

## Shmanners 286: Dietary Restrictions

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**Travis:** Yeah, I'm on the seafood diet.

**Teresa:** So, when you see food, you eat it?

**Travis:** Yeah. It's *Shmanners*.

[theme music plays]

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

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

**Travis:** And you're listening to *Shmanners*!

**Teresa:** It's extraordinary etiquette...

**Travis:** For ordinary occasions! Hello, my dove.

**Teresa:** Hello, dear.

**Travis:** How are you?

**Teresa:** Good! I want the listeners to know that we planned that I ruin your joke, not... not—

**Travis:** [sarcastically] Well, that's not how I remember it!

**Teresa:** [laughs] I didn't— I didn't just ruin your joke. It was— it was for you, audience. [laughs]

**Travis:** It was really hard, too, because, like, my impulse, as I'm sure you know and anyone who's listened to the show more than once, is to do, like, the anti-comedy. So it's so tempting to do like, "I'm on a seafood diet." "When you see food, you eat it?" "No, it's actually on certain days I only have Chilean bass." Like—

**Teresa:** [laughs]

**Travis:** But I don't think that's as funny to... anyone else?

**Teresa:** [laughs] Maybe not.

**Travis:** Other than me? Okay. Hey, so we're talking about dietary restrictions.

**Teresa:** Yes we are! Because a favorite holiday here in the US is coming up.

**Travis:** My birthday. No, my birthday's already passed! You missed it!

**Teresa:** Your birthday's already passed. The food holiday.

**Travis:** She didn't miss it, by the way, we did stuff. [laughs quietly]

**Teresa:** [laughs]

**Travis:** Thanksgiving!

**Teresa:** Thanksgiving. Which is less about the original settlers, because boo, hiss—

**Travis:** That's gross, yeah, colonization, boo, hiss.

**Teresa:** —and more about... lounging around and eating food together.

**Travis:** This is it, man. At this point, I wish we could just let go of that iconography, because it has—

**Teresa:** I know, right?

**Travis:** —it has nothing— at this point, it has nothing to do with that for me.

**Teresa:** There are very little foods that we eat at our Thanksgivings that were even available to "pilgrims," quote, Puritans is what they were—

**Travis:** Yeah.

**Teresa:** —and also—

**Travis:** And I think anyone who's listened to the show knows that on a lot of levels, we're not big fans of the Puritans!

**Teresa:** [laughs]

**Travis:** They come up a lot.

**Teresa:** They do come up a lot. And Thanksgiving, we've given a little bit of history, uh, was basically just like a pet project during the Civil War, where Abraham Lincoln was just petitioned constantly to make this a holiday.

**Travis:** Looking for that unification.

**Teresa:** Yeah.

**Travis:** Looking to bring the country back together, give 'em something else to talk about. Like, "Hey, let's have more holidays that are about people getting together."

**Teresa:** And eating.

**Travis:** And watching college football, I think. I don't know.

**Teresa:** Is that it?

**Travis:** I don't know.

**Teresa:** Your family loves to watch the Macy's Day Thanksgiving Parade.

**Travis:** This is true! This is true. We do. We like the ostentation. We like the...

**Teresa:** [laughs]

**Travis:** There's a lot— I think it's partially, one, uh, we're big Broadway fans, and so the Macy's Day Parade is always when they, like, debut and show off, like, numbers from that.

**Teresa:** Yeah.

**Travis:** But it's also just, like, I think the weirdest thing— this is off topic. But they always have, like— like, one out of every three floats is, like, a really weird combination of float and celebrity on it, right?

**Teresa:** Hmm.

**Travis:** Where it's just like, "It's the M&M float and it's Lady Gaga!" And you're like, "Wait. Why is Lady Gaga with the M&Ms? Okay, yeah."

**Teresa:** I have to say, the balloons are always my favorite. Just— I wanna see the big balloons.

**Travis:** Oh my God, you're so cute.

**Teresa:** [laughs]

**Travis:** Okay. So, we're talking about dietary restrictions.

**Teresa:** We are! Um, so first of all, I do want to make the distinction between dietary restriction and food allergy, because in our society today these kind of get blurred, right? The lines do.

**Travis:** I honestly thought it was an all-encompassing term that included, like, that— because here's the thing. As I— I was thinking about this before we started recording, the difference between, like, foods you don't like to eat, versus foods you cannot eat, versus food allergy, right?

**Teresa:** Okay, yes. So, a food allergy or a food intolerance, right? Because it has to do with what happens to your body after you eat it, is when someone's body physically cannot handle the ingestion of a certain type of food. Right?

