guess?

**Dawn French**

Something, some abhorrence has happened between Cornwall and they've lost their minds. And someone, or maybe they couldn't get hold of swede or something? I don't know.

**Ed Gamble**

There were carrots on the boat.



**Dawn French**

Maybe and they've all gone mad and they've decided that's where carrots belong, they're wrong, they're completely wrong about it. So anyway in my pasty you will not see carrot, but you will see these other ingredients.

**Ed Gamble**

But you want a traditional Cornish pasty.

**Dawn French**

Yes I want a traditional Cornish pasty made by my mother.

**James Acaster**

So you've got the beef is that?

**Dawn French**

Yes beef skirt.

**James Acaster**

Beef skirt.

**Dawn French**

Yes which weirdly enough anywhere else in this country, beef skirt is a sort of cheap cut. In Cornwall it's the most expensive because we're all making the pasties from it you see. Do you see what the butchers are doing?

**James Acaster**

Yes clever.

**Dawn French**

Ripping us off.

**James Acaster**

They're clever those butchers.

**Dawn French**

Yes, yes.

**Ed Gamble**

I was just about to say the most boring thing I've ever said.

**Dawn French**

No please say it.



**Ed Gamble**

Well it's like what's happened recently with chicken thighs Dawn.

**Dawn French**

Yes that's not the most boring thing you've ever said, I'm just here to tell you, but anyway.

**James Acaster**

And Dawn only met you today.

**Ed Gamble**

I'm not finished yet. It used to be the cheap cut, which is why they used it in a lot of dishes, especially in Indian dishes and stuff. And then everyone worked out it was more delicious, so not it's more expensive than breast.

**Dawn French**

Yes, yes.

**Ed Gamble**

How's that?

**Dawn French**

That's the world we live in. That's what we've got to deal with, that's what young people-, have you brought any children into the world you two?

**Ed Gamble**

No.

**James Acaster**

No.

**Dawn French**

Yes well don't because look what's happening.

**James Acaster**

We won't.

**Ed Gamble**

Yes.

**Dawn French**

How could you ever explain it to them?

**Ed Gamble**

I know. It's my only dream. My dream one day to have a child and feed them on chicken thighs.



**James Acaster**

Yes, say goodbye to that dream.

**Dawn French**

And now you won't be able to afford it.

**Ed Gamble**

Yes I know.

**James Acaster**

Your pasty is just savoury then? It's not half and half with the custard and the apple?

**Dawn French**

No, no can't be doing with that because you don't get enough really. I think their pasties were huge and I have to say the size of the pasty is the measure of the cook. So for instance my mother would make giant battleship pasties that were a challenge. So you would sit there until you finished it, otherwise she had no respect for you.

**James Acaster**

Obviously I'm still thinking about apple and custard.

**Ed Gamble**

Yes.

**Dawn French**

Are you? Yes and why not?

**James Acaster**

I'm a sweet toothed boy.

**Dawn French**

If I was you I'd have two pasties, that would be your main course and that would be your-,

**James Acaster**

Yes and that's what I would do.

**Dawn French**

There's a lot of pastry.

**James Acaster**

And I don't think if I was working in the mines, I don't think I'd even get to the savoury one, I think I'd eat that apple and custard one.



**Dawn French**

Really? Would you straight away?

**James Acaster**

Straight away, first.

**Ed Gamble**

On the way down there.

**James Acaster**

On the way down there.

**Dawn French**

Are you the sort of person on a school trip, you're already eating your wagon wheel before you've even left the school gates?

**James Acaster**

Yes, yes. I've already eaten it and then I'm like, 'Oh no.'

**Dawn French**

I am. Yes and you've started with the wagon wheel and move backwards to the jam sandwich?

**James Acaster**

Yes, yes. And then later when it's official, 'Okay everyone it's lunch time now, all eat your lunch.' And I'm there going, 'Oh man.' And then I'm really regretting.

**Dawn French**

Yes, I know, you idiot, oh what have I done?

**James Acaster**

I'm like, 'Oh no.' Just eating my brown bread sandwich.

**Dawn French**

Now I've got to eat my friend's food as well.

**James Acaster**

Yes.

**Dawn French**

I've got to make people share their lunch with me because I've been a greedy twat.





**Ed Gamble**

Yes I was supposed to have packed lunch at school. Some people had school dinners, some people had packed lunch. And I got sent with packed lunch and I used to eat it in morning break, the whole thing and then sneak into school dinners.

**Dawn French**

How were you able to get the school dinners if you were on packed lunches?

**Ed Gamble**

Just strolled in, it's confidence.

**Dawn French**

And looked like doe eyed at the dinner lady?

**Ed Gamble**

Just bowled in yes.

**Dawn French**

Did you? 'I'm starved at home Mrs Nightingale. I'm starved by my parents.'

**Ed Gamble**

Even though they'd all seen me sat there eating a full sandwich at 11 am.

**Dawn French**

Yes, listen, I respect you for that, completely. But there's something about a pasty, oh it's heavenly and the type of pastry and just as I say the love that it's made with is the answer.

**Ed Gamble**

Where do you stand on the West Cornwall Pasty Company?

**Dawn French**

Yes allowed.

**Ed Gamble**

Yes allowed?

**Dawn French**

Yes tick, definitely.

**Ed Gamble**

Good because I quite like them.

**Dawn French**

And again if you're en route somewhere, I would accept that definitely.



**Ed Gamble**

Yes, yes, yes I like the steak and Stilton from there, but I would never call it a traditional Cornish Pasty.

**Dawn French**

No thank you and I don't think I would ever order it because it's not a traditional Cornish pasty. Have you heard of a Pixie?

**Ed Gamble**

No.

**Dawn French**

Well I mean you've probably heard of a pixie, the small little fairy creature. But they do make something called a pixie, which is just like three mouthfuls, tiny little pasty. I think it's probably for children.

**Ed Gamble**

Yes I wouldn't be-, couldn't be seen dead with that.

**Dawn French**

No I sometimes put one behind each ear for later.

**James Acaster**

Dawn this is a Christmas episode, so of course we'd like to hear your dream Christmas dinner as well before we-, of course.

**Dawn French**

Okay, okay well.

**Ed Gamble**

This is another thing that's followed you around since the puddle days as well.

**Dawn French**

Thank you. And how many-, I mean I don't know if you've ever seen it, but how many Christmas dinners do you think I ate in that episode?

**Ed Gamble**

Well in the episode, is it three in the episode or four?

**Dawn French**

It might be four actually, it might be four yes. How many do you think I ate?

**James Acaster**

So you're doing multiple takes of each.



**Dawn French**

Yes, think about how television's made though.

**Ed Gamble**

Over and over again you would have had to film that.

**Dawn French**

You're going the wrong way.

**James Acaster**

Oh really?

**Dawn French**

Going the wrong way.

**James Acaster**

What you had one?

**Dawn French**

Keep thinking, none.

**Ed Gamble**

What?

