

Shmanners 182: Charcuterie and Cheese Boards (Part Two)

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[theme music plays]

Travis: Hello, internet! I'm your husband host, Travis McElroy.

Teresa: And I'm your wife host, Teresa McElroy.

Travis: And you're listening to Shmanners!

Teresa: It's extraordinary etiquette...

Travis: ... for ordinary occasions. Hello, my dove.

Teresa: Hello, dear.

Travis: How are you?

Teresa: Oh, man. I'm glad to be back.

Travis: Glad to be back in the old stud'.

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: Back in the stud', talkin' about meat.

Teresa: Talkin' about meat.

Travis: Listen, we should say – once again, content warning, right here at the top. We're gonna be talking about the production and consumption of meat. Teresa and I are both meat eaters, so we will be discussing it in, mostly likely, a positive way. Now, if you haven't listened to the last episode, part one of our charcuterie and cheese board... trifecta? Sure.

Teresa: Sure.

Travis: We're doing two episodes on charcuterie, because, surprisingly, there's a lot to talk about.

Teresa: So much!

Travis: And then, part three is going to be cheese boards. So, last week, let's see... we talked about the origin of it, we talked about the different types of it... uh, a lot about like, everything you need to know right up until kind of the arrangement and consumption stuff.

Teresa: Right. So all of the background biz. The history and such. Um, and then, this week, we are going to talk about... but, how do I do it? [laughs] Right?

Travis: Right. But how does one charcute?

Teresa: How does it work?

Travis: Yes. Listen – I've seen other charcute. I'm aware that some people charcuted. I want to charcute. I do. Both, I want to be the charcuter, and the charcutee.

Teresa: Well, I don't know how you do the smoking. I think you have to go to school for that.

Travis: Oh, no, sorry. Let me rephrase.

Teresa: Okay, okay.

Travis: I want to arrange the charcuterie, and I want to consume the charcuterie.

Teresa: Perhaps purchase it.

Travis: Perhaps! I would like people to look at my charcuterie and be like, "Oh, dang. I've never seen charcute like that before."

Teresa: I see.

Travis: But I would also like to consume charcuterie in a way that someone might say, "I've never seen someone charcute so well."

Teresa: Okay. Yes. All of those things, we will address.

Travis: Yes. Whatever you can do to make me my charcutest, that would just be incredible.

Teresa: [laughs] Yes.

Travis: `Cause now I'm charcutie, right? But I want to be charcuter.

Teresa: [laughing] Uh-huh.

Travis: And maybe the charcuterest.

Teresa: Yes.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: [laughs] Oh boy. I can't believe you got through all that.

Travis: Oh no, me neither. I couldn't do it again if I tried.

Teresa: [laughs] Okay. One of the things that we talked about last week is the... when one creates a charcuterie board, strictly speaking, it is only meat.

Travis: Correct.

Teresa: Now, most of us don't really consume a lot of just meat with our hands. There's usually accoutrements.

Travis: Or, it's a pr—I mean like, you could say like, y'know, a chicken drumstick. Right? That's meat with your hands. But that's a plate. That's a thing. I see what you're saying.

Teresa: Right. But if I was offered just a plate of meat, I might be able to take maybe one or two, but I'd be like, "But where's the rest of it?"

Travis: Yes. Where's the thing that makes me not feel like an animal monster?

Teresa: [laughs] Yes.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: Those are some of the accoutrements we are going to speak of today.

Travis: My favorite? Honeycomb. Raw honey. Not the cereal, but like, the like... ohh, it's dipped in honey. Ahh, and it's got the little hexagons. Ohh, and it's drizzlin' honey everywhere? I like that.

Teresa: [laughing] Um, so, this is why they are very big, just as even an appetizer, or as even like a main course in restaurants, right? Because there's so many things you can do with it, and it's real hard to mess it up.

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: This is why chefs love it.

Travis: Well, I can see that, too, because you also—like you said, if it's just the meat, right? It can feel a little samey. But when you're getting into accoutrements, this is where a lot of places have fun with it, and they're like, "This is our house made jam," or like, "This is like, an artisanal bread."

Teresa: Or like, people can pickle their own pickles.

Travis: Sure.

Teresa: Brine their own olives. Like, macerate fruit. Things like that.

Travis: You got a, like a sugared almonds, or some kind of nuts.

Teresa: Mm-hmm. That happens a lot. Yes.

Travis: Y'know. So many options.

Teresa: Yes.

Travis: Maybe some Cheetos.

Teresa: [laughs] I've never seen Cheetos on there before...

Travis: Not yet. Hi. Welcome to my restaurant.

Teresa: Aalright. So, here's the thing... you could just give people a pile of meat.

Travis: That's not attractive, though, Teresa.

Teresa: It's not attractive.

Travis: No. I—that's not the nicest way to—you wouldn't want—oh, well, I take that back. I was about to say, that's a bad way to present any food. But lots of food is presented as, "Here's a pile of food." Like a salad, really, if you think about it.

Teresa: [laughs] It's a pile.