**Travis:** Okay. Oh, and a dietary restriction is like, uh, I am, for whether health or moral reasons, like, vegetarian, or vegan, or...

**Teresa:** Exactly.

**Travis:** Okay.

**Teresa:** Uh, it could be even just a specific diet, right? If you're— I don't know if this is still around— on the Atkins diet, you don't eat bread or something?

**Travis:** Well, that— oh, it's a whole thing.

**Teresa:** I don't know.

**Travis:** Oh, the Atkins diet is not just "Don't eat bread." There's a whole thing about eating a lot of beans and bacon, I think.

**Teresa:** So, not all dietary restrictions are food allergies. But all food allergies are dietary restrictions.

**Travis:** Ah, it's a squares and rectangles thing!

**Teresa:** Indeed.

**Travis:** Ohhh! Okay.

**Teresa:** Um, and I wanna say, regardless of why someone doesn't eat something, it could be religious observance, like kosher is a big thing in the Jewish faith, um, or it could be a moral observance, right? Veganism often is tied to a moral objection to either using or wearing or supporting animal products.

**Travis:** That's not always just about, like, the animals too. Sometimes the morality is, like, sustainability—

**Teresa:** Absolutely.

**Travis:** —the impact on the climate, that kind of thing.

**Teresa:** Right. And whatever the reason is, it should be completely respected without question. After all, the food a person puts in their mouth is up to them. You shouldn't force anyone to eat anything they don't want to eat, whether it's 'cause it's, quote, "yucky," says Bebe... [laughs quietly]

**Travis:** Now, hold on.

**Teresa:** [laughs]

**Travis:** What she means is— she says this sometimes where, like, she'll ask for a food and then she'll go, "It's not like what I thought it was gonna be."

**Teresa:** [laughs] Yeah.

**Travis:** And it's like, "What does that mean? What'd you think it was—" I showed— sometimes it's, like, a meal prep thing. And it's, like, we can show her a picture beforehand. It's like, "This is what it's gonna be."

And she's like, "Sounds great!"

And then you make it and she's like, "It's not what I thought it was gonna be."

It's like, "I showed you a picture!"

**Teresa:** [laughs]

**Travis:** "You looked at a picture of it!"

**Teresa:** But regardless, we don't force feed our children, and you shouldn't force feed anyone else.

**Travis:** Let me ask you this, 'cause you said with question. But I mean, like, if you know the person or whatever, is it so bad to say, like, "Oh, why?" Or, like—

**Teresa:** I mean—

**Travis:** —is there a way to ask, to inquire about it, that doesn't seem rude? 'Cause if someone says, like, "Well, I'm actually vegan," I would be interested in, you know, their motivation? That's not it. Not in a judgmental way, but just 'cause, like, I'm curious?

**Teresa:** I mean, it is— I'm sure it has a lot to do with your relationship with them, if you are already friends. I mean, it's impolite to ask. But, if you're already friends, if you wanna say, "How is that going for you?" Or, "How long have you been vegan?" Or, you know, something like that? I don't— I don't think that that's so bad, but you never ask someone why they're not drinking. If you're—

**Travis:** But see, here's where I disagree. Because if I knew someone really well and I wanted to get to know them, and you— like, in the moment it's, like, a judgment call in your relationship. But it's like, "I was wondering why that is," right? I think that there is a level— because I think that— that it is improper to ask, it is impolite to ask, is true of a lot of things, right? In society.

**Teresa:** But with relationship, those rules bend a lot. I think what you should ask is about the history, right? Give a little lead in.

**Travis:** Oh, how long have you been vegan? Okay.

**Teresa:** Exactly, exactly. 'Cause that opens up the door for people to kind of tell you their story. Um, but, you know, it's about— it's not about the judgment or, quote, "why," right? It could be as simple as, "Well, I don't like it. I'm not into it. Not my bag."

**Travis:** That's true, that's true. Because that's the thing is, like, I saw somebody tweeted about this in the questions. Sometimes when we talk about, like, the preference, right? You get a little bit sticky here. But sometimes it is, uh, uh, oh, what's the— texture? It is a, um... what's the word I'm looking for? When it has to do with, like, feeling. Tactile—

**Teresa:** Mouth feel?

**Travis:** Well, but not that—

**Teresa:** Sensory?

**Travis:** Sensory! There it is. It's a sensory experience of just, like, "I do— I cannot deal with that." And that is a thing for a lot of people, right? That's not just a, like, "Ehh, I don't like it." But it's just like, yeah, it's a neurodivergent thing, that it isn't about your body reacting to it so much as, like, your brain reacting to it?

