

## Shmanners 275: Japanese Tea Ceremonies

Published August 27, 2021

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**Travis:** I feel very comfortable with this episode. Do you know why?

**Teresa:** Why?

**Travis:** It fits me to a "tea."

**Teresa:** [exasperated] 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. How are you?

**Teresa:** Hello— I— I'm well, my dear.

**Travis:** Oh, sorry. I jumped it. I jumped the cue!

**Teresa:** You did. That's alright.

**Travis:** Oh, our director's gonna have my bottom. [laughs]

**Teresa:** Oh.

**Travis:** Gonna just—

**Teresa:** Good— good thing that we're the director.

**Travis:** Oh, good. Uh, well, um, I'm... uh, you know, it's another late-night recording.

**Teresa:** [laughs]

**Travis:** By which I mean, what, 7:30 PM? Eastern Time?

**Teresa:** Not—not as late as it has been ever but, you know... I would much rather do it during the day.

**Travis:** Yeah. Uh, I understand that. Because, if nothing else, we don't have a monitor in the booth, and now we're hoping our 18-month-old isn't like, "Oh, no, you know what? Forget this! Wahhh!"

**Teresa:** [laughs] That sounds exactly like she would do it.

**Travis:** Yeah.

**Teresa and Travis:** "Wahhh!"

**Travis:** Um... [laughs] hi, everybody.

**Teresa:** [laughs]

**Travis:** Welcome. Welcome, welcome, welcome.

**Teresa:** Hey, hey.

**Travis:** You know what I could use, Teresa?

**Teresa:** What could you use?

**Travis:** A little peace. A little calm. A little tranquility.

**Teresa:** Let's find some.

**Travis:** Okay.

**Teresa:** Because we're talking about the Japanese tea ceremony.

**Travis:** Okay.

**Teresa:** Um, first, first I must say... Alex... loves... tea.

**Travis:** This is true.

**Teresa:** Alex loves tea.

**Travis:** Yeah.

**Teresa:** Um, and so she wrote how much she loves tea, and wrote about how much she loves learning about tea, and she wrote about how she is so thankful to Nico, who suggested this topic. And... she loves it so much that she saved this topic for her birthday week, so happy birthday, Alex.

**Travis:** Happy birthday, Alex! We should also just go ahead and state, um, Teresa and I— there are many things that we talk about on *Shmanners* that we kind of have a lot of experience with, right? That we

have, uh, just naturally done a lot in our lives. This is obviously, uh, one of those topics where this is not something we should be considered the experts on.

**Teresa:** Of course not, no.

**Travis:** There are so many resources online that you can find. Uh, documentaries, books, videos, all kinds of things, of people who have made it their study to be experts on the Japanese tea ceremony. So, in this circumstance, we are passing along information from others.

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

**Travis:** Right? Okay.

**Teresa:** I do think, though, you, having dabbled in Zen—

**Travis:** Yes.

**Teresa:** —uh, will have a very unique perspective on a lot of this.

**Travis:** I wouldn't say dabbled. I've studied— I've done it for years! [laughs]

**Teresa:** Okay, well—

**Travis:** Okay.

**Teresa:** —there's always room for improvement.

**Travis:** This is true. That's why it's called a practice

**Teresa:** Yeah.

**Travis:** Yeah. Tell me about... I'm going to bet— can I guess?

**Teresa:** Sure.

**Travis:** That the Japanese tea ceremony started in Japan?

**Teresa:** I mean, yeah, but it actually started in China. [laughs]

**Travis:** Aw, man! I really thought I had it! Aw, beans. Okay.

**Teresa:** Um, okay. So the Way of Tea, or *Sado*, means the right way or the perfect way that leads to awakening, or peace of mind.

**Travis:** Right.

**Teresa:** So it's— it's kind of like a ritual, right? So, it's very practiced.

**Travis:** I mean, it's a ceremony, right? It's a ceremony.

**Teresa:** It's a ceremony, right. It's very practiced, very specialized. Um, but it has gone through several iterations, and it's, like, you know— it's very spiritually centered. I mean, a lot of different cultures around the world use tea in kind of a healing way, um, but this is, like, body, soul kind of healing.

