

Shmanners 285: Apple Cider

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Travis: You know what's worse than finding a worm in your apple?

Teresa: What?

Travis: Like, a lot of stu— I mean, a lot of things. It's not that bad when you really think about it.

Teresa: It's *Shmanners*.

[theme music plays]

Travis: Because— 'cause the joke is normally "half a worm in your apple," right? But, like—

Teresa: [simultaneously] Right, yeah.

Travis: —when you think about, there's a lot of things that could be— 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. I thought you were going somewhere with that.

Travis: Well, like, the— 'cause the joke— 'cause it's a joke, and the joke is, "What's worse than finding a worm in your apple? Finding half a worm in your apple." Because it's like you bit the worm. But the—

Teresa: Right, but I thought that you were actually going to a joke when you didn't really make— what do they call that? Anti-humor?

Travis: An anti-joke, yes. It was an anti-joke.

Teresa: Mm-hmm.

Travis: Uh, the— I was trying to figure out something along the lines of, like, "Do you like apples?"

And then you'd be like, "Yeah."

And I'd be like, "That's cool. Have my apple."

Instead of, like, "How do you like them apples?" You know? But... listen. It's apples. I don't know that apples are inherently funny. The other one I thought is, like, "I had a doctor's appointment today, but I ate an apple and the doctor canceled." I don't know— that's nothing! 'Cause the doctor—[sighs]

Teresa: Oh, okay. Well, I kind of like that one. But it's alright. You're right. I mean, there are worse things.

Travis: This is what I'm saying. We're talking about apples.

Teresa: Right, apples. Well, apple cider specifically.

Travis: Or as I like to call it, apple— apple— spicy apple juice.

Teresa: [laughs] We have a— a... gallon? No, we have a half gallon of apple cider.

Travis: I can't keep track. I have no idea.

Teresa: In our refrigerator as we speak. And we also have a bottle of sparkling apple cider.

Travis: Or as we call it, and I don't know if this is a good parent moment or a bad parent moment, kid wine.

Teresa: Well, you know, we like wine, and the— the kids, they want to have wine, but they can't... have it.

Travis: So we give 'em kid wine.

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: Which is like the non-alcoholic sparkling juices.

Teresa: Yes. So... let's— let's make, first, a couple of distinctions.

Travis: Yes, please. Are we going to talk about the difference between juice and cider, and can I guess?

Teresa: A little bit, yes.

Travis: Yes, I can guess?

Teresa: Sure.

Travis: I think the difference is that apple cider is— like, contains particulate apple— apple... bits? Part— is—

Teresa: It's unfiltered.

Travis: Yes, okay.

Teresa: Yes. Yes, it is. Um, and so in Britain, and other places around the world, alcoholic cider is just cider, right?

Travis: Uh-huh.

Teresa: But in the US, when we say "cider," we are referring to the non-alcoholic unfiltered juice made directly from fresh apples, and it can be served warm or cold.

Travis: Okay. So that's why here we say, like, a hard cider.

Teresa: Exactly, yes.

Travis: Okay. Which that means, like, an alcoholic— which is always so funny to me. Is, like— like, a cider's been workin' out. [laughs]

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: [through gritted teeth] Gimme a hard cider! Oh, he's tough. That's a tough cider.

Teresa: Um, there are lots of beverages—

Travis: Over there in Britain do they call it soft cider? "Gimme a soft cider." It's a non-alcoholic cider.

Teresa: No, I don't think so. I think it's just apple juice. So when we— in US, when we talk about apple juice, it's been filtered and pasteurized.

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: Right? To last a lot longer. It's pretty shelf stable at this point. But there's filtered juice... I think there's filtered cider, and there's unfilter— like, there's— there's a lot of different distinctions, but here in the US, for our purposes, unfiltered pressed apples.

Travis: Okay. Non-alcoholic.

Teresa: Non-alcoholic, is cider.

Travis: Which is always so fun here because, like, people will take said non-alcoholic cider and add a bourbon to it, and maybe some melted butter and mulling spices. Oh!

Teresa: Oh, sounds delicious.

Travis: I want it so bad!

Teresa: Yeah, I do too. Um—

Travis: You know what? Show's canceled! Thank you all so much.

Teresa: [laughs] So, cider. Hard, alcoholic cider.

Travis: Uh-huh.