Travis: It's just a pile of food. Spaghetti is often just a—

Teresa: Poutine.

Travis: Poutine. Just a pile of food. Nachos.

Teresa: Yep. Those—

Travis: Ugh, I take it back.

Teresa: Those weird KFC bowls.

Travis: Perhaps a sandwich is a pile, if you think about it.

Teresa: [laughs] It's a structured pile.

Travis: Well, sure, but it's still a pile.

Teresa: So what you should probably start with is a nice serving board. Could be a cutting board. That's what we've used.

Travis: Yes.

Teresa: Could be a serving platter. A tray. I've seen, um, chefs serve these on like, slates.

Travis: Mm-hmm. Yes.

Teresa: Also, mirrors.

Travis: Yes.

Teresa: We've seen that.

Travis: You could also get whimsical with it, y'know? I would maybe like to see a cheese—a charcuterie board that's like an old board game board that's been thoroughly cleaned.

Teresa: Of course.

Travis: But I think that would be really fun.

Teresa: That would be fun.

Travis: Right?

Teresa: Yeah. Or like, reclaimed wood planks.

Travis: Yes. Once again, thoroughly cleaned.

Teresa: Thoroughly cleaned.

Travis: Um, but just about anything you could think of.

Teresa: Large, flat surface.

Travis: Let me give y'all a little tip from Travis to you.

Teresa: Okay. Okay. Okay.

Travis: If you go to Ikea, right? They will often have an area that is like, pieces. Where it's like, this was damaged, or not everything came in this box, or whatever, so you can just buy pieces. And often, you can find those like, butcher block, like, tabletops, or any tabletop, really, and just buy the tabletop without like, the legs or the anything else. Alright? So you can get a really nice, like, butcher block tabletop that you can use as like, a serving tray, or as something like that, that you can use all on your own without having to buy the whole thing.

Teresa: Do make sure that it's small enough that you could lift it and... and the meats.

Travis: Well, yes, that's the thing. I mean, you could chop it down, y'know?

Teresa: Oh, sure. Not everyone has that luxury, though.

Travis: That's true. But, that is a little secret, if you want to go get—I mean, you could probably find something that's like, end table sized, instead of like, dining room table sized. Yes.

Teresa: [laughs] That is what I was picturing.

Travis: Yes. Maybe not that.

Teresa: Thrift stores are a great place to get this kind of stuff, too.

Travis: Yes, indeed.

Teresa: A lot of like... like, metal cocktail trays are really great for this. Um, y'know, things in life used to be a lot more formal than they are now, so there's lots of really great china, and um, lots of really great glassware, and all kinds of stuff. Ceramic.

Travis: Especially cheaper if you're only buying one piece of it, at like, a thrift store.

Teresa: Exactly. At like, a thrift store. So, let your imagination run wild.

Travis: And if you think about it, what we're talking about, like these kinds of party tray things are a little bit vintage-y. So I think it's really fun. [laughs] I feel like we're getting into a lot of like, fixer uppers. Like, I think it's fun, but I think it like, matches the tone well, that your like, set doesn't have to necessarily match, or that it can be—look a little quote unquote “dated,” right? Because what we're talking about is like, kind of a cocktail party feel, where it's a communal eating experience instead of like, everybody getting an individualized plate.

Teresa: Exactly. Um, so, I think that we spoke a little bit about portion sized earlier, but I want to reiterate. Uh, if you're doing an appetizer charcuterie board, think about like, two ounces of meat and accoutrements

per person. And if it's meant to serve as a main course, double it. But here's the thing, right? It's supposed to be easy.

Travis: Yes.

Teresa: It's supposed to be accessible and really hard to mess up. So, if you go to, like... we have a cheese counter at our Kroger that I have just kind of like, perused. Gettin' the little... the little off cuts.

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: You could probably do the same at your local deli, and find things that are interesting and fun. Um, but what do we do? What do we put on it?

Travis: Meat?

Teresa: Yyyes.

Travis: I mean, that's a good start, right?

Teresa: It's a good start. So what you want is a variety, right? Because these are—these are essentially one bite tastes.

Travis: Y'know what would be good that I've never seen? A barbeque charcuterie board. There's no way I'm the first person to think—like, barbe... barcuterie.

Teresa: Oh, like briskets, and...

Travis: Yes. Barbercuterie. Something like that, where there's like, a little bit of smoked sausage, a little bit of brisket, maybe like, y'know, a little uh, like, pulled pork, right? That you can like, scoop onto a thing.

Teresa: Or smoked turkey breast.

Travis: Or smoked turkey breast.

Teresa: Mmm.

Travis: I'm saying... barbequeterie. It's almost there. I'll figure it out.

Teresa: [laughing] Almost.

Travis: Chard—wait!! Charredcutterie. There it is.

Teresa: Ohh, there it is!

Travis: Yes. Ohh, I got there. I was so worried. And y'know what? If anybody's listening to this, and they say, "I'm gonna steal that for my restaurant," that's totally fine. But if I ever come into your restaurant, I get once for free. Not all the time.

