

## Shmanners 203: Buffets

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**Travis:** You know what? This episode's so good, I'm gonna have seconds.

**Teresa:** It's *Shmanners!*

[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? How are *you*?

**Teresa:** How—

**Travis:** How *are* you? *How*—

**Teresa:** *How* are you.

**Travis:** —are you?

**Teresa:** I'm alright.

**Travis:** Has the cabin fever set in?

**Teresa:** Uhh... You know, not really for me. I—I think that, um, I, for years, attempted to be *extroverted*.

**Travis:** Mm-hmm.

**Teresa:** But I am *introverted*. [laughs]

**Travis:** I like how you said that, like one might be *verted*.

**Teresa:** [laughs]

**Travis:** But I want to be *extroverted*.

**Teresa:** Um, and having a newborn, I pretty much, even before the business that's happening now, just stayed inside anyway? I'd didn't really, like, relish going places and doing things, because it—it—there's a lot of preparation that you need to do before you take a newborn places, and—

**Travis:** Or a three year—or, like, any child, really.

**Teresa:** Well, she was getting easier and easier to take places.

**Travis:** That's true.

**Teresa:** But now—now, with the diapers and the wipes and the foods and the backpacks—

**Travis:** And the what-nots.

**Teresa:** —and the what-nots. It's—it's just a lot easier to stay home if you can. So, I am staying home, because I can.

**Travis:** You know, here's the problem, though. 'Cause I, uh, also have realized recent—well, not recently recently. But, like, within the last couple years—that even though I, uh, can be extroverted, what I really am is a performer, um, who likes to be on, likes to be in front of a crowd, but I—ehh, I'm not necessarily... extroverted.

**Teresa:** Okay.

**Travis:** I'm, like, a—a performing introvert. Anyways—

**Teresa:** Anyways.

**Travis:** —the problem is, it's the restriction.

**Teresa:** Ohh.

**Travis:** I don't want to go anywhere, but as soon as someone says you *can't* go anywhere—

**Teresa:** Or you shouldn't go anywhere.

**Travis:** Right, sure, yes. You would be responsible to not go anywhere. That's where I'm like—

**Teresa:** Right. So we are responsibly not going anywhere.

**Travis:** Yes, but now, because they said it, now it's like, "[whiny voice] Well now I *wanna* go places!"

**Teresa:** [laughs]

**Travis:** Oh no! But speaking of, speaking of places one should probably *not* go currently... the buffet.

**Teresa:** Well, yes. I think that, um, when I chose this topic... [laughs quietly]

**Travis:** Uh-huh?

**Teresa:** ... Uh, it—you know, the world has changed in such a short time.

**Travis:** Yes, indeed.

**Teresa:** Uh, since—since the moment that I decided this is what we would do. But, you know, aspirations being what they are—

**Travis:** Yes. An aspirational buffet. I like that.

**Teresa:** —we—we would hope that, uh—that the world will once again enjoy the buffet.

**Travis:** You know, I will say, uh—so, uh, what? A week and a half ago, maybe, uh, Bebe and I were on the JoCo Cruise, performing there.

**Teresa:** Mm-hmm, mm-hmm.

**Travis:** And there is a buffet set up in the Lido Market there. And the thing is is they—they had this on lock where it was like—they put up barriers, so no one could reach in to get anything. And so everything was served by people working for the ship. And, like, to walk into or out of the buffet, you had to get hand sanitizer. There was, like, a person standing there with, like, a hand sanitizer spray bottle, like, ready to go. And, like, they were very careful about it. And that kind of thing—

**Teresa:** Very proactive.

**Travis:** —yes. And I see that and I'm like, "That should be... *all* buffets."

**Teresa:** [laughs] What is your experience with buffets? Have you ever—you've been to The Golden Corral, have you not?

**Travis:** Oh, yeah. Oh, yeah. Yeah! Yeah, of course.

**Teresa:** I think I've been there twice in my life. The first time being on a, um—a high school field trip. Uh, it was a show choir trip.