**Dawn French**

None. Because if you look at it, it's put in front of me, I go, 'Ooh dear, I don't know if I can manage this.'  
Raises the knife and fork, cut to the end, cut to the carcass.

**Ed Gamble**

Of course, yes.

**Dawn French**

Didn't eat anything, anything. It was such a disappointing day because when I read the script I thought, 'Ooh great, some over eating today of the Christmas variety.' None, none. And even all the Brussels sprouts, I think I might have eaten, actually eaten and swallowed, masticated and pooped out two only, two only. Whereas there were many-, there were many on the table, many going in the mouth, but they all had to go in a bucket. Sorry everybody, I'm ruining it all aren't I for everyone?

**Ed Gamble**

No we love it, behind the scenes.

**Dawn French**

Had to go in a bucket because they would have choked me, yes.



**James Acaster**

Yes that is sad, so Curtis again just like.

**Dawn French**

I know it's sad, it is sad and I'm over it now, but-, and I've forgiven everybody in the production for starving me on that day. But yes that's how telly works, it's all props.

**Ed Gamble**

It could have ruined Christmas dinners for you though? If you'd actually had to eat them as many times as you would have done.

**Dawn French**

That is true, that is true.

**Ed Gamble**

On camera.

**Dawn French**

And actually I'm pretty sure that is what happens to vicars, where they get invited to far too many Christmassy things.

**James Acaster**

So maybe your dream Christmas dinner is that.

**Dawn French**

No dinner.

**James Acaster**

That many Christmas dinners, no maybe it is because you were looking forward to eating that many.

**Dawn French**

Well, no, it's not though, it's not, because what I'm going to suggest to you is not my Christmas Day dinner, if I'm allowed to veer from it.

**James Acaster**

Yes.

**Ed Gamble**

Of course.

**Dawn French**

But is Christmas Eve dinner. Now, this is a bit surprising, and I don't want to disappoint you-, well, I do, I do. It's beans on toast, I'm afraid, with grated cheese, and salad cream.



**James Acaster**

Great.

**Dawn French**

Every Christmas Eve, that's what we have in our family, because we know the next day is going to be a massive blowout, and because there's preparation going on, and because there are people to go and visit. So, every Christmas Eve we just have agreed, over many, many, many years, as a tradition, is beans on toast, and it's just easy. And honestly, I long for it.

**James Acaster**

Yes?

**Dawn French**

I long for it. And that's the beginning of Christmas for me.

**James Acaster**

Where is the salad cream going in this?

**Dawn French**

On the side, please.

**James Acaster**

On the side.

**Dawn French**

Yes, not over the top, don't be silly.

**James Acaster**

I didn't know, there are so many layers here.

**Ed Gamble**

So, you're dipping as you go along, are you?

**Dawn French**

Yes, dipping. I like the dipping because then you can measure out exactly how much in each mouthful. And also, may I say, if you want to be crazy, you could put some Marmite on the toast before.

**Ed Gamble**

Oh, yes.

**Dawn French**

And you also could chop the toast into little squares.



**James Acaster**

Yes.

**Dawn French**

So that, slightly American style, you can abandon your knife, and only use your fork. What do you think about that? Is that lazy?

**James Acaster**

I like it.

**Ed Gamble**

No, it's not lazy, because you're putting in the work beforehand, aren't you?

**Dawn French**

You are.

**James Acaster**

Yes, I like it.

**Dawn French**

You are, you are.

**Ed Gamble**

It just means you know you're getting the perfect-sized bite every time.

**Dawn French**

Agree. I think some people might regard that as wrong.

**Ed Gamble**

I'd actually never heard of that technique before, and I quite like it.

**Dawn French**

Yes.

**James Acaster**

I think it's a great technique.

**Ed Gamble**

Yes.

**Dawn French**

I do. And it also means you can hold the plate under your chin in that slightly, 'I am a dribbler,' way, and you've got the fork, and that's it, and you're just-, you know, it's just-, what's that word?



**James Acaster**

Shoveling?

**Ed Gamble**

Shoveling.

**Dawn French**

Shoveling. With grated cheese, and please, cheddar, always. Nothing posh, we're not going posh there. It's Christmas Eve, we're preparing for the fifteen vegetables the next day.

**Ed Gamble**

Are you just putting, like, grated cheese on the top and leaving it, you're not grilling it, or melting it or anything?

**Dawn French**

Not grilling it, oh, no, no, I think you're imagining that I'm more chef-y than I am.

**Ed Gamble**

I wouldn't count that as chef-y, necessarily.

**Dawn French**

I would. This is why you won't be coming for dinner at my home, because it really isn't good.

**James Acaster**

You're letting the beans melt the cheese.

**Dawn French**

Yes, I am.

**James Acaster**

The heat of the beans.

**Dawn French**

And the beans are very hot, and if you're my husband, you've put curry powder with the beans.

**Ed Gamble**

I respect that.

**James Acaster**

Respect.

**Dawn French**

Do you? Have you heard of it before?



**Ed Gamble**

Well, I'm not-,

**James Acaster**

I like it.

**Ed Gamble**

I don't really like baked beans, so any sort of addition to the baked beans would-,

**Dawn French**

So much, so much.

**James Acaster**

Yesterday we did a live show of this podcast, and we always have a secret ingredient that if the guest chooses it, they get kicked out of the dream restaurant.

**Dawn French**

And they don't know what the ingredient is?

**Ed Gamble**

No, they don't.

**James Acaster**

They don't know what it is.

**Dawn French**

Oh, that's sneaky.

**James Acaster**

Yes. And in the live episodes, we let the audience, kind of, help us decide what it's going to be before the guest comes on. Yesterday, they chose baked beans.

**Dawn French**

Did they?

**James Acaster**

For that guest yesterday, not for you.

**Dawn French**

Okay, alright, okay.

**James Acaster**

Not for you.





**Dawn French**

No. I'm aware it's ordinary, but I also know, a bit like a pasty, you can tell I'm, sort of, comfy, it's all comfy, yummy, yummy. This is the opposite to Jennifer, by the way, I don't know if Jennifer's ever been here yet-

**James Acaster**

No, not yet.

**Dawn French**

But you will find, woo, different. The different class, different, kind of, ooh, she's all about tentacles and oyster-y things, and little special little tiny things. That's who she is.

**James Acaster**

Yes?

**Dawn French**

Baked beans? Probably never. But I'm all about the comfort. So, I'm a boarding school girl, so I think when you've been to boarding school, there are so many mistakes at boarding school with food, but what you do is when you go home for the holidays, you so want to be outside, you don't watch your mum cook, you don't learn much about cooking. So, for me, tip-top food is, like, chocolate shake, baked beans, pasty, slow cooker things in there, could be chicken thighs, could be.

**Ed Gamble**

Yes, not with these prices.

**Dawn French**

You know, but chopped up things that cook for lots of hours and are gooey and filling and comforting.