Teresa: Hard cider, um, probably dates back all the way next to wine, right? Wine and beer. Like—

Travis: It's— it's old apples instead of old, uh, grapes.

Teresa: That's right, that's right. Uh, scientists actually believe that the apple as a plant is nearly 50 million years old.

Travis: Oh, wow.

Teresa: That's pretty old!

Travis: Now, but fun fact, fun biblical fact— now that's rare— when people talk about the apple in the garden... it probably wasn't an apple.

Teresa: Probably.

Travis: It was probably a promega— prome— pomegran—pomegranate.

Teresa: There's a lot—[wheeze-laughs] there's a lot of debate.

Travis: Took a couple runs at it.

Teresa: Could be also a fig.

Travis: Could be a fig.

Teresa: Yeah.

Travis: Or a figegrantate, which is what I—

Teresa: What?

Travis: I crossbred them—

Teresa: No.

Travis: —so then when you break it open, a bunch of little figs in there.
[laughs quietly]

Teresa: Or one giant pomegranate seed.

Travis: Oh my God, you're right.

Teresa: That would be great.

Travis: Yeah, it would be. Man, a lot less work.

Teresa: The seeds are the most annoying part.

Travis: It's the part you eat!

Teresa: That's not the part that I eat.

Travis: Oh, you mean the— 'cause you have the little bubbles.

Teresa: Right.

Travis: Of juice.

Teresa: Yeah.

Travis: And then they got the kernels.

Teresa: Yeah. The kernels I don't like. Anyway, anyway, anyway.
Apples? Not actually native to North America. Like, at all.

Travis: Huh!

Teresa: Yeah.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: They probably originated in Kazakhstan.

Travis: Really!

Teresa: And in Central Asia, east of the Caspian Sea.

Travis: Okay. Okay.

Teresa: Because it is a very temperate climate that they require.

Travis: I mean, it's temperate here.

Teresa: Yeah, no, it totally is, which is why—

Travis: I don't know why— I— I took that as an insult for some reason.

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: I was like, "What do you mean?! It's temperate. We live in Ohio! It's temperate!"

Teresa: Yes, yes. Um, there's evidence, there's prehistoric evidence that apple trees are in pretty much every single temperate zone, right?

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: And the way that they spread... are bears.

Travis: *Bears?!*

Teresa: Oh, wow.

Travis: Sorry.

Teresa: That's a big—

Travis: That was a big—[softly] bears?

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: The bears ate it, then crossed across the frozen... thing. You know, that one that's—

Teresa: Yeah, that bridge.

Travis: The bridge, the land bridge, and then they pooped out the seeds?

Teresa: Um, so—

Travis: Or the bears carried it with 'em, like a Johnny Applebear!

Teresa: No.

Travis: Bear-ny Appleseed.

Teresa: No, no, no. You were right the first time. The poops. Because—

Travis: Okay, but picture the first— the second one I said, of a pear with a— a bear with a pot on its head and a little satchel.

Teresa: Mm-hmm. That's cute. Does he also like pic-a-nics?

Travis: He does!

Teresa: [laughs] Um, because bears can go, like, 50 miles, just inside their territory. Um, so that's— that's how they spread naturally, right?

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: Uh, sorry, 50 miles— an average of 50 miles a day.

Travis: Ooh. Oh, wow! Really? Wow, okay! Good job, bear.

Teresa: And the reason why this works so well is because the seeds are indigestible, right? Um, and then when they go through, the rest of the fecal matter is fertilizer, basically.

Travis: Uh, speaking of— and this is worth noting— is, uh— so, apple seeds, as we're talking about, do contain... what is it, arsenic?

Teresa: Yes.

Travis: But in such low, low, low quantities, um, you would have to eat a lot of seeds all at one time to ever feel any effects of it. And most—

Teresa: And it would— and they would have to be powdered, because they are indigestible.

Travis: Well, yes. That's the other thing, right? So mostly when we talk about it, you're talking about extracting the arsenic from that. And I think also, like, peach pits contain arsenic as well? And there is a process that you can extract the arsenic from them in usable form. But if you swallow, like, an apple seed while you're eating an apple, it's not gonna make you sick.

Teresa: Right. It'll just come out in— in poops.

Travis: Come out the way it went in.

Teresa: No, the other way.

Travis: Well, no, I didn't mean the same *direction*, I meant—

Teresa: Oh, oh, okay. [laughs]

Travis: —in the same form.