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: I would not take advantage for that. But, the first time I come there, I'm takin' it, right? I get one for me. Right? That's my taste, right off the top. Okay.

Teresa: Alright. Um, so, think about—

Travis: Put that on a nice mesquite board. Okay, sorry, go on.

Teresa: [snorts]

Travis: Do they make mesquite boards? Okay.

Teresa: They certainly do. Mesquite smoked wood? Absolutely.

Travis: I mean, yeah, but can you get a mesquite tray?

Teresa: I don't see why not.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: Um, okay. So, think about textures, first of all. Make sure that you have a variety. You want some firm, like, sausage, and maybe some spreadables.

Travis: Right. Pâté usually does well.

Teresa: Mm-hmm. Something—

Travis: And we should also say – just, even though we have that content warning at the top... all of these, there are, and this day and age, vegetarian and vegan options for so many things.

Teresa: It's true.

Travis: I think you could put together a pretty rockin' vegan charcuterie board and have it serve the exact same purpose and be thoroughly enjoyed the exact same, right?

Teresa: Absolutely.

Travis: So when we're talking about—like, just, if you want to, in your head, tack on 'vegan' to all of this, and I think it applies universally.

Teresa: [laughs] Um, and in that same way, the textures are gonna be different when you include something dry, something cured or smoked and cooked, like... there are—find the different ways of preparing, and that also will usually clue you in on what it's going to taste like.

Travis: I would also recommend, um, trying to get things in small—like, even if they don't come this way, in sections. Right? So like, for example, prosciutto, sometimes you can get like, a long strip of it, right? Maybe pre-cut that into sections, so somebody picking it up isn't picking up like a whole slice of meat, right?

Teresa: Exactly.

Travis: So that they can pick it up basically with two fingers and be able to eat it. Another reason I mentioned pulled pork, but I wouldn't want anything too saucy. Like, sauce-based, or anything like that, because then it's like, what do I—how do I get it, and you're making, you're adding a step to the acquiring of it.

Teresa: Yeah, you'd have to kind of spoon it onto...

Travis: Right.

Teresa: Yeah. Okay. Um, and in the same way, when you think of a variety of textures and a variety of cooking methods, you also get a variety of flavor. Right? So if something is smoked, obviously, it's probably going to taste smoky, right?

Travis: Yes.

Teresa: More than something that has been salted.

Travis: Right.

Teresa: Probably also with other spices. So, depending upon how much maybe, like, peppercorns are in the party, that also is like, a spice, right?

Travis: Speaking of spice, I would also say that, while I think it is acceptable to have a spicy thing, uh, like a spicy sausage or spicy—there's spicy smoked, y'know, meat that you can have. I think if you're going to do that, if it is especially spicy, like, this is a habanero sausage. I think you need to make sure that that is denoted somewhere clear and obvious.

Teresa: Yes.

Travis: So that someone who is tasting a board who maybe doesn't like spicy things, or maybe has a bad reaction to it, uh, knows ahead of time. That's just a helpful hint.

Teresa: Mm-hmm. And don't forget that there are also sugar-cured meats. So, there can also be a sweeter end of the pot to take from as well.

Travis: Yes. I said it last week, and I'll say it again, but like, brown sugar bacon makes a really great addition to your cheese board. And, as we're talking about arrangement, like I mentioned, little signs. Are you gonna get to little signs?

Teresa: Absolutely.

Travis: Okay, great.

Teresa: Absolutely. Um, do your research, though. Do remember that even though, say, "I want some salami." Salami from different regions can taste different. Right? So you might be able to do even a whole, like, salami board, right? Just depending upon where it was, uh... where the meat is from, where it was cured... all of that stuff. So, it can be pretty exciting to just sample everything. 'Cause even if you think that you know, you might not know, y'know?

Travis: And listen, I mentioned it last week. What day? I mentioned it last week – don't discount bologna. Listen, we're all thinking... oh, I see Teresa making a face! 'Cause you're all thinking of that like, has like, a weird plastic casing on it, Oscar Meyer stuff, right?

Teresa: [laughing] The pink one.

Travis: But there is really nice—there is nice bologna. [laughing] That is like, very good. Bologna, like...

Teresa: Bologna of Bologna[pronounced 'balo-nya']?

Travis: Well, I'm saying like, that idea of like... like, you can get really good version of it, right? That is a softer, um... it's like somewhere between a cured meat and a pâté, where it has a softer, y'know, bite to it, and it's not as chewy. I think that I had a cheese board, uh, or meat board, at a

restaurant called Bazaar. B-A-Z-A-A-R, in Las Vegas, where the like, charcuterie was like, all different versions of like, fancy bologna.

Teresa: Ohh!

Travis: And it was really good.

Teresa: [laughs] Alright. I'll give it a try.

Travis: `Cause they put like, different stuff in it. It's really good.

Teresa: That's really good. Alright. Okay, so let's talk about vessels. Conveyance from the board to your mouth.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: Now, if it's something like a dry cured sausage... pick it up with your fingers.