**Teresa:** Exactly.

**Travis:** Yeah.

**Teresa:** And I, um, I mean, I have experienced sort of sensory aversions with texture of food. Like, I don't like celery because I don't like the texture, and sometimes if something is too, I don't know, kind of blobby, it's hard to swallow, like, it is— I'm physically capable of swallowing it, but my brain is going "Nope! Nope!"

**Travis:** Yeah. I get that. Very much so.

**Teresa:** [laughs] Okay. Um, there's a large misconception that food allergies and dietary restrictions are this trendy new thing, right? Here's the thing. The actual—

**Travis:** Tell me the thing.

**Teresa:** The thing.

**Travis:** What's the thing? What is it?

**Teresa:** The thing. The actual phrase "food allergy" only cropped up in the last century or two, but actual food allergies and dietary restrictions have been around for millennia. All the way back—

**Travis:** Millennia?

**Teresa:** Millennia!

**Travis:** Millennia.

**Teresa:** Millennia.

**Travis:** *Willennium?*

**Teresa:** Uh, back in the first century BCE, Roman poet Titus Lucretius Cato wrote—

**Travis:** Good name.

**Teresa:** "What is food to one, to another is rank poison."

**Travis:** Well, that's the thing, right? 'Cause we gotta talk about— like, allergies aren't new!

**Teresa:** Mm-hmm.

**Travis:** Right? Like, the idea of, like, peanut allergies and stuff like that.

**Teresa:** Yeah.

**Travis:** That's not new!

**Teresa:** The word "allergy" actually comes from an ancient Greek phrase meaning "to react differently." And, you know, old-timey doctors— eh heh, quote, "doctors."

**Travis:** Sure.

**Teresa:** [laughs] Uh, they wrote copious notes. And for example, Hippocrates noticed that some of his patients had adverse reactions after eating cheese, whereas the rest of the population ate as much cheese as they wanted, right? Without a problem.

**Travis:** Lactose intolerance.

**Teresa:** Hmm!

**Travis:** [gasps]

**Teresa:** So Hippocrates created the idea of hostile humors.

**Travis:** Well, okay. That's where it kind of whiff— whiffed that one.

**Teresa:** That— that's a whiff and a miss right there. Um, if you don't know about the four humors, listen to Sawbones. Sydnee does a really great job, but basically there are four fluids in the body.

**Travis:** Yellow bile, black bile, blood, and phlegm.

**Teresa:** Yeah, nice!

**Travis:** Boom.

**Teresa:** And too much of one or too little of one can really throw your body out of balance.

**Travis:** And there was a belief, too, of, like, well, that there are certain foods that are more, uh, uh, sanguine— blood— than others. Like, if you eat meat, right? It'll increase your sanguinity, and if you're too phlegma— all that stuff.

**Teresa:** So that's bananas and incorrect, right?

**Travis:** Sure.



**Teresa:** But it did provide a kind of starting place for food allergies. Um, for example there's evidence of Chinese emperors in 2500 BCE advising people to avoid certain foods that gave them strange skin symptoms.

**Travis:** Mm-hmm.

**Teresa:** Uh, you know, maybe this was eczema, or, like, rash-like reactions like, uh, what's the thing when you get it on your... the welts?

**Travis:** Hives?

**Teresa:** Hives, yeah.

**Travis:** I'm so glad that together we have one full brain.

**Teresa:** [laughs]

**Travis:** It's really nice.

**Teresa:** Here's a very interesting thing. Uh, in the 15th century, King Richard III is known to have been allergic to strawberries, so to use that to his political advantage he would often eat strawberries when a political opponent was dining with him, and then accuse him of poisoning him, and then—

**Travis:** Get out!

**Teresa:** [wheezes] And then—

**Travis:** Get out. I did not see that going that way.

**Teresa:** Yeah, really? I know, right?

**Travis:** I thought it was gonna be, like, a show of force. Like, "You know I'm allergic to strawberries. Well, watch this! [eating noises]"

**Teresa:** No! More like, "Oh no, everyone! This person's trying to poison me! Get him!"

**Travis:** Oh my God. I don't condone it, but... I'm impressed.

**Teresa:** That's a flex.

**Travis:** Yeah. A weird one, but okay.

**Teresa:** Um, another one around 1800, a doctor named Robert Willan realized he got hives every time he ate almonds. And not only that, but when he ate seafood, he'd suffer from anaphylaxis. And so he devoted his

career to the causes and treatment of his own symptoms, and led him to start a completely new medical field: dermatology!