**Travis:** The word that I would use— we watched, to prepare for this, we watched a Japanese tea ceremony right before we recorded. And the word I would use, uh, to describe it is "mindful," right? Because in order— like, just watching her movements it was very, like... nothing was rushed.

**Teresa:** Right.

**Travis:** Everything was very much like the idea of, like, "Now I am doing this. This is me scooping the thing. This is me wiping the thing." Right?

**Teresa:** Yeah, it is very mindful, except you're supposed to practice it until you don't have to think about it.

**Travis:** Well... yeah.

**Teresa:** Yeah.

**Travis:** I mean, that's what mindful is, you know?

**Teresa:** Is it? But— wait a minute. Is "mindful" knowing something so well that you don't have to think about it, or is "mindful" thinking about something that you know?

**Travis:** While you're present doing it? Um... I think it's about being mindful, being present in the moment, right? But the goal being that that is just how you're living naturally?

**Teresa:** Hmm.

**Travis:** Without—[sighs] this sounds so dumb. But, with mindfully being mindful, right? That you're just— that your autopilot is mindfulness.

**Teresa:** Okay.

**Travis:** If that makes sense? Yes.

**Teresa:** Sure. Um, nevertheless, it is definitely an enjoyable, comforting ritual, and it is rooted in the principles of Zen, Buddhism, and Shinto.

**Travis:** Uh, I would also say— and this is gonna sound like I'm making a joke, but in no way am I making light of this. Watching that ceremony video, if you are someone who experiences ASMR, you would enjoy this on, I would say, an even deeper level. Um, because that— there's something about it, too, that's a very common, like, ASMR trigger that has to do with, like, being taken care of. That feeling—

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

**Travis:** And so, like, when I was watching this woman prepare this, right? Every step seemed important in a way where it's just this feeling of, like, "Oh, this is something." Right? It's like when you have, um, you know, somebody— if you get measured for clothing and the person takes it very seriously and they're very sharp with their job, or, like, you have that, like, server at a restaurant who is, like, passionately describing, like, why the food— why they think you would enjoy this— like, that feeling of, like, "Oh, this is something. This is— there is a weight to this moment that makes it special."

**Teresa:** Mm-hmm.

**Travis:** And then it's just tingles galore.

**Teresa:** [chuckles] Um, so the whole ceremony is about preparing, serving, and then drinking the tea, uh, which is usually matcha, which we'll come back to that. Um, in a ritualistic way to promote well-being, mindfulness, harmony, and bonding between the host and the guest. There can be a guest of honor, and then several other people, or just one guest.

**Travis:** Like I was saying, that feeling of, "I am taking this very seriously to make, like, a cup of tea for you." It shows that, like, care in the simplicity of it.

**Teresa:** Absolutely.

**Travis:** Of just, like, "Hey, this is a simple thing that I could rush, but you mean so much to me that I am going to be so careful with this." And, like, yeah. It's beautiful.

**Teresa:** And, like a lot of the coolest things, it used to be only be practiced by the elites and monks and noble warlords, uh, throughout most of Japan's history. Um, and, like I said, it has ties to ancient China as well.

**Travis:** Sure.

**Teresa:** Um, so the Chinese were the first to adopt the practice of a ritual tea drinking, uh, which spread into Japan through trade. The leaves were first brought to Japan during the Nara period, which is somewhere between 710 CE and 784 CE.

**Travis:** So, what? That's, like... uhhh, what? 1300 years ago?

**Teresa:** Something like that.

**Travis:** Somewhere in there. Okay.

**Teresa:** Um, and the monks who brought them to Japan only used them in the temples for religious services. So, um, most of the Japanese tea ceremony is rooted in those ancient spiritual practices.

**Travis:** Okay. Alright.

**Teresa:** So, like I mentioned, tea has been used throughout history as a, uh, a wellness product—

**Travis:** Ever since a leaf fell into some water.

**Teresa:** [laughs]

**Travis:** And someone said, "Eh, why not? We're bored. We don't have TV yet. Let's try it." Okay, go on. Sorry.

**Teresa:** Uh, yeah, right. Uh, for medicinal purposes. And, you know, everything that's— that's cool gets used by the nobility first.