Travis: Yes.

Teresa: It's totally fine. It, like... it's kind of drier and firmer, and y'know, if you just want a taste of that, that's okay. No worries about that. For a lot of other things, you are gonna want to put them on a piece of bread or a cracker. And this is more centered, like, we want kind of a rustic feel to the bread. I feel like we talked about, the last time, grilled bread.

Travis: Yes.

Teresa: Sometimes is very good with this kind of stuff, as well as the crackers. And they should be higher end, but plainer, right? Because you don't want...

Travis: You're showcasing the meat.

Teresa: Showcasing the meat, so probably not like a Ritz cracker, something buttery like that that's gonna change things.

Travis: Too flavorful. Anything that's like, a Triscuit, that's like, super salty, or like, spiced with—or flavored with something, herbed with something.

Teresa: Right. A lot of places really like, um, just cream crackers. Or saltines are very popular.

Travis: Or like the—yeah, the wafery kind, where it's like...

Teresa: Yeah.

Travis: A little bit of sesame isn't bad sometimes. Like a sesame cracker. Now, let me ask you a question, Teresa.

Teresa: Mm-hmm?

Travis: Most of the time, you're still either... I mean, not all the time. But picking up with your fingers to put on bread to carry to your mouth.

Teresa: Yes.

Travis: So is it just a showy thing, that extra step, that you're not just picking it up and putting it in your mouth? Or is it like... why do you think it's like, okay to pick up sausage with your fingers and put it straight in your mouth, but if I just like, picked up a piece of salami and put it in my mouth, that I should put that on a cracker? Is it just like...

Teresa: It's about exploring all of the kind of... the variety on the plate. And sure, the meats are gonna taste great. But you want to kind of mix it up and find different combos, and see what... maybe—maybe the saltiness of this spread brings out the sweetness of this, and the creaminess, and like, all this kind of... these... I'm reminded of...

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: In the movie, Ratatouille, there's a scene where Remy, the said rat, is trying to teach his brother about flavor combinations, right? And you can see where they've illustrated it. He puts one thing in his mouth, and it looks a certain way in kind of like, his imagination, right? Kind of like bright dots, boopy doopy doopy.

Travis: You all cannot see the amazing hand movements Teresa's doing right now. It's incredible.

Teresa: [laughs] And there's music accompanying it, because the whole thing is about music, too. So then, he hands him a different thing, and it's kind of like, smooth and mellow, and... and y'know, creamy around the mouth. And then he tells them—he tells them to taste the two together, and it becomes more of like a full song, right?

These two counter melodies work around each other and complement each other. And that's the kind of thing that you're looking for when you are selecting meats and crackers and breads and accoutrements.

Travis: And I'll tell ya, as someone who has eaten many a charcute in his life, um, this is why you most often find some kind of imbalance, right? In proportion.

Teresa: Mm-hmm.

Travis: Where it's like, there's more meat than there is bread, and y'know, jam and whatever, or there is too much cheese, or whatever. Because most of the time, as Teresa is saying, it's not meant to be, you get an equal portion of everything in every bite. Right? So this isn't like building the perfect sandwich every time, take a perfect bite. It is like, try a little of this, try a little of that. This can be eaten on its own, this needs to go with that.

But, this is where I think that can be a little bit intimidating for people. When they sit down, they say, "I don't know what to put with what." And the secret is, there is no wrong answer.

Teresa: Exactly!

Travis: It's about trying it. Right? And if you find a combination where you're like, "Oh, that is very good." Right. Great. You like that combination. It might be that the person across the table from you eating the same plate would try that same combination and not like it. One of you is not right, and one of you is not wrong – it is just that you enjoyed those flavor combinations, and they didn't, and that's like, why... that's why it doesn't come pre-portioned with like, this on this and this on this and this on this.

Teresa: Exactly.

Travis: 'Cause there is no right. They just said, "Here's a bunch of good tasting things. I don't know, maybe. Enjoy."

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: "Maybe you'll like this."

Teresa: Put 'em together how you like. Um, so, talking about the—here's a bunch of great tasting things, you can try and arrange certain things to go with certain things.

Travis: Well, I would love to talk about the arranging of stuff. But first, I think it's time for a thank you note to our sponsors.

Teresa: Alright.

[theme music plays]

Travis: So, here is a true story. Today, Teresa and I took Bebe to her first dentist appointment.

Teresa: She was amazing.

Travis: She did incredible. Listen. She was totally down. And do you know why? Because here in this house, in the McElroy home, tooth brushing is very important. Dental care is very important. Uh, I have—I wish. I wish

that I had Bebe's diligence when I was her age, right? It took me forever to learn to appreciate how important dental healthcare is. And now, I take it very seriously, which is why I use a Quip toothbrush.

Because I had so many dentists recommend to me electric toothbrushes over the years, and I could not get over how bulky they were, or they would hurt my gums, or like, I would travel, and I didn't want to take 'em with me. And Quip has a solution for all of that. They are not bulky. They're only like, two percent larger than a regular sized toothbrush.