**James Acaster**

Yes, I love baked beans-

**Dawn French**

Yes, good.

**James Acaster**

So, I'm on your side.

**Dawn French**

Oh, good, I haven't disappointed you. Whereas you, I worry.

**Ed Gamble**

No, you've not disappointed me because I like what they signify, I love this Christmas Eve thing of just having something convenient but-



**Dawn French**

What do you have against them, please?

**Ed Gamble**

I just don't like the taste of them.

**Dawn French**

Too sugary?

**Ed Gamble**

No, I just think they're just a bit bland for me.

**Dawn French**

Meh.

**Ed Gamble**

Yes, just a bit meh.

**Dawn French**

Yes, well, that's where you would add the curry powder in.

**Ed Gamble**

Yes, so, the curry powder I would enjoy.

**James Acaster**

Yes, add that in, you've got the Marmite on the bottom.

**Dawn French**

You're not thinking it through, I don't think.

**Ed Gamble**

Yes, I'm not thinking it through.

**Dawn French**

Not all the way through.

**Ed Gamble**

No, no, no.

**Dawn French**

Not enough to actually get you to open a tin.



**James Acaster**

And because you've got a load of different combos there, I would feel that I would want to try them all. I'd want to have, like, the curry powder baked beans with the cheese, and then I'd want to have standard baked beans with cheese and Marmite, and then try the salad cream one-,

**Dawn French**

Salad cream.

**James Acaster**

Which I'm not sure is up my street, but I'd try it.

**Dawn French**

I know it sounds a bit out there, but it is right, there's something really good about it, it's tangy, it's good. It, sort of, counteracts the blandness, weirdly. It's good.

**Ed Gamble**

I just think everyone has a dish like that at Christmas, where they eat it and they're like, 'We've started. Here we go.'

**Dawn French**

Yes, agree, completely.

**Ed Gamble**

'Christmas is on the way.'

**James Acaster**

Yes.

**Dawn French**

Yes.

**Ed Gamble**

And I think it's nice that you've made that something convenient, so you don't-,

**Dawn French**

It's so easy, and nobody has to think about it.

**Ed Gamble**

You've got so much work to do the next day.

**Dawn French**

And no impressing anyone, because the next day's all about that, isn't it?



**Ed Gamble**

Yes.

**Dawn French**

Oh, the next day. I mainly take baths, I'm known for it.

**James Acaster**

Yes?

**Dawn French**

Yes, my family understand. I go, 'Ooh, I think I need a bath,' and that gives me 40 minutes away, 40 minutes upstairs.

**Ed Gamble**

At what point in the day?

**Dawn French**

Oh, quite early on, it can start quite early, it depends how many-, we normally have the biggest table. I'm not boasting, but we have. I am boasting, we've got a really fabulous big table. So, we are the hosts, and sometimes it'll be 30 people at our house.

**Ed Gamble**

Wow.

**Dawn French**

So, that's a lot to think about.

**Ed Gamble**

Yes.

**Dawn French**

And when they start arriving, I'm already overwhelmed, already overwhelmed by it.

**Ed Gamble**

Straight in the bath, yes.

**Dawn French**

So, I take baths, and everyone understands it just means I'm absenting myself. Obviously not during the main eating.

**Ed Gamble**

No.



**Dawn French**

But soon after.

**James Acaster**

I bet they're jealous that you get to just go and take a bath.

**Dawn French**

Well, they think it's quite anti-social, really, but they've accepted this about me now, because it's never going to change.

**Ed Gamble**

But also, if you're-

**Dawn French**

I also bribe children on Christmas Day.

**James Acaster**

What?

**Dawn French**

£5 each do to the dishes, £5 each.

**James Acaster**

Yes.

**Dawn French**

That's been since they were very young. And in a way it's counter-productive because they're not very good at it, so you end up doing them all over again.

**Ed Gamble**

I was going to say, yes.

**Dawn French**

But they have a first go at it, they get rid of most of the grease.

**Ed Gamble**

And that keeps them busy for a bit.

**Dawn French**

That's what I would say, it keeps them busy, yes, and they feel like, 'Ooh, Auntie Dawn's bribing us again.' But that works well. And something I want to mention to you, just because I've never said it before-



**James Acaster**

Yes?

**Dawn French**

Going back to boarding school, did either of you go to boarding school?

**Ed**

No.

**Dawn French**

No, okay. I went to boarding school because my dad was in the RAF and so, you know, the RAF pay for you to go, so you're suddenly with other posh girls, and you're not a posh girl, and it's all very weird. But anyway, the school I went to was an ex-convent, and there was a refectory, and at the end of the school day you would go into the refectory and the table was laid out for you to have-, you would have bread, and butter, and jam. This is what you had at the end of the day, and milk, you know, or tea. This is before your supper, this is the end of day food. So, when I first went there, very nervous about being there, like, what was I? Twelve or something, and missing my mum and dad like mad. They were missing me too, I have to say, my parents cried their eyes out every time-, every first day of term, and I was told I was allowed to come home any moment I wanted to, so it wasn't, like, a horrible punishment. But anyway, we were going into the refectory, and there were the plates with the butter on, cold butter chopped up, which I didn't understand the rules of this, so I thought this was cheese, and I just ate the butter. And because I was caught doing it by somebody watching me to see how I would deal with it, I had to pretend that that's what I do. So, I had to keep on eating the butter, and I will never forget it.

**James Acaster**

Was that an adult caught you?

**Dawn French**

No, another kid.

**Ed and James**

Another kid.

**Dawn French**

But, you know, a slightly mardy kid who was watching and thinking, 'You've got that wrong, haven't you?' So, I had to be like, 'No, I haven't got it wrong, I've got it very right, actually. You've got it wrong.'

**Ed Gamble**

Because as a kid-,

**Dawn French**

'I eat butter, that's what I do.'



**Ed Gamble**

It's preferable to be the person who eats butter than it is to admit you got something wrong.

**Dawn French**

Absolutely.

**Ed Gamble**

Yes.

**James Acaster**

Big butter is cheese.

**Dawn French**

But then you've got to eat another one, and then another one.

**Ed Gamble**

Yes, every day.

**Dawn French**

Looking them right in the eye.

**Ed Gamble**

Yes.

**Dawn French**

Yes, every day for seven years.

**Ed Gamble**

'My name's Dawn and I eat cold butter.'

**Dawn French**

Lots of it, I love it.

**James Acaster**

Your dream side dish, Dawn?

**Dawn French**

Here I go again just being a great big old tub. I think it's got to be chips, I'm sorry. Now, there are arguments about this in my household. Husband makes big fat ones, which are delightful, and three times cooked, I think because he saw that on a menu once and thought that was-

**Ed Gamble**

Yes, it's the fancy thing to do.



**Dawn French**

'Thrice cooked.'

**Ed Gamble**

Yes.

**Dawn French**

And he claims it's better for you because there's more potato, and you dip, you know, them in the fat more often. But I like the very, very thin-, the little tiny thin ones that are very bad for you. String chips are they called? Something like that.