Teresa: The same form. That's right. Um, so the early Kazakhstani apples were developed and modified over thousands of years into the multiple species of apples that we enjoy today. Um, they probably started with, like, sour crab apples, right?

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: Um, around 750 years ago or so. Um, and they weren't actually fully cultivated, um, by Neolithic farmers in modern day Asia until about 8000 years ago. But, I mean, of course since they were around for the hunter-gatherer times, they were very important still. So, here's the thing. [laughs quietly] You really could only eat apples after they'd been fermented. They were so hard, and so sour, they were not— it wasn't like pickin' off the tree to eat, at all.

Travis: No.

Teresa: Have you ever eaten a crab apple?

Travis: Tried to once, yeah, gross! Gross, gross, gross. My, uh, great-grandmother on my mom's side, I think, had a crab apple tree that, like, grew in her backyard. Don't recommend it.

Teresa: I have never enjoyed the smell, so I've never been tempted to eat one.

Travis: Oh, but you're also, um, smarter, and— and not—

Teresa: Oh. [laughs]

Travis: —as impulsive as I am. Where it's just like, "Yeah, I don't know. Maybe this is food."

Teresa: But, I mean, like I said, you *can* eat crab apples, um, but they're just so bitter, you know? And that's why people, for thousands of years, pressed them into juice, which then they would let ferment, you know, wildly ferment. There's no, like— like, a scoby or whatever we've talked about with, uh— with, um, kombucha.

Travis: Ah.

Teresa: So you basically, like— like people used to do with sourdough bread, you just leave it out, leave it open.

Travis: Well, they don't used to do it.

Teresa: Wha?

Travis: I st— I still make sourdough bread like that.

Teresa: You make wild-yeasted sourdough?

Travis: Yeah! Well, yeah.

Teresa: No— no, I've seen you with the little packets.

Travis: No, I don't put packets in my sourdough! Get outta the town. I put packets in when a specific recipe calls for it—

Teresa: Okay.

Travis: —but I don't put it into my starter. How *dare* you!

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: I've had a sourdough going for about, what, 19, 20 months now, and you're like, "You put yeast in there?" Oh my God. I should have you up on charges.

Teresa: [laughs] Okay.

Travis: I don't feel like you're taking this seriously!

Teresa: [muffled laughter]

Travis: I'm outraged, and you're giggling like a schoolchild!

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: How could you?

Teresa: You don't sound outraged.

Travis: I *am* outraged!

Teresa: You sound like you're playing at outrage.

Travis: No! Just because I sound like Schmidt from *New Girl*—

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: —doesn't mean I'm not really mad!

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: Oh boy.

Teresa: Okay. Alright.

Travis: This is the respect I get in my own home!

Teresa: [wheezy laughter] I gotta bring this back in.

Travis: Ughhh!

Teresa: [sighs] Okay. Cider was trendy, okay?

Travis: Yeah, of course, yeah.

Teresa: It spread literally everywhere.

Travis: [high-pitched, doubtful] Everywhere?

Teresa: [high-pitched] Everywhere? [normal pitch] Anywhere there was a temperate zone and people were movin' around, they moved apples with them. Um—

Travis: Speaking of— oh, oh, can I talk about him? I don't know if you had notes on him, but I mentioned Johnny Appleseed earlier.

Teresa: Yeah, sure! Go ahead. This is a great time for that. Because—

Travis: Okay, I'm totally going to.

Teresa: —the original Johnny Appleseeds were the Romans.

Travis: Oh!

Teresa: But they didn't do it by seed, they spread their apples everywhere they had their empire through grafting branches.

Travis: Oh, interesting!

Teresa: So cool! But go on.

Travis: Okay. I'll tell you about Johnny Appleseed, right after this message for our sponsors!

Teresa: I thought we called those thank you notes.

Travis: It is thank you notes, I just got so excited.

[theme music plays]

Travis: *Shmanners* wants to write a very special thank you note to Wild Alaskan Company. If you like to cook, you know that flavorful meals start with high quality food and simple ingredients. With Wild Alaskan Company, their seafood is frozen right after its caught for peak freshness, so you can avoid the fuss of unhealthy sauces and over seasoning. Instead, all you need are a few simple ingredients, and you've got a delicious lunch or dinner for you or your whole family.

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[music plays]

Speaker One: Hey, kid. Your dad tell you about the time he broke Stephen Dorff's nose at the Kid's Choice Awards?