**Travis:** Okay. So it wasn't *to* the Golden Corral.

**Teresa:** No, no, no.

**Travis:** Okay.

**Teresa:** No, no. It was just that was where we stopped to dine. Um, because I think it was just easiest, you know? Like, everybody could pick what they wanted. We'd just tell the servers how many seats we need and ready, set, go, and—

**Travis:** Options.

**Teresa:** —options, and all that kind of stuff. And then I think the second time was on a, uh—a theater—I was in a touring group. And again, it was just one of those things where it was easy and simple. Um, and we—we did a lot of, like, salad bar buffets and stuff like that. Like Frisch's around here has a salad bar and

stuff like that. Just because, again, if you're on a time crunch, it's a great way to just eat right away and not have to wait for food to be prepared.

**Travis:** Yeah. I mean, and that's the thing is, as you touched upon—you asked me about buffets, and the answer is yes, I have a myriad of experience. I would say ranging from a cafeteria style buffet, which is what I think I'm kind of describing what they kind of switched to at the Lido Market, where it's like there are people—and as you move down you're like, "A little bit of that, a little bit of that, a little bit of that."

Uh, and then there's the salad bar style. There is the, uh—uh, you know, full blown buffet, like a Golden Corral. Uh, I—

**Teresa:** Ooh! Or like Chinese food restaurants sometimes do buffets.

**Travis:** Sure, yes. Uh, there's—I mean, I think Shoney's—is Shoney's a... National? Or is that a local to—anyways—

**Teresa:** Hmm, that might be a local. I don't recall.

**Travis:** I've done—I've done it all. Why, there's [snorts] nary a buffet I haven't frequented.

**Teresa:** [laughs]

**Baby Dot:** [crying]

**Travis:** Hi, Baby Dot!

**Teresa:** It's okay, here. [crosstalk]

**Travis:** Welcome to the show!

**Baby Dot:** [crying]

**Travis:** Baby Dot, have you ever done a buffet? Not yet. Okay.

**Baby Dot:** [crying]

**Teresa:** So, um, let's—let's dive in to the buffet. Should we?

**Travis:** Yes. Let's—let's go for firsts. Now, here's—I imagine that one of the problems with doing history of this was it was like—the first time somebody sat a second portion of food next to the first—

**Teresa:** [laughs]

**Travis:** —and said, "Which one of these do you want?" the buffet was created.

**Teresa:** Okay. Not—not quite.

**Travis:** Okay.

**Teresa:** Because there have always been in fashions of the way people eat, okay?

**Travis:** Yeah.

**Teresa:** Um, but there is something to be said of, like, people sitting down to a big table full of food.

**Travis:** Right.

**Teresa:** Like you said. Um, it's... it's got a couple of incarnations, especially in Europe. So, it probably originated from the French word buffet, meaning bench or stool.

**Travis:** Sure, that tracks.

**Teresa:** Um, and that first appears around the 12th century. But, you know, you see in paintings even before that—Gods, biblical feat—uh, people, like, sitting around large tables piled high, right?

**Travis:** Yeah, but what I liked about this idea of it being, like, from the French word for stool is, like, get your food, right? And then go sit down, right? As opposed to the other way around, which would be sit down, and then get your food, right? You go get your food, and you sit down.

**Teresa:** I'm not quite sure that's exactly what's meant by it.

**Travis:** Okay, but that's what *I'm* saying by it.

**Teresa:** That's—okay. Okay.

**Travis:** That's what *I* mean by it, is what I mean.

**Teresa:** That's what you do it.

**Travis:** I don't—hey, honey? There's a reason you do most of the historical research.

**Teresa:** [laughs]

**Travis:** It's mostly about what *I* think it means. [snorts]

**Teresa:** [laughs] Uh, but this has always been kind of like a—a sign of—of wealth and prominence, right?

**Travis:** Oh—

**Teresa:** The table full of food. Um, but if we had to pick one group of people that we owe the most for the modern day buffet, it would probably be the Swedes. Can you guess what may have been the original buffet?

**Travis:** Uhhh... no! [laughs]

**Teresa:** Smorgasbord!

**Travis:** A smorgasbord, of course!

**Teresa:** That's right. So, it originated as a way to feed unexpected visitors, because the term literally translates to "battered bread board."

**Travis:** Okay.

**Teresa:** Um, but over time it grew to include salted fish, eggs, vegetables, cold cuts, and, you know, several other things that, eaten all together, make a full meal.

**Travis:** See—okay. Here's the thing about this, and this is why I'm really happy that we're talking about buffets. 'Cause if you think about the buffet, it is a brilliant solution to a myriad of problems.