**James Acaster**

Oh, right, yes, those ones are the really thin ones.

**Dawn French**

Really thin ones, yes, that's what I like. Impossible to make at home. That's why I would have it, because you're going to genie it up for me.

**James Acaster**

I'll do it for you.

**Dawn French**

Yes. So, think about what I'm eating, pasty with chips on the side.

**James Acaster**

Yes, it's great.

**Ed Gamble**

Sounds great.

**Dawn French**

Straight to hospital, frankly.

**James Acaster**

A brilliant day, you've had your beans on toast.

**Dawn French**

Yes, I've had my beans on toast. At Christmas only-,

**James Acaster**

That was Christmas, yes.

**Ed Gamble**

Yes.





**Dawn French**

Don't go having that during the year like it's normal and okay, save it for Christmas.

**James Acaster**

Yes.

**Ed Gamble**

Is there enough gravy in the pasty to dip chips into?

**Dawn French**

No, not really. Unless-, gravy and pasty's quite a moot point as I say, because I have known people to put some clotted cream in there, I've known people to make gravy they pour on. No, I'm-,

**Ed Gamble**

No, that guy in Munter did that.

**Dawn French**

I'm recoiling at that.

**James Acaster**

Yes, I mean, try holding that in your bosom.

**Ed Gamble**

The Ginsters guy's just looking round the stands, you're there with your gravy boat, just pouring it down.

**Dawn French**

I don't think gravy belongs on pasties at all. They should be moist-, sorry to use that word, on the inside, but not really-,

**Ed Gamble**

It shouldn't spill out.

**Dawn French**

That you could dip chips in. You could, if you like, dip chips in ketchup.

Ed and James: Yes.

**Dawn French**

Or, ketchup and mayonnaise mixed together.

**Ed Gamble**

Is that your preferred-,



**Dawn French**

I know it's like Marie Rose sauce, isn't it?

**Ed Gamble**

Yes.

**Dawn French**

Yes, but it's not the actual Marie Rose, it's the builder's version. I'm all for that.

**Ed Gamble**

Yes.

**Dawn French**

Yes.

**Ed Gamble**

So, would you like that with your dream meal, some ketchup and mayo?

**Dawn French**

Oh, yes, I would if I'm allowed that.

**Ed Gamble**

Yes, of course.

**Dawn French**

Yes, that would come with the stringy chips.

**Ed and James**

Yes.

**Dawn French**

Thank you.

**James Acaster**

Salt and vinegar?

**Dawn French**

Now, salt I'm not a huge fan of. I've got a thing about salt, why is it always salt and pepper, why? Why?

**James Acaster**

Yes, good point.



**Dawn French**

Why is it always that?

**James Acaster**

Good point.

**Dawn French**

And, you know, people will tell you, 'Ooh, the salt enhances the flavour,' no, it doesn't, it tastes like salt, doesn't it?

**Ed Gamble**

It brings out the flavour of the other stuff.

**Dawn French**

How does it?

**Ed Gamble**

I don't know, it's science magic.

**James Acaster**

Apparently what salt does, and I only know this from watching that Salt Fat Acid Heat show, is salt just emphasises the flavour that's already there.

**Ed Gamble**

Yes.

**James Acaster**

That's what that says, that show says it.

**Ed Gamble**

But you can use too much salt, I guess.

**James Acaster**

Just believe that show.

**Dawn French**

I am aghast when I see, like, grown-up chefs putting handfuls of salt in stuff.

**Ed Gamble**

It's mad, isn't it?



**Dawn French**

I don't like it. A) I'm not sure it's good for you, and look at me, I eat really good for you food, as you can tell. And I would put a tiny bit of salt in what's inside that pasty, I would enjoy that tiny, tiny amount. But if I'm tasting salt over the actual flavour of the food-

**Ed Gamble**

Yes, that's-

**Dawn French**

And most food has its own proper flavour. I don't think we're used to what the flavours are anymore without the salt.

**Ed Gamble**

Interesting, yes. I think it's mad when you see what restaurant chefs put in.

**Dawn French**

Yes.

**Ed Gamble**

The amount of salt and butter they put into stuff.

**Dawn French**

Salt, and cream.

**Ed Gamble**

And cream, yes.

**Dawn French**

Yes, it is shocking.

**James Acaster**

And sugar for desserts.

**Ed Gamble**

Yes.

**James Acaster**

When you see them making the dessert and they're just free-pouring the bucket of sugar into it, 'Oh, okay.'

**Ed Gamble**

But you've reacted to it in a way of saying, 'Well, that's too much salt, I don't do that at home and my food's fine.' Whereas what I've done is now when I cook at home I put as much salt in as a restaurant chef.



**Dawn French**

Oh, no, please stop that immediately.

**Ed Gamble**

I love it.

**Dawn French**

Do you think you're a salt addict?

**Ed Gamble**

Yes, definitely a salt addict.

**Dawn French**

Are you?

**Ed Gamble**

For sure.

**Dawn French**

Okay, yes.

**Ed Gamble**

Yes, I have a big, like, tub of flaky salt, Maldon Sea Salt, in one of those sealed things with a catch on it, and I pop that open-,

**Dawn French**

Do you?

**Ed Gamble**

I love listening, 'pop', 'Here we go.'

**Dawn French**

With every meal?

**Ed Gamble**

Yes.

**Dawn French**

Before tasting?

**Ed Gamble**

Yes. Well, certainly, like, if I'm having eggs in the morning, that's-,



**Dawn French**

Eggs, I sort of get it on eggs. I sort of get that.

**Ed Gamble**

It's a blizzard, it's an absolute blizzard.

**Dawn French**

But even so, very sparingly. Where are you with pepper?

**Ed Gamble**

I like pepper, yes, got a big black pepper grinder, love a bit of that.

**Dawn French**

But don't you think it's a bit boring, like, 'Ooh, I've made my meal, salt, salt, salt, pepper, pepper, pepper'?

**Ed Gamble**

I find pepper-,

**Dawn French**

Nobody's thinking of other things. Why don't they go, 'Ooh, liquorice'? You know, why don't they go, 'Ooh, chocolate'? Instead, why are they always those two? Always. I think it's a hangover from preserving stuff with salt or something, and getting used to that taste.

**James Acaster**

Well, I was given-, I've been given two things. I think I've probably mentioned this on the podcast before, but my mum got me, one of many Christmas presents one year, it wasn't my main Christmas present, but it was a salt, garlic and chilli grinder, so then I just used that on-, it was the best thing ever. And now, just using salt is very boring to me, I would just want to use that.

**Dawn French**

Yes, you've moved on from salt.

**James Acaster**

So good.

**Dawn French**

Yes.

**James Acaster**

And someone once sent me, from Trader Joe's in America, it was, like, a chilli and lime salt, and I started using that on a lot of especially-,



**Dawn French**

That sounds quite exotic.