[audience laughs]

Speaker Two: In *Dead Pilots Society*, scripts that were developed by studios and networks but were never produced are given the table reads they deserve.

Speaker Three: When I was a kid, I had to spend my Christmas break filming a PSA about Angel Dust! So yeah, bein' a kid sucks sometimes.

[audience laughs]

Speaker Two: Presented by Andrew Reich and Ben Blacker. *Dead Pilots Society*, twice a month on Maximumfun.org.

Speaker Four: You know, the show you like. That hobo with the scarf who lives in a magic dumpster?

[audience laughs]

Speaker Five: *Doctor Who*?

Speaker Four: Yeah!

[audience laughs and applauds]

Travis: Johnny Appleseed was a real person, right? And it's difficult sometimes, because American folklore being what it is, it is often hard to discern fact from fiction. But his name was John Chapman, and he was born in Massachusetts in 1774, and he basically— he planted apple tree nurseries in the Allegheny Valley, which is, you know, the valley with the Allegheny mountains.

Teresa: Mm-hmm.

Travis: Uh, that runs— I wanna say it's, like, Pennsylvania and Ohio, something like that. But, uh, he started it in Pennsylvania, about 1798, and then he traveled west through Ohio, planting as he went, and he would walk for miles every day, sleep outdoors, exactly what you think of when you think of Johnny Appleseed. Uh, and he would plant these, like, tree nurseries. Uh, and one of the interesting things about him is he was very good at kind of predicting where the next settler rush was gonna be, so he could plant one of his tree nurseries there, have it growing by the time they got there, boom.

Um, and also, the trees that he was planting, much as we have discussed, were not, like, sweet dessert apples. These were cider apples.

Teresa: Right, yeah, because that's basically how everybody knew apples. You weren't really eating apples out of hand. You were pressing 'em into cider. Delicious, alcoholic, hard cider.

Travis: Um, and he was very memorable for instead of a shirt he wore a sack with holes for his head and arms, uh, on his feet were worn out

shoes or no shoes at all, and he carried a bag of apple seeds. There you go.

So, uh, it's— it's not actually that far off from what we think of as Johnny Appleseed!

Teresa: Yeah! So, one of the reasons why he probably did that is because the early colonists at that time didn't really understand water pollution.

Travis: Oh.

Teresa: They didn't, like, figure out the—

Travis: Oh yeah, this is— we've talked about this with the beer stuff too, where they were like, "Everybody's drinking the water and they get sick. Must be demons!" [laughs quietly]

Teresa: [laughs] But not just that, but they didn't understand, like, the runoff they were creating, and the sewage, and it was just— they had— they had, like, such a poor concept of keeping the drinking source clean that pretty much everybody drank cider. I mean, there's even references that, um, babies were given cider. And I know that we hear this a lot more with beer, but the fact of the matter is, the, um, Atlantic colonies, right? Were actually not as good for growing, like, hops and wheat. They were better at growing apples.

Travis: Hmm.

Teresa: And not until much later, when, you know, the westward expansion started, were people able to actually grow grain and hops for beer.

Travis: Yeah. And also at this time— I mean, I assume if it's the same as, like, short beer, um, when we talk about these, they were also not as good— I mean, obviously they didn't have the same kind of serialization and— and technologies as we do. So the alcohol content would've been lower, right? They probably weren't giving kids, like, you know, 11% ABV, you know?

Teresa: Probably not. But Alex, very interestingly, gave me a tidbit about making your apple cider *more* alcoholic.

Travis: Go on?

Teresa: So, what you would do is you would take your— your hard cider, and you would leave the barrel open outside over winter. So, what would happen is the water would freeze.

Travis: Ohh.

Teresa: But the alcohol would stay in, right? So you wait for it to kind of separate a little bit, you take the ice out of it, from the water, and you can do that several times, thereby, like, just getting—

Travis: Condensing it.

Teresa: Condensing it into, like, a thick, syrupy alcohol.

Travis: Ooh la la, that's— wow— oh boy! [laughs] Oh boy. Oh my lanta. I don't know how I feel about that. Seems risky.

Teresa: Mm-hmm! So, um, everybody loved it. George Washington loved it.

Travis: Oh yeah.

Teresa: Sam Addams loved it.

Travis: That guy couldn't tell a lie, too, so you know it was true.