**Teresa:** Okay.

**Travis:** Right? So solu—uh, problem one: I don't know how many people are gonna show up. How many place settings do I do? Problem two: I don't know what kind of food everyone likes, so I don't know what one dish to make. Problem three: I don't have enough people to serve everyone. It will take forever to get meals out to everyone—like, as you go down the list, it solves all of these problems where you're like, "Yeah, this is brill—" like, you don't know how many people are gonna be there? Great! Just set up a stack of plates and say "Go down and get it yourself."

You don't need servers, right? It's great for a restaurant where it's like, "Yeah, we can't afford to have 40 servers, right? Great! People will serve themselves, and we just worry about drinks."

Oh, you don't know what kind of food people like? Great! Here's a bunch of options! Choose whatever you want.

Now, the one thing it does... create is—the one problem a buffet creates is excess, right? Because it's like, there is definitely going to be food left over that not everybody ate. And I imagine that was especially a problem before things like refrigeration and, like, proper food storage was a thing. But I'm saying that now, I think, especially if you take some of that excess and donate to places that will accept things like that from, you know, restaurant leftovers, it's perfect. The—y'all, I'm here to say it. I think with a little bit of forethought, the buffet is the perfect food delivery system.

That or Brazilian Steakhouse. It's one of those two things.

**Teresa:** Oh, okay. [laughs] Well, let me offer you a couple of—

**Travis:** 'Cause they bring you the meat on swords, is the thing.

**Teresa:** Yeah. That's a—

**Travis:** That's hard to beat, you know?



**Teresa:** Let me offer you a—a couple of other dining, um, options.

**Travis:** Okay.

**Teresa:** The first one being à la française.

**Travis:** Okay. I—hey. You said that good. I liked that.

**Teresa:** Thank you. Uh, and this dining option also is good for a lot of people centered around a table. Uh, the way that à la française works is you place dishes within easy reach of the diners. Well... you're not getting up, and you're not moving around, and there aren't servers, so you have to put many dishes on the table, and you have to put it within easy reach of several different people, but when you do this, not everybody gets the same dishes.

So imagine, if you will, a table, uh, with eight diners, right?

**Travis:** Okay.

**Teresa:** So you—

**Travis:** What are their names?

**Teresa:** [laughs] Inevitably have—

**Travis:** What are their hopes and dreams?

**Teresa:** —a person at each end.

**Travis:** Okay.

**Teresa:** Right? So you would place a main course type, like a roast, right?

**Travis:** Okay.

**Teresa:** At one end and at the other end.

**Travis:** Now, would the be, like—like, a roast here and chicken here? Or would it be, like, the same thing.

**Teresa:** It would—it would usually be mirrored.

**Travis:** Okay.

**Teresa:** Right? The larger dishes. But then you would place smaller dishes of the sides, right? Or the entremets. Which literally means "in between."

**Travis:** Yes.

**Teresa:** Right? Um, and then—

**Travis:** Which, by the way, that's something we need to bring back, 'cause we have appetizers that go before the meal. I need something to eat dur—I guess that's just sides, isn't it? I've just said si—okay.

**Teresa:** Well—

**Travis:** You know what? Let's keep moving.

**Teresa:** —side—entremets kind of morphed into sides. Anyway, you would place the smaller dishes around in between the diners, and you really weren't supposed to kind of, like, venture to the other side of the table. So you ended up with practically four dishes for each person to kind of serve themselves from, right?

So you'd have your main and your entremets and then some other courses and things like that. And between, the entire table would be cleared, and the second course set.

**Travis:** Oh, boy.

**Teresa:** Again, you would do more dishes, right? And there really wouldn't be repetition between the dishes, because you would set the more, like, extravagant, uh, delicious, wonderful dishes, by the people who are more important.

**Travis:** Okay. What's interesting about that as a process is it doesn't seem to eliminate a lot of—of the issues of—like, you still need servers. You still have to make the food. You still have to have a lot of choices. It seems like the only thing it provides for is, like, some semblance of control?