**James Acaster**

I'd just put it on avocados-

**Dawn French**

Yes, gosh.

**James Acaster**

With a-, and, like, I'd cut an avocado in half and just put that salt on it.

**Dawn French**

Is that lovely?

**James Acaster**

So good.

**Dawn French**

Right, I'm doing that then. What do you buy? Chilli, lime and what?

**James Acaster**

Salt. It was a chilli and lime salt from-

**Dawn French**

In one thing?

**James Acaster**

Yes, in one thing. They sent it to me from a place called Trader Joe's, so the supermarket in America.

**Dawn French**

Would they send it to me from Trader Joe's?

**James Acaster**

Maybe.

**Dawn French**

Where could I buy it?

**James Acaster**

I bet it's somewhere online. But also, if you just say, 'My name is Dawn French, I would like that sent to my house, please,' they'll probably do it.



**Dawn French**

You'd be surprised. All doors closed. But salt honestly I think is the enemy, sorry.

**Ed Gamble**

No, that's okay.

**Dawn French**

So, you'll be coming to me when you're 66 going, 'Dawn, why didn't I listen to you? Look at me, look at my flaking skin.'

**Ed Gamble**

All puckered up.

**Dawn French**

'I've got no teeth, all my ears have gone in with my tiny, tiny ears. They've just crept back inside my head.'

**Ed Gamble**

'I didn't have any to start with and now they've all crept in my head because of the salt.'

**Dawn French**

Yes, all because of the salt. 'I've got no liver left.'

**Ed Gamble**

Yes.

**Dawn French**

'My legs have fallen off. All because of salt.'

**James Acaster**

I'll tell you what, I hope that doesn't happen to Ed.

**Dawn French**

Do you? That's nice. What a friend.

**James Acaster**

He will feel very unhappy.

**Ed Gamble**

Yes.

**Dawn French**

He would, he would. If he had no body?





**Ed and James**

Yes.

**Dawn French**

Yes.

**James Acaster**

Sometimes Bonito takes photos of us, and weirdly makes Ed look nothing like he looks in real life.

**Ed Gamble**

It's a skill.

**Dawn French**

What happens to you in the photos?

**Ed Gamble**

I just look awful.

**James Acaster**

And Ed will see it and be like, 'Oh, God, oh, Jesus Christ.' So, if Ed actually did look like that in real life, I-,

**Dawn French**

Are you vain, Ed, or not?

**Ed Gamble**

Yes, probably.

**Dawn French**

Are you?

**Ed Gamble**

Yes.

**Dawn French**

And you're handsome, you're both handsome, so that's a-,

**Ed Gamble**

I'm vain when I look at the photos Bonito has taken because he makes me look-,

**Dawn French**

What do you do? What does he do that's so wrong?



**Ed Gamble**

I don't know.

**James Acaster**

It's an amazing skill.

**Dawn French**

You see, you haven't got-, my husband used to be redhead when he was young, so he's now very white, and so he's got quite white eyebrows, white hair, does double up for Father Christmas occasionally, but hasn't got the actual real beard, but puts it on at Christmas, you know, for kids at his work. But anyway-, he, oh, I've told people that now. Oh, the kids at work will know that it's him and it's not-, it's the CEO, it's not actually Father Christmas. Anyway, when anyone takes a picture of him, he disappears. It's just like a wisp, it's like Casper, he's gone. Because of the whiteness, he's just not even in the picture.

**Ed Gamble**

I'd love that if that happened to me in a picture. Yes.

**Dawn French**

But that's not what happens to you. What happens to you in the picture?

**Ed Gamble**

I just look like a different guy.

**James Acaster**

Yes, he just suddenly-,

**Ed Gamble**

A guy with what going on though?

**James Acaster**

All his proportions just go all over the place.

**Dawn French**

What happens to your face?

**James Acaster**

I don't like it either, but I've just accepted that's just how Ben takes my photo, whatever, whereas Ed is like, 'What the fuck? I'm the sexiest man alive, what the fuck is this?'

**Ed Gamble**

I never said that.



**James Acaster**

Yes he does. Said, 'Well, I'm sexy.'

**Ed Gamble**

We'll take a photo after this episode to promote the episode-,

**Dawn French**

Yes, and then we'll look at it.

**Ed Gamble**

And then we'll look at it and-,

**Dawn French**

Show me your photo face, I'll describe it to the listener.

**Ed Gamble**

I do a silly face for the podcast.

**Dawn French**

Let's see.

**James Acaster**

It's a big smiley face.

**Dawn French**

Oh.

**Ed Gamble**

I do this.

**Dawn French**

Oh, no.

**James Acaster**

Yes, I don't like that.

**Dawn French**

He's doing a, sort of, gleeful-,

**Ed Gamble**

I don't really have a photo face, and I always panic when people take photos of me.

**James Acaster**

Yes.



**Dawn French**

Well, I'll tell you my rule of thumb with this, which hasn't been successful.

**James Acaster**

Okay.

**Dawn French**

This is another twatiness of me. Is that when I was very small, my grandmother told me that I was at my very best when I smiled with every single tooth in my head, like that. So, I've always done it, I still do it now, it's bad, it's very bad. I haven't even got great teeth because I can't be bothered to do-

**James Acaster**

I think you have though.

**Dawn French**

I've got quite nice teeth, but they're quite-

**James Acaster**

I associate-, because you do do that-, because now you've said that-,

**Dawn French**

I do.

**James Acaster**

So, obviously I've seen loads of photos of you my whole life-,

**Dawn French**

Yes, but grimacing.

**James Acaster**

No, I think it's a very nice smile, Dawn, and I have always thought-, I would associate you with-, if someone said to me, 'What are Dawn French's teeth like?' I'd say, 'Immaculate.'

**Ed Gamble**

Follow-up, 'Why are you asking that question?'

**James Acaster**

Yes, 'Why are you asking it? But-,'

**Dawn French**

Do you want to know something else that's-, I mean, I don't know if we're going off-piste here, something about my teeth at the moment, quite alarming.



**James Acaster**

Yes.

**Dawn French**

COVID came along, didn't it?

**Ed Gamble**

Yes.

**Dawn French**

My husband, frontline worker, helps people who are in a pickle with drugs and alcohol and all that sort of stuff, I'll leave his card here. Because he was given two choices, either live at work with lots of people who were not distancing and whatever because they were all in a bit of a pickle, or go home, do not touch your wife, and sleep in another room. So, he chose the latter, right? So, we had this very weird few months where he was in a different room at night, and I did not like this at all. So, I found my comforts in returning to childhood by, every night, and this is-, I'm talking about after brushing my teeth, afterwards, right?

**James Acaster**

Yes.

**Dawn French**

Five chocolate éclair toffees. Always five. Why? Don't know, can't answer you. Bit weird. Lined up there, and I'd think, 'Come on, French, tonight is the night you only have four. Come on, let's go four, let's go three, let's go two, let's go one, let's go none.'