They have sensitive vibrations. It's not gonna make your tongue bleed or your gums bleed or anything like that. And it has a built in, two minute timer to make sure that you are brushing your teeth for the allotted time. Listen, none of us do it. I thought I was. And then I started using Quip, and I'm like, "Oh—oh, that's only 30 seconds. Aaand I thought I was done."

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: And every three months, they'll send you new brush heads so that like, you can change your brush head on schedule, which none of us are doing. Listen... let's get it together. Let's get our teeth healthier. Take care of yourself. And it starts at just \$25, and you'll get your first refill free at GetQuip.com/Shmanners.

It's a simple way to support our show and start brushing better, but you have to go to GetQuip.com/Shmanners to get your first refill free. So, right now, GetQuip.com/Shmanners. Do it.

Teresa: Shmanners is brought to you in part this week also by Hello Fresh.

Travis: Hello, Fresh!

Teresa: Hello!

Travis: Wait, are you Fresh in this circumstance? Am I saying hello to you?

Teresa: No. Hello Fresh makes cooking delicious meals at home a reality, regardless of your comfort in your kitchen. It is a food delivery service.

Travis: Oh, we love those.

Teresa: That includes step by step recipes, and pre-measured ingredients, so that you can have everything you need to get a wow-worthy dinner on the table in just about 30 minutes.

Travis: Oh, which is so great.

Teresa: It's easy to adjust your schedule as well. You can skip a week whenever you want, there are lots of different food preferences, um... and you can really experiment and see what you like, what you don't like. Go through and change your menu, and y'know, have a great time with it.

Travis: And one of my favorite things is, the skills you learn while cooking the meals they send you? Then they become applicable to other meals. So like, even if you're not cooking a Hello Fresh meal, you're like, "I remember how to do this! I remember what this term means that I found in my grandmother's recipe book." Or whatever, right? It's teaching you as you're doing it.

Teresa: Exactly. Um, so, for a total of \$80 off in your first month...

Travis: What?!

Teresa: So, \$20 off for your first four boxes. That's how that divides off.

Travis: Wow. Yes.

Teresa: Uh, visit [HelloFresh.com/Shmanners80](https://www.hellofresh.com/Shmanners80). That makes sense.

Travis: Yes. That's \$80. Yes.

Teresa: You need to enter the promo code 'Shmanners80' to get \$80 off in your first month. That's a total of four boxes. Uh, once again, go to

HelloFresh.com/Shmanners80, promo code 'Shmanners80' for a total of \$80 off for your first month.

[applause]

Speaker 1: Macho Man to the top rope. The flying elbow! The cover! We've got a new champion!

[music plays]

Speaker 2: We're here with Macho Man, Randy Savage, after his big win to become the new world champion. What are you gonna do now, Mach?

Speaker 3: I'm gonna go listen to the newest episode of the Tights and Fights podcast! Oh yeahhh!

Speaker 2: Tell us more about this podcast!

Speaker 3: It's the podcast of power! Too sweet to be sour! Funky like a monkey! Woke discussions, man! And jokes about wrestlers' fashion choices, myself *excluded*. Yeahhh.

Speaker 2: I can't wait to listen!

Speaker 3: Neither can I! You can find it Thursdays on Maximum Fun! Oh yeahhh, dig it!

[ocean sounds]

Speaker 1: Ahh, there's nothing quite like sailing the calm, international waters on my ship, the SS Biopic.

[ship horns]

Speaker 2: Avast, it's actually pronounced bio-pick!

Speaker 1: No, you dingus! It's biopic!

Speaker 2: Who the hell says that? It's bio-pick.

Speaker 1: It's the words for biography and picture!

Speaker 2: If you—

[ship horn]

Dave: Alright, that is enough! Ahoy, I'm Dave Holmes. I'm the host of the newly rebooted podcast, formerly known as International Waters. Designed to resolve petty, but persistent arguments like this. How? By pitting two teams of opinionated comedians against each other with trivia and improv games, of course! Winner takes home the right to be right.

Speaker 1: What podcast be this?

Dave: It's called Troubled Waters, where we disagree to disagree!

Travis: Okay. So, how do I arrange so that I trick people into eating what I want them to eat?

Teresa: [laughs] Well, think about the board as having kind of quarters, right?

Travis: Uh-huh. I always do.

Teresa: And you quarter it so that anything, like, touching kind of goes together. Y'know what I mean?

Travis: Yes, I do.

Teresa: Yeah. So, you've got four sides. In the top corner, to the right, is one thing that kind of also goes. In the bottom corner to the right, kind of also goes in the top corner to the left, right? And we kind of work those ways around. But you also need to think about, like you said, the portion sizes. You mentioned that with like, prosciutto specifically.

Travis: Right.

Teresa: Some other shapes you can make is, you can fold a larger slice into halves or quarters. You can kind of like, pile things up elegantly, like, y'know, volcano style.