**Teresa:** Sure.

**Travis:** Over what you get on your plate and how much you get, and that kind of thing.

**Teresa:** Well, you don't need as many servants, because what came next in fashion was the à la russe dining.

**Travis:** Okay.

**Teresa:** Right? Where you do need servants—

**Travis:** Oh, for the rooster.

**Teresa:** No. Uh, Russia. [laughs]

**Travis:** Oh. Guh—yep, that makes a lot more sense.

**Teresa:** [laughs] This is what we see most often on TV shows like *Downton Abbey*, where you have the lines of servants and footmen kind of standing around and serving, right? Um, so instead of the main course like the roast being set on the table they now used, uh, sideboards.

**Travis:** Oh, okay. Yes, yes, yes.

**Teresa:** Okay? And you would cut up the roast, and a person—one of the servers would bring it to you and you would pick whatever kind of, like, cut you liked.

**Travis:** Yeah. Center.

**Teresa:** And most of these dishes were served that way. Just people walking around the table, holding the—the courses, and you would pick off of that plate. Now, this eliminated the need for so *many* different dishes, because basically everyone got the same meal, as it rotated around the table.

**Travis:** Okay.

**Teresa:** In people's hands, right? And it also made it so that you could serve dishes warm, because they didn't have to be all laid out on the table in between, right?

**Travis:** Yeah.

**Teresa:** So you had—

**Travis:** You could bring 'em out as they were, like, read—you—if you had a cook who was really on point, like, time that out to be like, "And... go!"

**Teresa:** Exactly. Exactly.

**Travis:** Okay.

**Teresa:** And all of this happened, uh, kind of for the rich and famous, right? Until 1939 when—

**Travis:** When Golden Corral was invented.

**Teresa:** —the smorgasbord...

**Travis:** Oh, right, yep, yep, that's what I meant.

**Teresa:** ... came to the World's Fair in New York. And so, uh, it was served a sizable selection of snacks atop a rotating platform in the Three Crowns restaurant.

**Travis:** Okay.

**Teresa:** Um, and then this would be, like, the... I'm gonna say pinnacle of the buffet, that, uh, the buffet craze that started in the 1950's.

**Travis:** Okay. Oh! You know what? Continental breakfast. That's another kind of buffet.

**Teresa:** That's true.

**Travis:** Yep, done that one too.

**Teresa:** That's true. Um, and what happened between the—the 1930's—so, 1939 to 1950—is what we have really come to know as the ultimate buffet: the Vegas style buffet.

**Travis:** Oh, yes, yes, yes! Okay!

**Teresa:** We really have one man to thank for this. His name is Herb McDonald.

**Travis:** Okay. What a great name.

**Teresa:** He was a Canadian. Um, who—

**Travis:** Yeah, I would've guessed that from the name.

**Teresa:** Yeah. Really?

**Travis:** No.

**Teresa:** [laughs]

**Travis:** But it—it's one of those things that you say, like, "Herb McDonald is a Canadian." And I'm like, "Yeah. Yeah he is. He—go, Herb!" There, do they say Herb [silent H]? Would his name be Herb [silent H]? Or Herb?

**Teresa:** No, I think it's Herb.

**Travis:** Okay.

**Teresa:** I think that names are Herb.

**Travis:** It's always Herb?

**Teresa:** Always.

**Travis:** No—nowhere is it like, "My name is Erb."

**Teresa:** [through laughter] No.

**Travis:** Okay.

**Teresa:** Uh, he made his way to Las Vegas, like I said, in the 1940's. He was working as a publicist at the El Rancho, which was one of the first hotels on the strip. Um, the legend is that one late night he wandered back to the kitchen and brought out for the gamblers some cold cuts, some cheese, bread, pickles, you know, all this kind of stuff, right?

**Travis:** Fixin's.

**Teresa:** And spread it out—fixin's. Spread it out along the bar, okay? Um, for the hungry poker players. He—

**Travis:** This has a very Earl of Sandwich feel to it, doesn't it? Yeah.

**Teresa:** It is a little bit, doesn't it? Uh, he made it so that they could kind of grab what they wanted and go back to their table.

**Travis:** Yeah.

**Teresa:** Um, and this selection of accouterments, various things, was an enormous hit right away. And it turned into a 24 hour, like, all-you-can-eat vehicle buffet, right? And he called it the Buckaroo Buffet.