Teresa: [sad trumpet noise] Um, and around this time, Washington was busy with his political career, right?

Travis: I wish you all at home could see how Teresa just demon— like, physically acted out political career.

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: She did this kind of, like, arm pumping—

Teresa: No, that— that's busy, that's busy, not political career.

Travis: Are you sure? 'Cause you didn't start doing it until you said the words "political career," and it looked like you were, like, very pointedly marching down—[gruff voice] hup, hup, hup, hup, hup.

Teresa: And so, when young Washington ran for Virginia's House of Burgess in 1755, he thought that the current practice of basically buying people drinks to secure votes, uh, was crude and ungentlemanly.

Travis: Oh!

Teresa: So he didn't do it, and he lost. [laughs]

Travis: Well, there you go.

Teresa: But in—

Travis: So, wait! It was literally back then, like, "Someone you could have a drink with."

Teresa: Yeah! Totally.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: So, in 17—

Travis: Not a new idea, okay.

Teresa: Not a new idea. Nothing new under the sun.

Travis: God knows that's true.

Teresa: 1758, uh, his campaign served up 144 gallons of hard cider to potential voters, and he breezed into his new office.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: I mentioned that Sam Addams also loved cider. He—

Travis: And beer, that guy.

Teresa: And beer.

Travis: I have to assume. [beat] Well, 'cause it's named—

Teresa: He believed that, uh, cider counted as one of your apples a day. [laughs quietly]

Travis: Huh.

Teresa: To keep the doctor away.

Travis: I can't prove that it doesn't, but that feels wrong, doesn't it?

Teresa: Hmm... Jefferson, Ben Franklin, all loved cider. Also, um, Jefferson had a very large orchard in Monticello. All this kind of stuff, right?

So there is a very historical significance, especially in the US, for cider, until...

Travis: Wait. When?

Teresa: Until the waves of immigration from Germany and Europe over the years brought a deep love of beer, and people settled in the Midwest, started growing more grain, more hops, in the better climate, right?

Travis: I completely forgot how time worked for a second, 'cause I thought you were gonna say Prohibition.

Teresa: Oh, definitely Prohibition.

Travis: But that came way longer, because I was just having the thought process as I'm listening to you talk about, like, all these founders who loved cider. And I was like, so, how come here in the US if you say "cider" you're talking about the non-alcoholic version, and in Britain if you say "cider" you're talking about the alcoholic version? And then it hit me: Prohibition.

Teresa: Prohibition, exactly.

Travis: Prohibition was the difference, okay.

Teresa: Um, so the—

Travis: But I jumped way ahead.

Teresa: [laughs] Well, I mean, we can go there. We totally can —

Travis: You wanna go there?

Teresa: We're going.

Travis: You wanna *go* there?

Teresa: Um, Prohibition made producing liquor into a crime in the United States, we know, and so one of the in vogue things that anti-alcohol farmers would do is torch their orchards.

Travis: What a waste.

Teresa: I know, right? Um, in the early 1800's, farmers would mow down their entire orchard because they couldn't imagine using apples for anything besides pressing them into cider.

Travis: What about pie?

Teresa: I know, right? So many other things you can use apples for.

Travis: Yeah! I mean, throwing 'em at each other, if nothing else. Using 'em to scare away birds. I wouldn't do that. That seems mean.

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: But if you're a farmer, maybe.

Teresa: The loophole that kept cider alive is that it wasn't technically hard liquor, or beer, or wine. Right? So you could still drink it during Prohibition if you could find it.

Travis: Ohhh, okay.

Teresa: In 1920, cider prices leapt up to several dollars a gallon, which is a lot in 1920. Um, and the prices skyrocketed because a lot of farmers, the ones that hadn't gotten rid of their orchards, were hoarding them, right? For cider making.

Um, and so those few years of Prohibition, cider was actually served instead of champagne or scotch for New Years.

Travis: Get out.

Teresa: Um, and finally, uh, the cider dilemma... those were my quotation marks.

Travis: Yeah, yeah, no, no, yeah.

Teresa: Uh, six months into Prohibition was addressed. The newly formed Bureau of Prohibition—[sarcastically] that sounds really fun...

Travis: [blows raspberry]

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: Hey, I'm glad finally someone's sticking it to Prohibition! I'm proud of you for having the courage to say that Prohibition sounded like no fun.