Travis: Also, I'm gonna give you a very important word here. When it comes to arranging your charcuterie board... ramekins. Get yourself a nice set of little ramekins, right?

Teresa: Well, that's for the bits and bobs, right?

Travis: Well, that's what I'm saying, so you can get—put a little jelly in there so it doesn't get all over the place. Put your nuts in there so it doesn't get all over the place. You want some like, crumbly something in there, right? It's a—a nice, decorative ramekin can be a good centerpiece for those quarters you were talking about.

Teresa: Certainly.

Travis: We have a set of serving dishes that I really, really enjoy that are four quarters with like, an oval separate dish in the middle, right? And that's perfect. We don't so much use that for charcuterie – though, you could – but it's perfect for like, here are four things that you could dip in this center thing.

Teresa: Exactly.

Travis: But I like thinking about them in quarters, so that's a good way to think about it.

Teresa: Um, if you have a cured sausage, you can cut a few slices off. Leave a knife close by to the plate, so that people can, after a while, they've seen how you've cut it, they can cut their own sized slices.

Travis: And if you want to announce out loud, "This is how I do it! Everyone watch me do it!" And then do it that way.

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: People love that at a party.

Teresa: Oh, do they?

Travis: They do. They love being told how to do stuff.

Teresa: Here is something else. Do check to make sure that uh, the casing for some of these high quality like, smoked sausages is meant to be eaten, because some are not. So you may have to remove the casing, which is very easy. Usually if you slice off the end, you can kind of just peel it off, banana style.

Travis: And yes, trust me, from experience... peel off the outside before you slice it into slices. It is way easier. Especially—

Teresa: It's easier to cut, too.

Travis: Yes, yes, a thousand percent.

Teresa: Um, you can also, like, label the things on your board, if you want to. I don't tend to really do that, because I feel like it's part of the discussion over the plate. "Ooh, what's this? And how does this? And what's that?"

Travis: Here's why I think it can be very important.

Teresa: Okay.

Travis: If there is a mixture – 'cause as we mentioned, right? Say you have something on the plate that contains pork, something on the plate that contains beef, something on the plate that contains—like, or something that is cured with nuts in it, right? Something... allergens and food, uh, like,

nutritional things, of like, aversions, I think is a good way to think of it, right?

Teresa: Sure.

Travis: Of, if you do not know... like, for example. Our friends and us are very close knit, right? I know which friends eat what, and I know if any of them have allergies at this point, right? So when we throw parties, I wouldn't really worry about it. But, if you're doing like, a mixer, or you're having like, a housewarming party and inviting people from the neighborhood or whatever...

Teresa: Exactly.

Travis: And you don't know that, that is a very, very important thing that you—at the very least, tell people. Make sure to say like, this is, y'know, meat. This is not vegan. This is whatever.

Teresa: And you can go all the way from one end to the other. So there are little fancy toothpick, like, cocktail stick, like, flags you can put on things. If you're using a slate board, some people use those chalk pens.

Travis: Write right on it.

Teresa: I wouldn't recommend—

Travis: You can do that if it's a mirror, too. There's like, glass writing pens that you can use.

Teresa: Mm-hmm. I wouldn't recommend using just regular stick chalk, because then that'll get in your food.

Travis: Dusty.

Teresa: Use the pens. Um, or you can even just take a Post-It note, fold it in half so that it stands up, and write it there.

Travis: Do it that way. I will also say, this is—just 'cause I've thought about it now, based off of like, allergies. Our daughter has a walnut allergy, so I've become very aware of it. This is another way where ramekins can be really useful, that you can set them off to the side without having them touching the things that are on the plate. So that way, if someone has a nut allergy, they can still consume things that are on the plate without having to worry about it being cross-contaminated by, uh, allergens.

Teresa: Okay. So, here is the last grouping of things that you can put on your board.

Travis: Okay. Army men.

Teresa: The little snack'ems.

Travis: Oh.

Teresa: Little snack'ems.

Travis: You could put—[gasps] You could put—okay, how fun would this be?

Teresa: Okay.

Travis: To do a charcuterie board that's like a, uh, that's like a game board, right? That's like, say it's like, Candy Land. And then have the Candy Land pieces holding up signs that say what's on the board.

Teresa: I mean, that would be super cute, as long as you could clean everything thoroughly.

Travis: I'm saying—yes, you would have to clean it thoroughly. Yes. Yes, Teresa, of course. Don't put some dirty Candy Land board up there. But I'm saying, that would be cute.

Teresa: Okay. So—

Travis: Or army men holding signs would be cute, too. A whole toy-themed charcuter—I should put this on my Pinterest page. Okay, go on.

Teresa: Alright.

Travis: How do we not have a Shmanners Pinterest page?

Teresa: I don't know.

Travis: We've been going for 600 episodes, and this is the first time we've—

Teresa: Not 600 episodes.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: But we should.

Travis: Yes.

Teresa: I'll work on it. Somebody will work on it.

Travis: Somebody will definitely do it.