**Travis:** Okay.

**Teresa:** At the El Rancho. I mean, it makes sense!

**Travis:** Oh, yeah—oh, okay. Yeah, yeah, yeah.

**Teresa:** It makes sense.

**Travis:** Now—now I get it. Okay.

**Teresa:** And because his background was in PR, his strategy was, for a dollar you could choose every possible variety of hot and cold entrees to appease the howling coyote in your innards.

**Travis:** Nice. Yes.

**Teresa:** [laughs]

**Travis:** Yes! Innards, yes!

**Teresa:** Uh, it was a financial, um... what do I wanna say? Cavern? [laughs quietly] Hole?

**Travis:** It was a loss leader.

**Teresa:** A loss leader. But because what they were doing was enticing people to the Vegas style gambling—

**Travis:** That's what the loss leader means, right?

**Teresa:** Right.

**Travis:** So it's, like, they lose money on this, *but* it gets you in the door, and so then we make money—like, yes. This is why people will like—

**Teresa:** We make money on the gambling. We lose money on the food, but the food brings people in so they give us their money gambling. Exactly.

**Travis:** Hence loss leader, yes.

**Teresa:** Right, right, right, right, right. Um, so then every hotel and, like, gambling... uh, casino, that's the word I'm looking for. They all followed suit of course, because you have to be up with the times. And then, this is when the American style buffet really, like, flourished across the United States, finally culminating in places like Cici's Pizza, Golden Corral, Frisch's, Sizzler's, things like—Pizza Hut, Ponderosa. And hotels—

**Travis:** Yeah. Ponderosa. That was another one. I've been to a Ponderosa.

**Teresa:** Yeah.

**Travis:** Yeah!

**Teresa:** I think I've been to a Ponderosa. I think so.

**Travis:** I was about to say "You'd know," but I can't remember any defining features of a Ponderosa? So I don't actually know that you'd know.

**Teresa:** Um, and it reached its peak popularity in the 1980's. This also makes sense, right?

**Travis:** That tracks, yep. 1000 percent. 1000 per—that go go life? You know, you don't have time to stop and wait for your meal to be cooked and served to you. You're just gonna shlop it on a plate and just keep goin'—get back to makin' those *business deals*!

**Teresa:** Exactly. Materialism. Excess. The 80's. Shoulder pads.

**Travis:** Excess. Exc—[stammers]—New Coke.

**Teresa:** [laughs] All that stuff. And it was also an economical way to feed a large group of people, and this is what the commercials of the time really looked for, right? They played to large families, to cruise ships, to all-inclusive retreats a low maintenance way to feed a crowd.

[pauses]

Now. The buffet-aissance—thank you, Alex. That's a beautiful—

**Travis:** Uh-huh, yes.

**Teresa:** —beautiful turn of phrase—was not long for the world. Many of these restaurants that boomed in the 80's decelerated from quick expansions and raised competition in the 90's.

**Travis:** Uh-huh, yeah.

**Teresa:** Um—

**Travis:** That was true. There was a lot of that in—in the 80's. Where it was just like, "This bubble will *never* burst!"

**Teresa:** And then it bursts. [laughs]

**Travis:** Yeah. Like, that's—if you're interested in this, and I *highly* recommend it, there's a great *Decoder Ring* Episode about the pizza wars, between Showbiz Pizza and Chuck E. Cheese. And, like, this is, like, a—exactly that, where, like,



they reached a point where it was like [through laughter] there's a Chuck E. Cheese every two miles or something.

**Teresa:** Right.

**Travis:** There's just tooo much.

**Teresa:** But like we said earlier, the reason that the decline happened really so fast, within 10 years, was because the buffet is not a good business model.

**Travis:** Yeah.

**Teresa:** Right? It's a way to get people in the door to do other things. So, you can still find great 24 hour buffets in Vegas because, like you said, it's the way to get people in the door.

**Travis:** Yep.

**Teresa:** Um, but having, like, a restaurant that's a buffet is really not a good business model.

**Travis:** Well, so, the thing is—and I say this with no judgment whatsoever, but to make it work you have to have... Cost effective food.

**Teresa:** Right.

**Travis:** Let's put it that way, right?

**Teresa:** That's why breakfast works well.

**Travis:** Breakfast works so well, right? Stuff you—and, like, batch bake stuff, right? So, like, mac and cheese, right? Where you can make a lot of it all at once and it's not, like, a specialized thing.