**Ed Gamble**

Let's wean yourself off the-,

**Dawn French**

How long ago was COVID? Two years, three years?

**Ed Gamble**

Well, 2020 was the big kick-off, wasn't it?

**James Acaster**

Yes, I think it was.

**Dawn French**

2020, so we're now in 2023, so let's say three whole years. How many days is that? I don't know, 365 days, three years, 900-,

**Ed Gamble**

It's a lot, like, over 1,000 days.



**Dawn French**

Million, million days. Five toffees every single day since then.

**James Acaster**

You still doing it?

**Dawn French**

Still doing it, can't stop. He's back in the bed and I'm still doing it. And he has to wait. I say, 'Just wait, I'm on toffee number three, I'll be with you shortly.' And now my teeth have gone smaller.

**James Acaster**

I don't want to know what he's waiting for.

**Ed Gamble**

Your teeth have gone smaller?

**Dawn French**

My teeth have been smallened by the sugar in the toffee, everything's gone wrong with the teeth because I'm favouring the sugar over the husband. And I'm thinking, 'Sugar or husband? Sugar or husband? Both.'

**Ed Gamble**

Did he know you were doing that before he could come back?

**Dawn French**

Yes, I owned up to it. I said, 'Look, this is what's going on. You're not there, and so I'm turning to sugar for my nutrients. For my comfort.' And he went, 'Okay. Well, we don't know how long COVID's going to last, but okay.' And then when he was back in I tried to sneakily do it. I don't know if you've ever tried to open a chocolate éclair sneakily. So, then what I started to do-,

**Ed Gamble**

It's a noisy packet, isn't it?

**Dawn French**

It is noisy. I actually unwrapped them earlier in the evening and put them in the drawers, and I would just move the drawer and put them in, put them in the other way, like this, pretend to be scrolling or something like that. And there is the chewy noise, isn't there? It's all wet.

**Ed Gamble**

You can't answer questions if you've got a chocolate éclair in there, because-,

**Dawn French**

You can't answer questions. Although I don't get asked a lot of questions at bedtime. Do you?



**James Acaster**

I do.

**Dawn French**

Like, 'Could you leave now?'

**Ed Gamble**

Yes.

**Dawn French**

Things like that.

**Ed Gamble**

Yes.

**Dawn French**

I apparently, I can't believe this, because it's not ladylike, do do a bit of snoring, apparently.

**Ed Gamble**

Yes.

**Dawn French**

Well, everyone does, he does. But when I'm doing my snoring, this is the noise that I hear, this is how I know I'm doing snoring, because he does this noise, 'Tss, tss, tss, tss.' Do you think that's alright?

**Ed Gamble**

Like you're a cat?

**Dawn French**

Pretending to be a snake in the night.

**James Acaster**

Yes, it's like you're a cat.

**Dawn French**

Yes. Because that, apparently, brings me out of the sleep enough to stop the snoring. And I get very annoyed, I go, '(Garbled sounds),' up out of the REM sleep, and it's going, 'What the fuck was that? Oh.' And back again. And apparently then I'm snore-free for another hour.

**James Acaster**

Wow.

**Ed Gamble**

So, he's doing what he considers to be a considerate thing.



**Dawn French**

He is.

**Ed Gamble**

Because he doesn't wake you up fully, but it stops you snoring.

**Dawn French**

Doesn't fully wake me up. My answer is, 'Go to the other room. If you hear that, please leave.'

**Ed Gamble**

Yes.

**James Acaster**

'You loved that other room during COVID, why don't you go in there?'

**Ed Gamble**

Have you considered half having a toffee and sticking your teeth together? That might stop the snoring.

**Dawn French**

Is it the teeth that make the snoring? Isn't it your uvula? Sorry to use that word.

**Ed Gamble**

That's alright.

**Dawn French**

At the back of your throat. Is it called that?

**James Acaster**

Your septum?

**Dawn French**

No, septum's here.

**James Acaster**

Yes, it's not your septum.

**Ed Gamble**

No, septum's that bit in the middle.

**Dawn French**

I think it might be that tonsil-y uvula thing that's hanging down at the back. Or is that just girls, or is that just me? Wouldn't that be awful if I find out that I was the only person who had tonsils in the world, and nobody else had them? And I had some kind of prehistoric hanging skin thing in the back of my throat, and everybody else went, 'Well, what do you mean? You call it what? Tonsils?'





**Ed Gamble**

That would be so bad if you found that out.

**Dawn French**

'You've got hang-y flesh in your throat? How do you eat? It's a flap in your throat.' Anyway.

**James Acaster**

Your dream drink, Dawn French?

**Dawn French**

Well, I'm going to plug something now, because it actually genuinely is my dream drink.

**James Acaster**

Yes.

**Dawn French**

This is cider made by my best friend's husband. It's called Fowey Valley Cider, and it is just the best. These apples are grown in the Fowey Valley, down in Cornwall where I live. And this cider, you know, there's cider, isn't there, and then there's cider? There's rough cider, you know, the cider you steal from people, the cider you use to try and numb the regret, cider you use to try and find that ugly boy attractive, that sort of cider. So, cider to try and get over everything. It's not that, it's not rough, it's beautiful and light, and oh, it's heavenly. Castledore Fowey Valley Cider, that's what I would have, it just goes with everything, it's absolutely divine.

**Ed Gamble**

Is it a sweet cider, or a dry cider?

**Dawn French**

Yes, it's not sweet and it's not dry, whatever that is. Swy?

**Ed Gamble**

Swy.

**James Acaster**

Yes.

**Dawn French**

Or dreet.

**Ed Gamble**

Dreet?

**Dawn French**

Yes.



**Ed Gamble**

Swy-dreet.

**Dawn French**

It's somewhere in there.

**Ed Gamble**

Yes.

**Dawn French**

He probably will argue this with me, he probably would call it one or the other, but I'm not so fond of the sweet, and I'm not so fond of the dry, but I love this, so it's something in the middle.

**Ed Gamble**

Lovely.

**James Acaster**

Yes, I'm not, like, really a cider guy, but-

**Dawn French**

Aren't you?

**James Acaster**

I've found one type of cider that I just think is the best drink.

**Dawn French**

Have you? What is that? Are you allowed to say it?

**James Acaster**

Yes, Henleys vintage cider, which is this cider that's kept in whiskey barrels, so the flavour of that gets into the cider.

**Dawn French**

Oh, hello.

**James Acaster**

It's, like, it's own drink.

**Dawn French**

Are you loving it?

**James Acaster**



Yes, and that was a really nice-, on our 100th episode we got to do our own menus, and I couldn't remember where I'd had this cider before-, uh-oh, Healeys. Healeys, not Henleys. As soon as Ben looked at me, I was like-,

**Dawn French**

Yes, it was like, 'I've got it wrong.'

**James Acaster**

'It was the other option in my head.' I had Henleys or Healeys in my head.

**Dawn French**

Yes.