**Travis:** Mm-hmm.

**Teresa:** The thing is, they were right? There's not a lot of things that used as wellness products has a lot— you know. There's not—

**Travis:** Yeah, no, no, no.

**Teresa:** —there's not a lot in that bucket.

**Travis:** Yeah.

**Teresa:** But so far, we think that, yeah, green tea especially is great for you.

**Travis:** Man, antioxidants, you know. Free— free radical? No, tannins.

**Teresa:** Well, I don't—

**Travis:** You got delicious Biff Tannins in there.

**Teresa:** [wheeze-laughs]

**Travis:** But here's— but I will say that, like a lot of things, like honey, um, probably aspirin, um, tea, while it does have medicinal purposes, the number of things that could be ascribed to it in the past, of like, "And it'll fix this!"

**Teresa:** Yeah, that— yeah.

**Travis:** Like, nah, I don't know, man.

**Teresa:** Yeah.

**Travis:** I don't know about all that.

**Teresa:** Um, there's also caffeine in tea.

**Travis:** Which is great.

**Teresa:** Right. And they— then, way, way, way back, they probably didn't know that there— what caffeine was. But they—

**Travis:** Yeah, they just drank it and felt great?

**Teresa:** —they did know— yeah, that it was, like, kind of a— a pep-you-up machine.

**Travis:** Yeah, yeah, yeah.

**Teresa:** Um, and the Zen monks might have adapted this ritual in order to stay awake during longer periods of meditation.

**Travis:** This is what I will say, as someone who— there— so, the— the Zen center that I used to frequent, now I have kids and a just do it home— but I used to frequent, they will do, like, weekend-long, like, silent retreats.

**Teresa:** Hmm.

**Travis:** Uh, at a place called Furnace Mountain. And all I could think is, like, six hours sitting still, I would either get so bored, or just nap.

**Teresa:** [laughs]

**Travis:** And just take a little nap.

**Teresa:** That's what the tea was for.

**Travis:** Yeah! But then again, my— the Zen teacher there would often say, like, "Eh, if you fall asleep, you fall asleep. That's fine. That's great."

**Teresa:** That's very Zen of him.

**Travis:** Yeah, it's fine, whatever.

**Teresa:** [laughs] Um, so that leads us to the first patriarch of Zen Buddhism.

**Travis:** I would love to hear about that. But you know what I want to hear about first?

**Teresa:** Yeah?

**Travis:** Thank you notes for our sponsors.

[theme music plays]

**Travis:** You know wanna know what? This isn't one of those Hollywood advertising lies.

**Teresa:** Oh yeah?

**Travis:** This is true. We used DoorDash this evening.

**Teresa:** We did. [laughs]

**Travis:** So this is a thank you note to DoorDash as a sponsor, but also...

**Teresa:** [laughs]

**Travis:** ... uh, for providing our dinner this evening.

**Teresa:** [laughs]

**Travis:** Because sometimes when you have two kids and a I— and a life that's full of stuff, and you're just like, "You know what?! I want leftovers!" [wheezes]

**Teresa:** [laughs]

**Travis:** So you just— you go on DoorDash and you order, I would say, 1.5 times the amount of food that you need. Uh, but you know what else?



It's not just food, my friends. It's, uh, household necessities as well, as I just discovered. There's a liquor store on DoorDash near us.

**Teresa:** Yeah!

**Travis:** They've got everything on DoorDash now! Uh, snacks, drinks, household essentials, all in 30 minutes with DoorDash. They connect you with the restaurants you love. Uh, and like I said, get the other things you need. Not just, uh, meals from restaurants. Ordering is easy. Open the DoorDash app, choose what you want from where you want, and your items will be left safely outside your door with the contactless delivery drop off setting.

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**Teresa:** *Shmanners* is also sponsored in part by Zola! Weddings...

**Travis:** Yeah?

**Teresa:** ... beginning to happen again. So nice. Um, and I would love to introduce you to Zola, where you can create your very own special day on your very own site!

**Travis:** All your friends will be impressed, and they'll probably give you money for your honeymoon. Or, shall we say moneymoon!