This is why, like... You know, if you go to Golden Corral, let's just say it, I—I will eat at a Golden Corral. I'm not above it. But you know what kind of food you're getting when you go, right? I—I don't think that this is a "All restaurants should be replaced with buffet" kind of thing.

**Teresa:** Right.

**Travis:** Right? Because, like, if you want, you know, a—a bespoke dining experience, that is, like, a sit down, table service restaurant, right? When it's just like, "I dunno. What does everybody want? [makes "I don't know" sound]"

**Teresa:** Like we talked about earlier, it's great for tour buses. It's great for big family style dinners. It's great for weary travelers who just wanna eat, right?

**Travis:** Right.

**Teresa:** But it's—

**Travis:** There's a reason, like, the cafeterias in schools [through laughter] are cafeterias and not table service restaurants!

**Teresa:** Exactly! Exactly. So—but the buffet still has its place in history. There still are Golden Corrals. In fact, the Golden Corral, uh, business model, uh, especially, was named in 2016's Entrepreneur magazine as the number one franchiser in the US for the 20th year in a row!

**Travis:** Whoaaa!

**Teresa:** Right? So it hasn't died. We're—we're still there. It's just not at the peak of its lifespan.

**Travis:** This is—I—I think that this is true of pretty much every bubble—is, like, it's not that there wasn't a place, it's that it expanded to quickly and outpaced its own, like, growth or whatever? And so then when it deflates, the hope is like, "Well, this deflated to a *normal, manageable* level."

**Teresa:** Exactly.

**Travis:** Hey, we have some questions. Do you wanna do some questions?

**Teresa:** Sure!

**Travis:** Okay. This is from @Helenethesmall.

"How much food is too much food, both at parties and restaurants? Going to a wedding this summer and don't want to seem rude, but I know the caterer and he makes such amazing food."

I think—here's the thing, right? Let me tell you—[softer voice] Hey.

**Teresa:** [laughs]

**Travis:** [softer voice] Teresa doesn't need to butt in here, but, um... I, for a long time, was a *real* piler. And sometimes? I still am.

**Teresa:** [simultaneously] Still am. [laughs]

**Travis:** Because I am—I am all about... uh, what's—what's the word I'm looking for? Efficiency. Efficiency. But! If you're worried about seeming rude, I think the answer is, small portions, uh, don't pile your plate, and just plan on going back for more, right?

**Teresa:** Exactly. That's the really great thing about buffet style dining, is you can try a little bit of everything and then go back for the stuff that you really, really liked and have a second helping.

Um, do remember to always get a new plate, uh, because it is much more sanitary. Um, and also remember to use the serving... What is it?

**Travis:** Utensils?

**Teresa:** Utensils provided for each different...

**Travis:** Yes. Do not mix and match—do not, like, take the mashed potato scoop to get some mac and cheese. Uh, and not that I have any problem with the mixing of those, but some people might. And this is—a buffet is a shared experience.

**Teresa:** Indeed.

**Travis:** Uh, this next question comes from someone—it comes from Battosaur.

"Is a homemade buffet possible, or is it just not possible to recreate that vibe at home?"

I will tell—well—

**Teresa:** I think it is possible.

**Travis:** You go.

**Teresa:** And I think that we've—we've done this kind of with our ever-expanding Thanksgiving.

**Travis:** Yes.

**Teresa:** Uh, family. And the way that you do it is you gotta make sure to serve the foods that are also snacky foods, right? So you have your main course, your turkey, your potatoes, your—your salad or whatever, but you can also put out that shrimp cocktail. You can also put out the cheese and crackers. You can also—like, and just so that you have a variety of things. They don't all have to be served hot. You can have the—the colds and the dessert type stuff and everything out all at once to make it buffet style.

**Travis:** This is something growing up, um, even though West Virginia is not a So—well, it's the northernmost Southern state and the southernmost Northern state—whatever. However you wanna call it.

**Teresa:** [laughs]

**Travis:** But after church on Sundays, oftentimes we would go over to someone's house, right? And people would bring different sides and different dishes and all this stuff, and we would ba—it was like a potluck buffet kind of deal, you know? Where it was like we set up all the dishes on, like, the counter top and the table, and you go around and fill the plate and then sit wherever seating is available and eat

I think the thing is is, as you have said, when you talk about—there are so many different kinds of buffets, as we had touched on this.