Teresa: [laughs] Okay. So—

Travis: One of our dedicated Shmannies out there will do it. [laughs]

Teresa: These extra—Shmannies?

Travis: I don't know.

Teresa: Shmanners Fanners.

Travis: But that's already taken for the Facebook group.

Teresa: But that still can be their name.

Travis: I mean, I guess that's true.

Teresa: So, like we talked about, the extra business is all fun and games. We're talking—

Travis: Until someone loses an eye. [laughs]

Teresa: [laughs] We're talking mustards. We're talking jams. We're talking honey. We're talking, um, nuts, and pickles, and olives, and cocktail onions, and—

Travis: What have you.

Teresa: And really, just anything that sounds like a good time. I do suggest that you have something sweet, something savory, something crunchy. Okay? So if you're gonna go with three separate things, I would go with... jam, mustard, and nuts.

Travis: I like that. I also think, it's fun if you can, right? To do a theme thing. Right? For example, I have, before, had a charcuterie board that was very, like, German-inspired, right? So then they had like a uh, Bavarian-style mustard, a beer jelly, which was really good, and some like, uh, y'know, candied walnuts. And it felt very, like, of a piece.

And I think any time... that is, I think, the only requirement that you have that you can look and say, "I think this goes with this, this goes with this, and this would taste good with this." I think... for example, I wouldn't want... I wouldn't—I wouldn't just go to like, my refrigerator and grab out three things and three meats and put them on the tray together.

I would try to think in terms of like, these look good together, and they don't taste terrible together, right?

Teresa: [laughs] Sure.

Travis: For example. Here's a good example.

Teresa: Okay.

Travis: A brown sugar bacon, I don't know would go as well with like, a whole grain mustard.

Teresa: Certainly.

Travis: Right? But it might go well with a honey mustard. Right? Or something along those lines.

Teresa: Or it would probably go well with, like, walnuts or almonds.

Travis: Right. Exactly. Right. So, just that—I wouldn't want to have a bunch of smoked stuff with, I don't know, a bunch of spicy accou—I don't know, maybe you would. But I'm saying, think about it. Have a plan.

Teresa: Have a plan. But these extra snack'ems are not going on your charcuterie bite, okay? These are for in between, especially the pickles, the olives, the onions, the nuts, those things. Don't try and like, balance it on top of your meats.

If you're using a spread, well, we're getting to that right now.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: So, uh—

Travis: Spreads.

Teresa: Spreads. [laughs] We talked about pâtés. Those are also considered spreads. So the way that you want to build your bite is your um, your conveyance method, either cracker or bread, plus a spreadable, which can be one of the pâtés. Can also be the jam, can also be the honey, can also be the—

Travis: Whatever the bite cement is.

Teresa: Right. The meat cement is what you need.

Travis: Sure.

Teresa: And then a meat on top. Try not to put too... too many meats together. I have seen people do like, two different types of fish, but...

Travis: Individual meats! This is about the meat!

Teresa: Individual meats is really what you want to go for.

Travis: And listen. This is Travis over here. Teresa's not looking. Listen to me. I can be a bit of a meat monster. We've talked about it already. A charcuterie is not your chance to like, fill up. Especially not at a party. Right? It is about the bite. So you're not trying to create like a Dagwood-style biggest bite you can. You're not trying to Scooby Doo it over here, alright? This is petite bites. Right? This is a single bite thing. Right?

If you have made a charcuterie bite that takes you more than one bite to do, you've made it too large. Right?

Teresa: And so, if you have larger pieces of bread, it's perfectly fine to use just a corner of it.

Travis: Yes.

Teresa: Right? Don't have to like, rip it up or cut it off. All you need to do is put your spread on just that corner, little slice of meat, just that corner. Bite it off, and then you can use that bread for the rest of the stuff, right? You can reuse that. Crackers, you want to try and put in your mouth all at once, because of the, y'know, the crumbly nature.

And there are also often reserved for softer meats, right? We talked about fish. A nice smoked salmon or something on there, quite nice.

Travis: Ohh, with a nice pumpernickel? Ohh.

Teresa: Mmm. But we're talking about crackers.

Travis: Yes.

Teresa: So, um, you probably want to put that whole cracker in your mouth at once.

Travis: Right.

Teresa: So, build it a little smaller. [laughs] Y'know?

Travis: And this is the other thing, too. From a former, recovering meat monster, Travis McElroy. Especially if you're like, out at a restaurant, and you've like, ordered a charcuterie for the table, right? Try to give everyone an opportunity to try some of everything, right?

Like I mentioned at the beginning, the first thing that always springs to my mind is like, the honeycomb, right? It can usually be a fairly small hunk of it, right? Don't just pick up the whole thing and pop it in your mouth. Don't pick up a ramekin of nuts and take it like a shot, right?

Teresa: [laughs] I would like to see that, actually.

Travis: Well, no, that would be terrifying. But y'know, like—

Teresa: [laughing] Just unhinge your jaw.

Travis: Right. Like, if there is a thing of pâté, right? Take—take a hunk of it. Don't like, scoop the whole thing up, put it on one piece of bread, and eat it all at once, right?