**Teresa:** Ooh.

**Travis:** If you don't wanna go anywhere, I mean. Like, if you just want the money to, like, I don't know, fix your house or whatever.

**Teresa:** Right. And Zola can help you with that. Uh, they can help you create save-the-dates, invites, wedding website, uh, and gift registry, and all of this stuff. Like— so, the planning tools are great. And it's also fun to have, like, a centralized location that you can send everybody to, right?

**Travis:** Especially if you're inviting, like— I don't know, if you have any, like, friends or relatives that aren't tech savvy.

**Teresa:** Mm-hmm.

**Travis:** And you don't wanna be like, "Yeah, okay. So, here's this super long URL." Or, like, "Click through these three things." Or, "Just open this

thing I sent you, and then click... " [sighs] No. Just one place. One stop shop.

**Teresa:** So when you're planning your wedding, start with Zola. Go to [zola.com/shmanners](http://zola.com/shmanners) today, and use the promo code "save50" for 50% off—

**Travis:** What?!

**Teresa:** —your save-the-dates. I know! There's a lot of stuff that goes with a wedding, and that is a great deal. Zola is the one place to start for your wedding day. That's [zola.com/shmanners](http://zola.com/shmanners), code "save50".

[cheerful music plays]

**Dave:** Are you feeling elevated levels of anxiety?

[chime]

Do you quake uncontrollably even thinking about watching cable news?

[chime]

Do you have disturbing nightmares, only to realize it's two in the afternoon and you're up?

[three chimes]

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**Travis:** Okay. Where were we, Teresa?

**Teresa:** So, back to the Buddha Dharma.

**Travis:** Yes.

**Teresa:** Yes.

**Travis:** Yes. Tell me.

**Teresa:** There was— there was a guy... named Morata Shuko, which could also be pronounced Juko or Shukau.

**Travis:** Okay.

**Teresa:** Um, he was born sometime around 1423. Um, and—

**Travis:** A good y— a fine year.

**Teresa:** A fi—

**Travis:** Oh, the summer that year was so mild. I remember it well. Oh!

**Teresa:** [laughs quietly]

**Travis:** How we would walk by the stream.

**Teresa:** [quietly] We did?

**Travis:** Yeah, you remember?

**Teresa:** Okay. Um, he was present in the temple from a very early age, and eventually became a Buddhist priest. And just tea... didn't change his life.

**Travis:** Oh.

**Teresa:** But... one of his Zen teachers said to him that the Buddha Dharma is also in the Way of the Tea.

**Travis:** Okay?

**Teresa:** And before this, he had basically used the tea like everyone else did, just to kind of, like, stay awake to study, right? Um, but this hit him in a way where he decided to create the tea ceremony.

**Travis:** Okay.

**Teresa:** Yeah. Um, and so there was already some form of the ceremony in existence at the time, but Shuko set out to craft it into a uniquely Japanese experience. And in a funny way, he used the Chinese tea ceremony to make a Japanese one?

**Travis:** Yeah. Why— I mean, listen. Why reinvent the wheel? You know what I mean? Just take a wheel that's already there and make a better wheel. Or a different wheel, I should say.

**Teresa:** A different wheel.

**Travis:** A different wheel.

**Teresa:** A different wheel. Um, so Chinese utensils were totally in vogue at the time. Um, and the thing is, though, like... there were kind of, like, tea ceremony snobs that were like, "Ooh—"

**Travis:** [sarcastically] What?! Get outta town.

**Teresa:** You can't—[laughs]

**Travis:** [sarcastically] Tea snobs?! Wait, stop. You're telling me—[normal tone] Okay.

**Teresa:** [laughs] Uh, but he suggested that the tea ceremony beginners, because you have to practice it *a lot*, uh—

**Travis:** That's why it's called a practice. Go on.

**Teresa:** That's right. Uh, should start with Chinese pieces in order to fully appreciate Japanese utensils that they'll use later on once they're masters.