**James Acaster**

But that was a thing in our 100th episode, I couldn't remember where it was from or what it was called, but I remembered I had this cider once, and then the listeners helped track it down.

**Dawn French**

And so are you drinking it regularly now?

**James Acaster**

No, but I did get sent some, they very kindly sent me some, and-,

**Ed Gamble**

So, he's run out, and that's why he's mentioning it again.

**James Acaster**

And now I'm mentioning it again.

**Dawn French**

Okay. Well, I can help you with the Fowey Valley, I cannot help you with the Healeys or Henleys.

**Ed Gamble**

Sounds delicious.

**James Acaster**

Well, we could do a little exchange, maybe.

**Dawn French**

What is yours, out of interest, Ed, sorry?

**Ed Gamble**

I don't really drink cider.

**Dawn French**



No. Are you an alcohol drinker?

**Ed Gamble**

Yes, I'm an alcohol drinker, very much. But cider is tricky-, sorry, I'm going to be boring now, James. Because I'm type 1 diabetic, so-,

**Dawn French**

Oh, right, yes.

**James Acaster**

It's not boring to me, I support this.

**Ed Gamble**

I don't tend to have anything-, cider can be so sweet that it would just ruin a night out for me if I started drinking cider.

**Dawn French**

Pretty much all alcohol's got lots of sugar, hasn't it?

**Ed Gamble**

Not as much as cider.

**Dawn French**

So, what is your tippie?

**Ed Gamble**

Red wine is my normal go-to. I like, you know, Martinis and things like that. They're the things I like the most, but also tend to be on the lower sugar.

**James Acaster**

When you were saying about the eclairs, it unlocked a memory of you.

**Dawn French**

Did it?

**James Acaster**

But I didn't know-, and I was like-, so, I was imagining you eating the eclairs-,

**Ed Gamble**

He's got a very visual mind.

**Dawn French**

I've suddenly become afraid.

**James Acaster**



Well, you were doing some mimes as well.

**Dawn French**

Yes, I was, sorry.

**James Acaster**

I was like, 'What's that?' So, I'm now trying to remember what it was. I think it was Jackanory, I think you were doing a Jackanory story about someone working in, like, a chocolate shop or something, and in front of the customer, eating the chocolates and looking at them, and miming that. Is that a thing you did?

**Dawn French**

That sounds right, but I can't think what the-, I definitely did Jackanory.

**James Acaster**

Yes.

**Dawn French**

I don't know what the story was, but I would have definitely-, I'm always eating chocolate.

**James Acaster**

I remember you doing a mime of a look at the customer dead in the eye, and then they pick a chocolate out, and then eat the-, and the mime was so good-,

**Dawn French**

Well, I'm experienced.

**James Acaster**

That as a little chocolate-loving boy, I was like, 'Oh, that chocolate looks good,' even though it was not there.

**Dawn French**

Yes.

**James Acaster**

Benito? Daisy Pig Keeps Shop.

**Dawn French**

Thank you.

**James Acaster**

There you go. And they eat the chocolate in front of the customers.

**Dawn French**



That's right, absolutely right.

**Ed Gamble**

There you go, it's just unlocked that memory for you.

**James Acaster**

Just unlocked it.

**Dawn French**

Can you imagine being me, and somewhere in your 30s, I think, someone says, 'Would you like to get paid for eating Chocolate Oranges?'

**James Acaster**

Oh, yes.

**Dawn French**

Imagine that.

**James Acaster**

Of course, we haven't even discussed that yet.

**Dawn French**

Well, they didn't even-, they missed a trick there, because I would have paid them.

**Ed and James**

Yes.

**Ed Gamble**

And that's, like, my Christmas signifier, is the Terry's Chocolate Orange.

**Dawn French**

Is it?

**Ed Gamble**

Yes.

**Dawn French**

In the bottom of your stocking?

**James Acaster**

Of course.

**Ed Gamble**



Every year, bottom of the stocking. Love it, love it.

**Dawn French**

They've recently come up with a Terry's Chocolate Mint. No.

**Ed and James**

No.

**Dawn French**

Stop it.

**James Acaster**

Stay in your lane.

**Ed Gamble**

Yes.

**Dawn French**

Yes, stay in your lane, exactly.

**Ed Gamble**

Stay in your lane, it's the shape of a fucking orange, what are you doing?

**Dawn French**

Yes, exactly.

**James Acaster**

Yes, no-one wants that.

**Dawn French**

But imagine that, imagine that job. I was bereft when it finished.

**Ed Gamble**

Yes.

**James Acaster**

I bet you were.

**Dawn French**

Yes, bereft.

**James Acaster**

That was a sweet gig.

**Dawn French**



But you can't rely on advertising campaigns, can you? You can't count on them.

**James Acaster**

No.

**Dawn French**

They come, they go, they're fickle as hell. But at the moment I'm involved with M&S. I'm a little fairy that flies all over the M&S food and I go, 'Ooh, look at this, maples covered sugar, turkey crown with-, ' I do that every-, I've done it for the last three Christmases.

**Ed Gamble**

That's pretty good, isn't it?

**Dawn French**

And I have different-, first year it was with Percy Pig, who was Tom Holland. Second year was with Duckie the dog chew toy, which was Jennifer Saunders. This year I'm not even allowed to tell you who it is it's so exciting, I've signed an NDA.

**Ed Gamble**

Big news.

**James Acaster**

Wow.

**Dawn French**

How excited are you now?

**James Acaster**

Very excited, actually.

**Ed Gamble**

Very excited.

**James Acaster**

I'm guessing it must be either Mark or Spencer themselves.

**Dawn French**

It is a couple of people, I'll just leave that with you.

**Ed and James**

Ooh.

**Ed Gamble**





If Marks & Spencer wanted to be truly Christmassy this year, they'd have you as the fairy flying over some baked beans and salad cream.

**Dawn French**

They would, if they were true to my Christmas. But they're all about Christmas day, really, aren't they? And honestly, I can't-, again, this is a job where people come and she said, 'Do you mind if we pay you to come and pretend to be a fairy, and look at all this lovely food? And then we'll send you some of it at Christmas.' 'Yes. Just give me no minutes at all to think about this. Yes.'

**James Acaster**

The dream dessert. We're, kind of, already there, we're talking about all these wonderful sweets.

**Dawn French**

Yes. Well, weirdly enough, what I think I would like-, I know it's slightly poncy at the moment and people are doing this, but I do this in my house all the time, and I would like it in a slightly posher version. I think it's called-, correct me, assiette of desserts. Have I got that right? I think it means when you've got lots of little bite-sized versions-,

**James Acaster**

Yes.

**Ed Gamble**

Nice.

**Dawn French**

And a little tiramisu, a little coconutty thing, a little chocolatey thing. Lots of different-, I like that, because I like to have coffee at the same time, black coffee, please.

**Ed Gamble**

Nice.

**James Acaster**

Great.