**Teresa:** Exactly.

**Travis:** I don't think you're ever going to be able to recreate the Vegas style, all-you-can-eat, there's someone waiting to, like, replace this tray of green beans kind of thing.

**Teresa:** [laughs]

**Travis:** But I think definitely, like, a serve yourself, a la carte kind of thing.

**Teresa:** It's more of a style of eating than it is the, like—an exact science. So it can be recreated any place.

**Travis:** And I think 'cause—I think the problem is is the—the thing you're never going to be able to recreates is, someone still has to make the food.

**Teresa:** Right.

**Travis:** So, like, if you're doing it at home, you all have to make it, right? Which I think defeats one of the biggest purposes of the buffet, which is, like, just kind of swoop by, get what you want, and go sit down, right? Um, but I think you totally could recreate it at home.

Uh, Lynn asks:

"How long should one wait before getting seconds? Also, how many plates should one get in a single round?"

**Teresa:** Um, one plate per round, because what you have to do is you have to hold your plate, and then you have to scoop with the other hand. If you have two plates, there's no way that you can scoop.

Um, also I think that it's important that you let everyone who is eating with you go through the line once before you go again. Um, not because I'm afraid that you'll run out of food, where—I mean, if you're at your house, you might run out of food. But because it's the, um... the pacing of the meal, right? You don't want to be done before everybody else has eaten. That's no fun.

You want to try and keep up the pace with everybody. So, um, wait until everyone's had at least one plate to their spot before you go and get a new one.

**Travis:** And I will—I think this ties back to Helene's question, because this is another thing is oftentimes I will find that, as they say, my eyes are bigger than my stomach.

**Teresa:** [laughs]

**Travis:** Where I will pile my plate with food and then only be able to eat, like, half of it. Where it's like then it's—I'm—I feel very wasteful. I feel like a failure. [laughs]

**Teresa:** [laughs]

**Travis:** All these things, so I think pacing is very important.

Uh, Jillian asks:

"I am a very peak—picky eater, so I usually only like one or two things at a buffet. Is it rude to take a lot of that thing?"

**Teresa:** As long as there's a lot of that thing on offer, I don't think so. Things like, you know—like you said earlier, the batch bake stuff like macaroni, like potatoes, like, you know, chicken wings, like salad, stuff like that that doesn't take a lot of nuance to really prepare and there's always another tray somewhere. Go for it.

**Travis:** I think that's the important thing, right? Is, like, what scenario are you in? 'Cause, like, if you're at a restaurant where there is a kitchen whose job it is to turn out more trays of that thing, go to town! If you're at someone's house or maybe it's catered and they brought all the food and trays with them, maybe then get as much as you might want, right? Reasonably, and then go back for more after everyone has had a chance to go through.

**Teresa:** Yes.

**Travis:** I—I don't know that it's a good look to stand in front of any one tray and pile your plate full of it—

**Teresa:** [laughs] Take that tray to your seat. [laughs]

**Travis:** Yeah. That—that's not a great look. Um, Skylar asks—and man, this is a tough one:

"Can I cut past someone? Like, if there is a hamburger slice o—of pizza taco, and someone's at slice of pizza and I"—oh, oh, I see. Hamburger, slice of pizza, taco, in a row.

**Teresa:** Mm-hmm.

**Travis:** "And someone's at slice of pizza and I want taco, do I have to wait for them to move or can I just cut past them?"

**Teresa:** Okay. Technically... you can't. Uh, it is... it's a poor showing to cut in front of people in line any time.

**Travis:** Correct.

**Teresa:** But, I would say that if it is restaurant where there are different stations, you are welcome to skip a station and move to the next station.

**Travis:** Yes. So, like, if they're at the salad portion and it's, like, a big—a whole thing of salad and they are meticulously making a salad, and you wanna cut to the pasta stuff—

**Teresa:** Exactly.

**Travis:** —cool.

**Teresa:** That is something you are definitely allowed to do, because each is like a little microcosm of a line.

**Travis:** Yes.

**Teresa:** Um, but if it is at a same station, you're in close proximity, you have to wait.

**Travis:** I've also been to places where it's not really a lineup thing so much as it's just people will walk—like, I see this a lot at, like, Chinese food buffets.