**Travis:** Okay. So this dude definitely thought his version was better, right?

**Teresa:** I mean, of course he did.

**Travis:** Yeah, okay.

**Teresa:** Everybody thinks their own brand is the best, right?

**Travis:** Well, yeah, absolutely.

**Teresa:** Um, and so he worked to create a Japanese tea culture that blended the useful elements of other practices, rather than, you know, starting over. The— the in— the wheel, I think, works great in this.

**Travis:** Yeah. I think that that is—

**Teresa:** That wheel you spoke of?

**Travis:** This wheel? Um, I think that that's probably pretty common as far as, like, taking a thing and making it your— like, I guarantee that— I mean, just here in the US, right? When you think about, for example, uh, the US— oh, the US! Famous for, like, barbecue, right? We didn't invent that from scratch, right? You take a process, you make it uniquely yours, right? And by "yours," I mean culturally, right?

**Teresa:** Right.

**Travis:** You take a thing— it's, I think, probably at this point, hard to track back some of this stuff. Uh, although [laughs quietly] here, tea, China. Got it. Okay, great, great, great.

**Teresa:** Um, and Shuko stressed four values in the tea ceremony. *Kin*, which a form of humble reverence.

**Travis:** Okay.

**Teresa:** *Ke*, a respect for the food and drink.

**Travis:** Uh-huh.

**Teresa:** *Sei*, purity of both body and spirit.

**Travis:** Sure.

**Teresa:** And *Jaku*, a Buddhist concept denoting calmness and freedom from desire.

**Travis:** I will say that that is another thing, uh, in watching the ceremony that we watched, right? The moves, that first one, uh, specifically *Kin*, I believe, uh, that idea of— it wasn't flashy, right? This isn't, like, you showing off how good you're doing it. It's very, like, smooth, direct, uh, succinct motions, right? And not, like, "Hoo! Watch— eyy, I'm flippin' cups." Right? Like, there not a lot...

**Teresa:** [laughs] Yeah.

**Travis:** ... of— it's not like the movie *Cocktail*, right? This is very much like—

**Teresa:** Oh, right, exactly.

**Travis:** —where this isn't me showing off.

**Teresa:** Shake-a, shake-a, shake-a, shake-a, shake-a, shake-a, shake-a.

**Travis:** Yeah. Like, the impressiveness is in, like, the... precision, right?

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

**Travis:** And mindfulness, and not in the, like, flashiness, right?

**Teresa:** And so, everybody was totally into it. The 15th century brought a swell of tea gatherings. People would come together to drink tea and discuss the aesthetic merits of painting and calligraphy—

**Travis:** Oh, see, I thought you were gonna say, like—

**Teresa:** —and flower arrangements.

**Travis:** —they came together to drink tea, to discuss tea, to look at tea...

**Teresa:** [laughs] I mean, they did do that.

**Travis:** Yeah.

**Teresa:** There was a form of, like— do you remember that, um, Bob's Burgers, uh, episode, wine train?

**Travis:** Sure. Sure, sure, sure, sure.

**Teresa:** Where they have the wine-off?

**Travis:** Yeah? Yeah.

**Teresa:** There was something very similar at the time where you had three cups of known tea and then one cup—

**Travis:** Mystery tea!

**Teresa:** —of mystery tea, and you were supposed to taste them.

**Travis:** I love mystery tea.

**Teresa:** And taste them and figure out what region the tea leaves came from.

**Travis:** Get out. Okay.

**Teresa:** Anyway. Um, so another very famous believer in the power of the tea ceremony was named Sen Rikyu, who was another, you know— another all-around... appreciative kind of— of— of the arts person.

**Travis:** A connoisseur?

**Teresa:** Well, so technically the word is aestheticist?

**Travis:** [quietly sounding it out] A—as—aste—as...

**Teresa:** Aestheticist.

**Travis:** Aestheticist? Aesteti—

**Teresa:** Aestheticist?

**Travis:** Sure. That's what I'm gonna go with.

**Teresa:** Okay.

**Travis:** There's a C in there, I assume.

**Teresa:** Yes.

**Travis:** Gonna make it a soft C.

**Teresa:** Okay.

**Travis:** Aestheticist.

**Teresa:** Someone who [crosstalk]—

**Travis:** Can I just say, seven-year-old Travis would've hated that word.

**Teresa:** [laughs]

**Travis:** Oh, that was pre-speech therapy Travis. Oh boy. Get outta town. Aestheticist.

**Teresa:** Uh, so it's about making things beautiful and balanced and, you know, generally appreciating the way something looks, and the vibes it gives off.