Teresa: It is not recommended that you scoop anything.

Travis: Right.

Teresa: On a charcuterie board. Don't think of anything as a dip. Think of it as a spread.

Travis: Right. And like, if you're thinking—like, for example, say there are four pieces of candied bacon on the plate. And there are four people at the table. You should get one of them.

Teresa: Yeah!

Travis: And if you say, maybe, only eat one of say, three meats on the plate... we'll get to this when we do questions in the next episode. But this is an opportunity where you say, like, "I am not going to eat these two, if anybody wants extra of that." Right?

Teresa: Sure.

Travis: And then, figure it out from there. But don't—don't try to fill yourself up off a party charcuterie. Trust me.

Teresa: [laughs] Alright. The last thing I want to talk about it. Uh, what are we going to slide all this down our gullet with? The liquid.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: Right?

Travis: I was gonna say, like, your esophagus?

Teresa: [laughs] Probably wine. Right?

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: Wine is recommended. Although... although...

Travis: Oh, ah! Oh!

Teresa: Ah! Ah!

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: Although... lots of places, especially like, if there, uh, like a sharing meat board kind of place, also recommend coffees and teas that can go really well with their meats. Um, and you can always fall back on lemonade. It's recommended a lot, because it will kind of act as a palate cleanser, right?

Travis: Yes.

Teresa: Lemonade is really good for that. As long as it's not too, too, like, sweet.

Travis: I think you could make a strong case for certain kinds of beer, depending on the nationality or influences of the drink.

Teresa: Certainly.

Travis: As I mentioned, like an Oktoberfest kind of charcuterie, right? I think that if you went with a blonder... I don't think you want to go with anything too hoppy, or too, uh, like, rich. Right? I think you want something that... you don't want something that has a palate all its own, and like, a flavor all of its own that you have to deal with. This is where I think like, a lager or a pilsner would do you pretty good, instead of some kind of ale.

Teresa: Sure. Um, if you're in doubt of the wine, may I suggest a Riesling? Because again, usually has a lemony flavor that acts as a palate cleanser. It's usually quite a dry, thin wine, as opposed to like a zinfandel, or a pinot noir, or a port, even. Which will go with certain meats quite well. For pork, it's recommended that something like a port would bring out the sweetness of the pork.

But, y'know, like I said, lemonade's great, too.

Travis: Lemonade's fine. There you go. Maybe some soda.

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: Nice lemon-lime seltzer. Who knows.

Teresa: Uh, sure.

Travis: Y'know what? You do you. That's gonna do it for part two of charcuterie.

Teresa: Yes.

Travis: Part... partwoterie.

Teresa: Partwoterie.

Travis: Thank you.

Teresa: Ohh. Please name it that.

Travis: Partwoterie? That sounds weird. It sounds like toots.

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: So, next week will be all about cheese plates, right? And that'll be part three. Thank you so much for listening. If you like these two episodes, be sure to tell people about it. I feel like we've gone really in depth, here. We're really gettin' into it. We're solvin' this whole charcuterie thing. People are gonna love this.

Teresa: Yeah. I'm there for you guys.

Travis: Yeah. This is important. Um, let's see, what else? Thank you for listening. Be sure to check out all the other amazing shows on

MaximumFun.org. Make sure to listen to all the other Shmanners. They're really great. Tell a friend. Share us around. Help us grow. Grow the audience.

And then, if you want to discuss it... ahh, I remembered this time! You can go on Facebook and join the fan-run Facebook group, Shmanners Fanners, where you can give and get excellent advice from our listeners.

Teresa: Awesome! Um, also, we want to thank Kayla M. Wasil for our Twitter thumbnail art, and our Twitter is @ShmannersCast. That's where we get a lot of our, uh, fan submission questions for each episode, which we will be tackling. I promise. I promise, I promise. Thank you for submitting those.

If you'd like to submit a topic, you can reach us at ShmannersCast@gmail.com. That is the best way to do that, because it's easily searchable.

Travis: Yes.

Teresa: And so, please submit those topic suggestions there. Also, thank you to Brent "Brental Floss" Black for our theme music, which is available as a ringtone where those are found. It's a banger, so go and get that ringtone. Also thank you to Bruja Betty Pinup Photography for that beautiful banner photo that is showcased on the Shmanners Fanners Facebook group.

Thank you so much to our assistant, Alex, who puts my ramblings into some sort of intelligible order. Do appreciate that. Thank you so much. Um, hey, y'know what you can do?

Travis: What?

Teresa: You could go to iTunes.

Travis: [gasps]

Teresa: Rate, review, and subscribe.

Travis: I could?

Teresa: You really could. We love it.

Travis: Okay. Then I will.

Teresa: That helps our show a lot. Thank you so much.

Travis: Uh, and I think that's gonna do it for us this week. Join us again next week.

Teresa: No RSVP required.

Travis: You've been listening to Shmanners.

Teresa: Manners, Shmanners. Get it.

[theme music plays]

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