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: Finally, someone stands up to Prohibition.

Teresa: Made a public ruling that the ban on fruit juices, nonintoxicating beverages, including apple cider, uh, made it a loophole, so that everybody could home brew their own spirit. 'Cause it's just apple juice, guys!

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: You thought I was going the other way, right? But, so— okay.

Travis: So they officially said, like, why you can't—"

Teresa: They— no, no, no. They officially said, "does not include apple cider."

Travis: Ohh, okay.

Teresa: Um, because— so, we had that toast, the New Years champagne toast, and then on the 16th of January was when Prohibition took hold.

Travis: And they were like, "Hey, hey! No!"

Teresa: "No!"

Travis: "You can't have this—"

"No, it's cider... alcohol, now, we just realized. [laughs] Whoops!"

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: "Happy New Year. Sorry."

Teresa: Um, so today, ciders are all throughout the western world and East Asia, and made from all kinds of fruits, like peaches, and dragon fruit, and kiwi, and all of that great stuff.

Travis: What's your favorite kind of cider? Do you have, like, a favorite fruit cider?

Teresa: Hard cider? I love pear cider.

Travis: Yeah! I thought that—

Teresa: So good.

Travis: There's a very good pineapple cider. I think Ace makes it? I wanna say it's— or maybe that's just the name of it, but I like pineapples anyways.

Teresa: But you know what I really love?

Travis: What?

Teresa: I love warm, like, non-alcoholic, regular apple cider, with rum and a little pat of butter.

Travis: Ooh.

Teresa: Mmmm.

Travis: I prefer bourbon, but that's just 'cause I'm classy, and... a gentleman. Um—

Teresa: It's more historically accurate for the United States, because rum was the drink of choice for the colonists, uh, because of the molasses.

Travis: I mean, sure, but it's not as good as bourbon. There, I said it!

Teresa: [laughs] Okay. Let's— let's move on to some etiquette. It's more historical etiquette.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: Because if you should like it, you should drink it.

Travis: And put a ring on it.

Teresa: Indeed. The English custom of wassailing...

Travis: Uh-huh. We've talked about this—

Teresa: A little bit.

Travis: —on Christmas episodes, right? Yeah.

Teresa: Yeah, yeah.

Travis: You get drunk, and sing, and take things from people's house.

Teresa: [laughs] It's all cider-based, because the customary drink of a wassailing is mulled and spiked apple cider.

Travis: Mmm.

Teresa: Um, and so, you know, you can— you can bring it out to your orchard, and everybody can sing and drink and have a holiday party among the trees.

Travis: Ugh. And take things from people's houses. 'Cause that's what it is, here. "[singing] We go a-wassailing—" And then they're like... there's a line in there about— oh, no, sorry, that's a different one. "[singing] Now bring us a figgy pudding."

Teresa: That's the figgy pudding, yeah.

Travis: Yeah. "[singing] We won't go until we've got some." It gets very threatening in there.

Teresa: [laughs] Speaking of things that are not fun... there's a Puritan tradition.

Travis: Aw, man.

Teresa: [laughs] Around—

Travis: Them, again. [laughs quietly]

Teresa: —around apples.

Travis: "Throw 'em away! Too sweet!"

Teresa: They were called apple bees.

Travis: [gasps] Wait. Wait. What? What.

Teresa: What? No. No relation.

Travis: N— there has to be!

Teresa: There isn't.

Travis: You can't tell me that there's a thing called apple bees and that Applebee's isn't related to apple bees. Listen to what I just said and tell me—

Teresa: Listen— listen to me. It was named after a random name in the phone book that the founders of the restaurant fell in love with.

Travis: Sure. But do you think that that random name from the phone book originally came from this?

Teresa: I mean, there's no way to say.

Travis: I'm saying it right here. Applebee's? Puritanical.

[pause]

Teresa: So, during a bee—

Travis: That, and their brewtuses. Puritanical big beer steins. Puritanical 'tato skins. [snorts] Sorry, go on?

Teresa: [laughs] Uh, during a bee, the farmers would set out every empty pail, pan, tub, and basket that they could get their hands on. They would then heat barrels of apples in a center of the room, and then everyone would come over, and with the help of your neighbors you could empty the barrels, pare and quarter the apples, and fill every empty vessel around.

That's a chore. Those are chores?

Travis: Yeah. It's just to have apples?

Teresa: That's not a party. Those are chores.