**Travis:** Yeah.

**Teresa:** Okay.

**Travis:** That makes sense.

**Teresa:** Um, so, uh—

**Travis:** Aestheticist is better than beauty appreciator, right?

**Teresa:** [laughs]

**Travis:** It's— it's a lot... more beautiful.

**Teresa:** Uh, so Rikyu adapted Shuko's tea style into a ceremony known as *Wabi-cha*, which roughly translates to "absence of ornament." So he—

**Travis:** Once again, yeah, yeah.

**Teresa:** Yeah.

**Travis:** Simple. Clean. Not showy, not flashy. Yeah.

**Teresa:** That's right. So it was distilled a little more down, focusing on harmony, right? Between guests and implements, and respect for utensils, and the tranquility. Like, a lot of it, like... and the cleanliness of it? Did you notice in the tea ceremony—

**Travis:** A lot of wiping.

**Teresa:** A lot of wiping of things. Right, exactly.

**Travis:** Very— but once again, precise wiping.

**Teresa:** Yes.

**Travis:** Not like, "Oops! Let me get that." It was like, *fwoomp*. Right in one clean movement, one clean— like, yeah.

**Teresa:** Mm-hmm.

**Travis:** Ritualistic wiping.

**Teresa:** Yes. So the ceremony has changed, and continues to be, you know, given flair of certain things. Sometimes the silk, the silk wipe is different colors or whatever. Um—

**Travis:** Ever-evolving.

**Teresa:** Ever minimally evolving.

**Travis:** Yes. Tiny.

**Teresa:** Um, and so some perform the tea ceremonies as a hobby. Some more as, like, religion. Some more as, like, Japanese art.

**Travis:** Yeah.

**Teresa:** Um, but it takes a very long time to perfect it. Um, and it's said that training to become a tea master is not unlike training to become a master at Japanese martial arts.

**Travis:** Yeah. I can see that.



**Teresa:** Right. Um, so...

**Travis:** I will say, though, much like anything, this is how I feel whenever I watch, like, gymnastics. Where of course, of course it's amazing to watch the athlete do the thing. But I also want to just talk to the judges and be like, "How do you get good enough to catch everything that they're doing?" 'Cause there must be people who, like, watch, like, a Japanese tea ceremony like we watched and go like, "Oh, they didn't do this." Or, like, "Oh, nope! Supposed to go to the left." Or whatever. Right?

**Teresa:** Sure.

**Travis:** And they couldn't do it, but they definitely know when someone else does something wrong. That's more of what I want to study. Okay.

**Teresa:** I see. Okay.

**Travis:** It was a long walk to get there, but—

**Teresa:** You just wanna be a critique.

**Travis:** Well... I don't like it when you put it— uh, I wanna be, uh, a non-practicing expert. How about that?

**Teresa:** [laughs] I don't think that's possible. Not in— not in this.

**Travis:** I mean, you could read books.

**Teresa:** [laughs] Okay.

**Travis:** I've done it with magic. I know how all magic tricks work, but I can't do 'em.

**Teresa:** [laughs] Okay. Let me walk you through the tea ceremony, uh, in a very simplistic manner.

**Travis:** Okay.

**Teresa:** So, there's usually a tea house, uh, which can be a small structure detached from the main house or it can be a special designated room in the house.

**Travis:** Okay.

**Teresa:** Um, it should be a little more rustic, but simplistic. Um, and they're usually about nine foot square. Um, and there is a little alcove, uh, that may hold a flower, a scroll, something beautiful in a way that is also eye catching.

**Travis:** Okay.

**Teresa:** The ceremony actually starts before you make the tea. You have to prepare the tea room.

**Travis:** Yeah.

**Teresa:** Prepare the sweets that go along with it as, like, a contrast to the bitterness of the tea, and then you prepare the tea itself. So, some of these phases are done with kind of, like, polite conversation, and some are done in complete silence. The preparation is where the participants stay silent. All of the focus is on the meditative act of preparing the tea, um, again, because there's a spiritual element to it, right?