**Teresa:** Oh, walking to get one dish.

**Travis:** Where they just, like, walk up, get one thing, and go sit down, right? And people aren't really lined up.

**Teresa:** I think that that is a good in-the-middle-of-the-road type deal. Um, if that seems to be the vibe of the room, I think that is okay, but if we are starting at one end and we are moving through, you have to stay in line.

**Travis:** And you know what? I will also just say this. There's no question about this, but someone always has to be first, and that's a thing I—I will jump on that grenade, you know? I understand—I used to feel bad because it was like, "The buffet's open! Oh, wait. Am I first? Ah, no!"

**Teresa:** Someone's gotta be first!

**Travis:** But someone's gotta be first. And you know what? The—the brave amongst us are willing to be first in line.

**Teresa:** I—I dropped this truth bomb on Travis: food is for eatin'.

**Travis:** Food is for eatin'!

**Teresa:** You gotta go get it.

**Travis:** Uh, Craftypants asks:

"If you're waiting for something to be refilled, can you hover, are do you have to go sit down and then come back?"

So I assume this is, like, at a place where they are swapping out trays.

**Teresa:** Um... can you hover? I think that it all depends on where you are in your plate filling.

**Travis:** Yeah.

**Teresa:** Right? If it's, like... you have a full plate and you just want that one last thing, I think you should go sit down. But if it's, like, we are swapping out things as I am standing there waiting to fill my plate, then I think you can wait. For a *little* while.



**Travis:** Yeah.

**Teresa:** Um, I mean, it's all about readin' the room, right? We talk about this a lot, where it's about not being that—that one guy, right? Who is making everybody wait, or who is line jumping, or who is—you know, just bein' rude, havin' that rude 'tude. We don't wanna do that.

**Travis:** No.

**Teresa:** So I think that you—you've got great judgment already, because you're listening to this podcast!

**Travis:** [laughs]

**Teresa:** You've got great judgment. Trust your heart.

**Travis:** Uh, one last question from Alex.

"I tend to just take a little bit of food at a time and go back for more until full. Is wasting many plates just as rude as taking too much food on one plate?"

**Teresa:** No, it is not. Um, because—

**Travis:** Especially at a restaurant, where they have, like—

**Teresa:** Especially.

**Travis:** —the batch washing machine, you know? Where they just stack stuff up. Fwoomph!

**Teresa:** Every restaurant would rather that you take several plates in succession than, uh, you compromise the cleanliness of the buffet by reusing plates.

**Travis:** Or wasting food.

**Teresa:** Or wasting food. Um, I think that you're doin' it right. Uh, they always say, the more plates the better.

**Travis:** Alright. Well, that's gonna do it for us. Thank you so much for joining us. Uh, and thank you so much for joining us in these uncertain times. We hope that you find some kind of solace here in our comedy/etiquette podcast. Uh, if you do enjoy it, please tell a friend. Uh, maybe they're bored and they've already listened to every other podcast and they just didn't know this one existed, and they will be so happy to hear about it from you. So if you like it, please share that link.

**Teresa:** Yeah, tweet a link! Tell a friend.

**Travis:** Yeah. Tweet that link! Um—

**Teresa:** You can also go to iTunes, rate, review, and subscribe!

**Travis:** There you go. You can go to Maximumfun.org and check out all the other amazing shows there. Um—

**Teresa:** They've also got some great forums going!

**Travis:** Okay, what else? What else, Teresa?

**Teresa:** Well—

**Travis:** What else do we normally say?

**Teresa:** —what else—we normally, uh, thank Brent "brentalfloss" Black for our theme music, which is available as a ringtone where those are found.

We like to thank Kayla M. Wasil for our Twitter thumbnail art, which you can reach @shmannerscast. That's where we get all these really great questions for all of our, um—our etiquette shows.

So then, also you can go to Facebook and join our fan-run Facebook group, which has a beautiful cover banner done by Bruja Betty Pinup Photography. Um, join that group if you love to get and give excellent advice to other fanners.

**Travis:** Alright, and I think that's gonna do it for us, so join us—oh!

**Teresa:** Thank you to Alex. She put together a wonderful show this week. We really appreciate our, um—her as a—as a script writer and as a research assistant.

**Travis:** And as a person.

**Teresa:** And as a person!

**Travis:** And that's gonna do it for us for real—

**Teresa:** For real.

**Travis:** —so 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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