**Dawn French**

At the same time, directly before going to bed. Which I can do, because I've got the body mass to absorb it. And also, my mother used to bring us coffee straight before bed.

**Ed Gamble**

I can drink coffee before bed as well.

**Dawn French**

Can you?

**Ed Gamble**



Absolutely.

**Dawn French**

Good, respect back up again.

**Ed Gamble**

Yes, thank you.

**Dawn French**

The respect I lost with the baked beans is back up again.

**James Acaster**

I can't, I can't do it.

**Dawn French**

Oh, God, now you've-, it's a roller-coaster here for respect lost and winning. But can you imagine a little board, or a plate, or whatever fancy thing you want to bring, but with the little bite-sized version of about five or six different puddings? Is it called an assiette?

**James Acaster**

It is, apparently.

**Dawn French**

Ah, there you go, I've seen that in restaurants.

**Ed Gamble**

So, take us through what the little bites would be.

**Dawn French**

Well, I would always have a tiramisu, I might have a little lemon meringue-y thing. I'd have something chocolatey, not poncy chocolate, but some kind of little chocolate mousse-y something or other. Something pistachio-y or cannoli, kind of, thing.

**Ed Gamble**

Oh, nice.

**James Acaster**

Oh, a pistachio cannoli, yes.

**Dawn French**

You know, something like that, that would be enough, that's enough. That's enough.

**Ed Gamble**



That's great.

**James Acaster**

Yes.

**Dawn French**

Let's not over-eat now. And we're full of pasty.

**Ed Gamble**

Yes, exactly, it's too late now.

**Dawn French**

And cheese bread.

**James Acaster**

Do you want a single segment of Terry's Chocolate Orange?

**Dawn French**

Oh, go on then. Go on, put it there. You can make very nice cakes out of those, by the way.

**James Acaster**

Yes.

**Dawn French**

Yes, they're very good for melting. Fondue, that's another thing. I have won friends amongst my daughter's friends by melting chocolate and putting-, you fool children by making chocolate fondue, but you put fruit on the side, so they're somehow eating fruit also, and marshmallows, also and biscuits.

**Ed Gamble**

Yes.

**Dawn French**

But they're dipping, they're dipping.

**Ed Gamble**

They're dipping the fruit when they've run out of the marshmallows and biscuits.

**Dawn French**

They are. And you win the friends over with that because they ask if they can come again, they say to their parents, 'She makes a brilliant pudding.' When the kids have gone to bed, you re-heat it, but you add brandy.

**Ed Gamble**



Oh, nice.

**Dawn French**

Hello.

**James Acaster**

Oh, yes.

**Ed Gamble**

Hello.

**Dawn French**

And get rid of the fruit.

**James Acaster**

I'm going to read your menu back to you now, Dawn, see how you feel about it.

**Dawn French**

Okay.

**James Acaster**

You would like sparkling water.

**Dawn French**

Yes please.

**James Acaster**

You would like Satan's cheese bread as your bread course.

**Dawn French**

Yes.

**James Acaster**

Starter, you want thinly sliced ripe pear with magic ham and balsamic drizzlette. Some crushed walnuts in the middle of the table.

**Dawn French**

Correct.

**James Acaster**

Main course, beef skirt pasty made by your mother. Christmas meal, you would like Christmas Eve beans on toast with Marmite, grated cheese and salad cream. Side dish, the string fries with ketchup and mayo mixed together.

**Dawn French**



Yes.

**James Acaster**

Drink, Castledore Fowey Valley-

**Dawn French**

'Foy', please say 'Foy'.

**James Acaster**

Fowey Valley Cider.

**Dawn French**

Yes.

**James Acaster**

Dessert, assiette of desserts, tiramisu, lemon meringue, chocolate mousse, pistachio cannoli, Terry's Chocolate Orange, and a black coffee.

**Dawn French**

Correct. All of that is good.

**James Acaster**

That sounds great.

**Ed Gamble**

That is a fantastic menu.

**Dawn French**

Thank you.

**James Acaster**

Yes, it sounds.

**Ed Gamble**

Very, very good.

**Dawn French**

But I feel very full, don't you?

**Ed Gamble**

Yes, but don't forget-

**Dawn French**



I'd need a sleep now.

**Ed Gamble**

You'll be going to bed after that meal and eating five chocolate eclairs.

**Dawn French**

Do you know, I would directly after that, and I will tonight. I bet you'll think of me tonight.

**James Acaster**

I will.

**Dawn French**

When you're going to sleep. And when you're brushing your teeth you'll think, 'After this she has all five toffees?'

**James Acaster**

Yes. Also, like, yes, your husband is trained to help people combat addiction, so surely he should be able to help you stop this toffee thing.

**Dawn French**

I know. I'm a lost cause, completely a lost cause.

**Ed Gamble**

He was at work for the whole pandemic, little did he know in his own house-,

**Dawn French**

I know, it was all going on. I'm a filthy, filthy, junkie.

**James Acaster**

Dawn's fallen off the wagon.

**Ed Gamble**

Thank you so much, Dawn.

**Dawn French**

Thank you for having me.

**James Acaster**

Thank you, Dawn.

**Ed Gamble**

Well, there we are, James. I mean, a special one for us, I think.

**James Acaster**



There you go, we can tick that off the-, that's an achievement, Ed, we did it.

**Ed Gamble**

Absolutely. Speaking to Dawn French about her dream menu, and what a dream menu it was.

**James Acaster**

She spoke to us.

**Ed Gamble**

She spoke to us, she spoke back to us.

**James Acaster**

She looked at us.

**Ed Gamble**

Yes, she looked at us. We're hanging out, we're best mates now. Very exciting. And lovely menu, and lovely little Christmas chat as well, James, because it's Christmas.

**James Acaster**

Yes, and also Dawn did not pick Marmite cake, so we didn't have to kick her out the dream restaurant.

**Ed Gamble**

We didn't have to kick her out the dream restaurant.

**James Acaster**

So we're very happy about that.

**Ed Gamble**

Do not forget that The Twat Files by Dawn French is out now, go and buy it. It's Christmas just round the corner if you're listening to this when it comes out. It will be the perfect Christmas gift, buy The Twat Files by Dawn French, published by Michael Joseph. And hey, if you're in a book-buying mood, why don't you get Glutton: The Multi-Course Life of a Very Greedy Boy by Ed Gamble, me?

**James Acaster**

A life of mistakes, no regrets.

**Ed Gamble**

There are a lot of mistakes in it, actually.

**James Acaster**

Yes.

**Ed Gamble**



But no regrets.

**James Acaster**

But no regrets at all.

**Ed Gamble**

Yes.

**James Acaster**

Well, Ed, I hope you have a good festive season. Or, hold on, maybe I'll be seeing you again soon for another Christmas special.

**Ed Gamble**

Yes, maybe next week even, James. Thank you very much for listening to the Off Menu podcast, happy holidays.

**James Acaster**

Happy holidays, motherfuckers.

**Ed Gamble**

Oh, dear.