**Travis:** Sure.

**Teresa:** You can set it up in a formal style or an informal style. Informal is what you would usually come across. It's about 45 minutes, while the formal ceremony can last four hours.

**Travis:** Hoo, boy!

**Teresa:** Like, one, two, three, four.

**Travis:** Yes.

**Teresa:** Four.

**Travis:** No, yes, the number four hours, not for hours.

**Teresa:** Right.

**Travis:** Four hours.

**Teresa:** That's right. That's right.

**Travis:** That's why it's better in West Virginia, 'cause we would just say, "fer hours."

**Teresa:** [laughs]

**Travis:** Or "four hours." Right?

**Teresa:** Ahh, hmm.

**Travis:** It's clearer, right? "Fer. Four."

**Teresa:** So that four-hour-long one is not just tea, but it's also, like, a meal.

**Travis:** I should hope so!

**Teresa:** [laughs]

**Travis:** Blood sugar drops over four hours! I hope there's snacks! If anyone told me I had to be anywhere for four hours, the next question would be, like, "Cool. Is a meal provided?" I am like a hobbit in that respect. Okay.

**Teresa:** [laughs] Like a lot of ceremonies or, you know, special occasions, invitations should be sent to guests weeks in advance so that they can have time to properly and leisurely prepare. Uh, so it's not just about lookin' fancy and shinin' your shoes. It's more of, like, an inner preparedness.

**Travis:** Right.

**Teresa:** Right?

**Travis:** You don't wanna show up to it with a lot of stuff on your mind, and turmoil or whatever. You need some time to get in the right head space, yeah.

**Teresa:** Right. Um, so then, uh, the— you may have your meal, um, and it is the, like, all the small dishes kind of set around-type meal, not like... sit down at a restaurant-type meal. You know what I mean?

**Travis:** Sure. Sure, yeah, yeah.

**Teresa:** Like, it's all very... almost tastes of a food.

**Travis:** Sure, sure, sure.

**Teresa:** Um—

**Travis:** Aw, man, I'm really hungry. Okay, go on.

**Teresa:** [laughs] Uh, so, I mean, there's a lot of bowing. There's a lot of stand up, kneel-type stuff. Uh, I can't begin to tell you all the times that the host would bow. But there is usually a guest of honor who is— pretty much, like, eats first, you know?

**Travis:** Yeah, that's usually me.

**Teresa:** Oh, is it?

**Travis:** Yeah. At every... tea ceremony. It's almost always me. Yeah, I'm busy! Very busy!

**Teresa:** [laughs]

**Travis:** Phew!

**Teresa:** And like— like a, you know, English high tea or English afternoon tea, there are subjects that one is permitted to talk about, and subjects that one isn't permitted.

**Travis:** Yeah. No spoilers.

**Teresa:** [laughs]

**Travis:** You can't talk about the newest episode of *Ted Lasso* until everyone's watched it.

**Teresa:** [laughs] Uh, it is incredibly good manners to show interest in the tools of the— of the— the set, right? The tea set, um, as well as to appear very reverent when you hold them. Um, and the guest of honor can actually comment on, you know, like, the food, and, you know, ask the host where their utensils were made, and things like that. And that's part of the ritual.

And so the next part is the silent part, where you're actually making the tea. Making— like, whisking in the matcha and all that stuff. And, like, there's a lot of kind of... it's almost like a puzzle, right? Where this thing has to be moved here, and then this thing moves here, and then I pick up this thing, and I move— and the whole part, like, that's part of the practice, right? That's the meditation. So you're supposed to practice it enough so that— what we were talking about earlier. You can do it, your muscles just do it, but you also are watching yourself and doing it. You know?

**Travis:** Yeah. And I will also say, once again, uh, ASMR enjoyers, that whisking of the matcha? Ohh! It's very good. The one we watched, it was, like, this, uh, wooden kind of whisk that looked a lot like those, like, head massager things, you know? That you put on the top of your head?