Travis: I don't understand this. Okay.

Teresa: You— okay. So—

Travis: No, I get it.

Teresa: —you invite all your friends over.

Travis: To help you peel apples.

Teresa: Peel and, like, core, and cut up the apples that you're going to maybe press into cider, but you're Puritans, so probably not.

Travis: No. You probably just... pickle them?

Teresa: Dry them.

Travis: Dry them. Uh, gross.

Teresa: And then you would, um, use them in your pies and baking by rehydrating them in the sugar syrup.

Travis: Do you think they would eat them then?

Teresa: I don't know.

Travis: I mean, 'cause if I help my friend move, at least I get pizza. You know what I mean? If I come over and help you core apples and you're like, "Alright, bye!"

And you're like, "We're not gonna eat the apples?"

And you're like, "No! We're saving those apples! For when they're dried out!"

Teresa: Yeah. Um, so, few more, few more I've got. It is customary in times of celebration to splash tree roots with liberal amounts of apple cider to encourage the orchard to have an even greater apple production the next year.

Travis: There's something about that I feel weird about. It feels like somebody kind of throwing my own blood on my feet, but I can't figure it out.

Teresa: Well, so, I mean, the apple tree would inevitably drop some apples, which would also rot, right? Enriching the soil.

Travis: No, I understand the logic.

Teresa: Oh, okay.

Travis: I'm just saying if I was the tree I'd be like, "I can't believe this. What—[scoffs] You're mocking me! With my own juice!"

Teresa: [laughs] Okay. Uh, so here's another one. Before, you know, TV and other fun things to do, people were very bored. So, young women would test their cooking skills in the colonies, and would challenge each other to pare an entire apple in one long single peel.

Travis: Okay, listen, you take that back, 'cause that sounds fun. Can you ima— like, I—

Teresa: That— wait a minute. That sounds fun?

Travis: Okay, listen. Hear me out. In this day and age? That's a TikTok challenge right there, baby. I don't know what to tell you. That's what people are doing now. Of, like, "Can you flip a bottle over?" Some day, people will look back 200 years and be like, "I guess everyone was so bored, 'cause they would flip bottles in the air, and if they landed straight up they'd just go wild. Just cheering. It was the greatest form of entertainment on the planet."

Teresa: So you would take your long peel, right? Which you had to have skills to do, I guess, and then you would throw it over your shoulder.

Travis: You were just so dismissive. I challenge you to peel an apple in one long string.

Teresa: It's not hard. I can do it.

Travis: Excu— now! [unintelligible] Let me give you a dull old-timey knife like they would've had—

Teresa: You didn't know that they had old-timey dull knives. You could make a very sharp knife!

Travis: You think it's sharp now? You think they had Ginsus back then? No!

Teresa: Anyway, based—

Travis: I don't know why— I don't know why I'm taking their side over the—

Teresa: I don't know either.

Travis: —over yours. I love you.

Teresa: [laughs] Based on how the peel landed, it would show you the initials of the person you were going to marry.

Travis: See, you didn't even tell me it was magic peels! [laughs quietly]

Teresa: And if you already had plenty of those, you could take two apple seeds, one for the two that you're choosing between I suppose, lick them, and place them on your cheek. Whichever seed stayed on the longest was the one who had the truest heart.

Travis: Now, it's important when you do this to decide which seed is which before you do it, 'cause if it falls and you're like, "Wait, is that Doug? Was that Doug or Derek? Ugh!"

Teresa: Apple cider wasn't the only important apple byproduct that you would make during your harvest season. Uh, you could make apple butter, right?

Travis: Oh yeah.

Teresa: You could also make apple sass. Apple sass is apple butter relish with a molasses-like consistency.

Travis: What?! That sounds amazing! Ugh.

Teresa: Um, a lot of people, like I said—

Travis: Isn't it funny that the— I wonder why it's called apple butter instead of apple jelly. 'Cause that's what it is. I mean, it's not butter.

Teresa: Well, okay. So, I think that jelly and jam, they require cooking and sugar added, whereas I don't know if apple butter requires cooking, uh, or added sugar.

Travis: Now I'm gonna look.

Teresa: [singing] Travis googles it. [speaking] Um, and you would— I mentioned earlier about the drying of apples, yes? People would often dry apples by hanging them from their home's rafters.

Travis: Okay, okay. I bet it smelled good.

Teresa: Do you know why New York is called the Big Apple?

Travis: Mmm, no.

Teresa: It began in the 1920's when sports journalist John J. Fitzgerald wrote a column for the New York Morning Telegraph, and he referred to the substantial prizes of the many racehorses in New York as the Big Apple, symbolizing the biggest and best one can achieve, and it stuck!

Travis: So, basically what I'm finding is that apple butter— this is from simplyrecipes.com. Apple butter is made by slowly cooking pureed apples for over an hour. The sugars in the apples caramelize as the puree cooks, giving the apple butter its rich, sweet flavor and dark color. In contrast to what the name implies, there is no butter in apple butter. The name comes from its smooth and buttery texture.

But I've also found on [chowhound](http://chowhound.com) that it's closer to a jam— a jelly. So it basically is, but because it's more of a nickname, it sounds like to me, that it's like a jam or jelly that is nicknamed butter because of how smooth it is.

Teresa: You know, I bet— I bet you could take filtered apple juice and turn that into actual apple jelly. Because you could probably do that— you might have to add pectin or gelatin in order to make it a jelly, but I feel like that would be closer to it.

Travis: Yeah. But so basically now, according to mykeuken.com, uh, it's basically apple jam. It's just called apple jelly. Uh, apple butter.

Teresa: [simultaneously] Uh, apple butter.

Travis: Excuse me. Oh my God. Okay.

Teresa: Okay. So there really is no distinction, it's just nomenclature.

Travis: Yes. Another successful Travis google. That's gonna do it for us, I think.

Teresa: Yeah!

Travis: Thank you so much for joining us. Uh, thank you to Alex, our researcher, without whom we would not be able to make this show.

Teresa: It was so juicy! Thanks, Alex!

Travis: Oh!

Teresa: Oh!

Travis: Speaking of, Alex is helping research and write another show. In fact, I will say, she is the researcher and writer on another show: *Chasing Immortality*. It's a new podcast that I am executive producing that tells the stories of people throughout history who have tried to cheat death in a myriad of ways, most of the time pretty creepy. [laughs quietly] Um—

Teresa: It's creepy good.

Travis: It is creepy good. Uh, it is narrated by Tybee Diskin. It is written by Alex. It is produced by Alice Flanders. It is executive produced by me, and it is sound designed by Doug Borntrager. It's called *Chasing Immortality*. You can find it at chasingimmortalitypod.com or by searching *Chasing Immortality* in your podcatcher.

Uh, the first episode is out. The second one's probably out at this point, when you're listening to this. In fact, I know it will be. The first episode is about James Schafer, who claimed that the only reason people died is because they were taught that it was an inevitability, so he wanted to raise a baby to not accept death as a thing that had to happen, and thereby become immortal. And the second episode is about cryogenic freezing.

Teresa: Hmm!

Travis: Uh, so— or specifically cryonics. So if that sounds interesting to you, go check it out! Uh, and go check out all the shows at Maximumfun.org, *Shmanners's* podcast home. You can go to mcelroy.family to check out all the McElroy projects there.

Teresa: And the new merch.

Travis: And the new merch, yes! It's a new month and that means new merch. There's a lot of really cool stuff over there. Mcelroymerch.com. Who else do we thank, Teresa?

Teresa: We always thank Brent "brentalfloss" Black for writing our theme music, which is available as a ringtone where those are found. We also thank Kayla M. Wasil for our Twitter thumbnail art. Our Twitter handle is @shmatterscast, and that's where we get etiquette questions when we have topics that require... explaining. [laughs] I don't know, I fell off my horse there.

Travis: Yeah, it happens.

Teresa: So, also we thank Bruja Betty Pinup Photography for the cover picture of our fan-run Facebook group, *Shmatters* Fanners. Go ahead and join that group if you love to give and get excellent advice from other fans.

Alex, by the way, reads every email sent to us at shmatterscast@gmail.com. We are always accepting topic suggestions, and idioms, and, you know, just... hey.

Travis: All that good stuff.

Teresa: "Hey, Alex"s. [laughs]

Travis: Uh, also, thank you to Rachel, our editor, without whom we would not be able to make this show. And that's gonna do it for us, so join us again next week.

Teresa: No RSVP required.

Travis: You've been listening to *Shmatters*...

Teresa: Manners, *Shmatters*. Get it.

[theme music plays]

[chord]

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