**Teresa:** Mm-hmm. It did, a little bit.

**Travis:** Uh, but with a lot more tines. And— and— and the kind of whisking of it was a very, very, very pleasant sound, uh, and movement.

Now, Teresa, you had mentioned that we would talk about matcha later. Um, is that because you do not enjoy... the taste of the matcha?

**Teresa:** [quietly] Yes.

**Travis:** Yeah.

**Teresa:** I think that matcha is a, um— is an acquired taste, in the fullest sense of the word. And I'm not acquired to it yet. I have not acquired that taste, because it's... it's like jumping into the deep end of a very cold pool, right?

**Travis:** See, but I think... okay. There are two things that when I am a ki— when I was a kid I thought tea would taste like, right?

**Teresa:** Okay.

**Travis:** One was basically sugar water, right? That it would be like if you put a, like, uh, uh, like a raspberry tea kind of thing into a thing, it would taste like raspberry. It would taste like juice.

**Teresa:** Mm-hmm.

**Travis:** Right? And then the other thing that I thought it would taste like is like matcha, or like yerba mate, right? Where it's just, like, straight up, like, this is, like, grass water, right?

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

**Travis:** And so I liked that.

**Teresa:** Okay.

**Travis:** And I liked, like, sweet tea. And sometimes then I get a tea and then I'm like, "This is nothing. This is— this does nothing for me."

**Teresa:** Be one thing or the other thing, is what you're saying?

**Travis:** This is why— I— li— listen. Coffee is exactly what it promises. You smell coffee, you taste coffee, you're like, "Mm-hmm. Yep! I don't know if I like this or not, but it's definitely something."

**Teresa:** Yeah.

**Travis:** And that's why I sometimes get thrown off by tea where I'm like, "Oh! Red raspberry, you say?" Like, well, I guess. I guess th— but that's why I like matcha, because matcha is a thing. Yerba mate is a thing. Super sweet tea is the thing. Although one time we got a tea that we thought Bebe would really like—

**Teresa:** Oh, yeah.

**Travis:** —for a tea party. And it was, like, a bubble gum something something. And we're like, "Oh, awesome." Come to find out that all that meant was, like, it had gumballs in it!

**Teresa:** [dry-heaves]

**Travis:** And I was like, "No. No, no, no, no, no."

**Teresa:** Well, I mean, if you s—

**Travis:** It was loose leaf tea. Like, it was a loose leaf tea with gumballs in it.

**Teresa:** If you steep a gumball the candy does dissolve.

**Travis:** I mean, sure. But at that point, that's just a waste of gumballs.

**Teresa:** Yeah. So matcha, I have not yet decided to like it.

**Travis:** But someday.

**Teresa:** Maybe.

**Travis:** Yeah. Okay. That's gonna do it for us, folks. Thank you so much for joining us. Uh, thank you to Nico for suggesting the topic. Thank you to Alex for doing so much research for us, and happy birthday, Alex.

**Teresa:** That's right.

**Travis:** Everybody, Alex reads all your emails, so make sure that you say happy birthday.

**Teresa:** Also, um, if you would like to watch a tea ceremony, check out some of the YouTube videos in our sources list.

**Travis:** Um, and let's see, what else? Oh, thank you to Alex for the research, of course. Couldn't do it without you.

**Teresa:** Of course, yes.

**Travis:** Thank you to our podcast home, Maximumfun.org. If you wanna check out other Ma— uh, McElroy shows, you can go to mcelroy.family. Umm... let's see. What else, Teresa?

**Teresa:** We always thank Brent "brentalfloss" Black for writing our theme music, which is available as a ringtone where those are found.

Thank you to Kayla M. Wasil for our Twitter thumbnail art. That's @shmannerscast. And often we do put out the call for questions for episodes, and that's where you can submit your answers. Um, thank you to Bruja Betty Pinup Photography for the cover picture of our fan-run Facebook group, *Shmanners* Fanners. Uh, if you love to give and get excellent advice, please join that fan-run group. Um, and also keep submitting all of your topics, and happy birthdays to Alex, and that is shmannerscast@gmail.com. Oh! And your idioms. We always are collecting idioms.

**Travis:** And that's gonna do it for 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]

[chord]

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