**Travis:** Oh, okay. Got it, got it, got it.

**Teresa:** Um, so... here's a very— a very, uh, concise and very simple explanation: an allergy is your body reacting to a certain thing by making immunoglobulins.

**Travis:** Sure.

**Teresa:** And these are carried—

**Travis:** Immu— immuno-goblins, got it.

**Teresa:** Mm-mm. These are carried in the blood, and specifically the isotype gamma E is the one that makes it so that your body attacks what's goin' on, right? And so, this is really something that we've pretty much only, like, nailed down in the 21st century.

**Travis:** Oh, sure. That doesn't sound like something in 16th century that someone was like, "I think it's immunogob—" whatever.

**Teresa:** Right, yes.

**Travis:** They probably thought it was goblins.

**Teresa:** Um, and there is a small percentage of increase of allergies today than there were a long time ago, but probably just because we are way cleaner than we ever have been, right?

**Travis:** Do you think— are allergies hereditary? I've gotta google it.

**Teresa:** They can be! Some can be.

**Travis:** Well, that might be another thing too, is we've developed, you know, epi-pens and stuff. People are surviving allergic reactions more, and so they're able to pass on that gene more.

**Teresa:** Right. There's a theory— a couple of theories. The first one being, yes, we have become so much cleaner, and usually when a child would, like, contract a parasite or something, the body would be pretty busy, right? And so it wouldn't have time to attack things like the peanut allergen, right?

**Travis:** Sure.

**Teresa:** There's another theory that introducing children early to known allergens can also make it so that they are less likely to develop it. And this goes back to the development of baby foods, which were never a thing until the early 1900's. Um, like, packaged, pureed, canned, jarred baby foods weren't something that anybody used. It was basically, you went from milk, to soft foods, to regular foods. So that's another theory. And like I said, these are just theories, so we haven't— haven't quite cracked that code just yet.

**Travis:** I cannot wait to talk more about this. But first... a thank you note for our sponsors.

**Teresa:** Oh!

[theme music plays]

**Travis:** *Shmanners* would like to write a thank you note to Bombas. Bombas's mission is simple: make the most comfortable clothes ever and match every item sold with an equal item donated. So, this holiday, when you give Bombas to someone on your list, you're also giving them to someone in need. It's a give-give!

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We also want to write a thank you note to Quip! Good health starts with good habits, and Quip makes it easy, by delivering all the oral care essentials you need to care for your mouth. Their brushes deliver sensitive sonic vibrations for an effective clean that's gentle on your sensitive gums, and the kids' electric toothbrush is just like the original but with sized-down features, like a small brush head for small mouths and rubber grip handle for greater control.

In addition to brush heads, Quip also delivers fresh floss, toothpaste, mouthwash, and gum refills every three months from just \$5. Shipping is free, so you can save money and skip the hustle and bustle of in store shopping.

Quip is my favorite. There, I said it. I love Quip toothbrushes. I love Quip toothpaste, floss, mouthwash, all of it is off the charts. I can't imagine using anything else at this point.

So, go to [getquip.com/shmanners](http://getquip.com/shmanners) right now, and you'll get your first refill free. That's your first refill free at [getquip.com/shmanners](http://getquip.com/shmanners), spelled G-E-T-Q-U-I-P.com/shmanners. Quip: the good habits company.

We also have a personal message for Mac, and it's from Sepyhr.

"Happy first year anniversary, my universe! From sea to shining sea, top of the top of the bottom of the aquarium, we have lived a great year and life, and will live a thousand more."

Whoaaa! That's incredible! Whoaaa! Well, happy anniversary, you two. I'm so happy for you, and I hope you have a thousand more.

[music plays]

**Dave:** Hi, it's me, Dave Hill, from before, here to tell you about my brand new show on Maximum Fun, the *Dave Hill Goodtime Hour*, which combines my old Maximum Fun show, *Dave Hill's Podcasting Incident*, with my old radio show, *The Goddamn Dave Hill Show*, into one new futuristic program from the future.

If you like delightful conversation with incredible guests, technical difficulties, and actual phone calls from real life listeners, you've just hit a street called Easy.

I'm also joined by my incredible cohost, the boy criminal Chris Gersbeck. Say hi, Chris.

**Chris:** Hey Dave, it's really great to—

**Dave:** That's enough, Chris. And New Jersey chicken rancher Dez. Say hi, Dez.

**Dez:** Hey, Dave!

[chicken squawk]

**Dave:** The *Dave Hill Goodtime Hour*. Brand new episodes every Friday on Maximum Fun.

**Chris:** Plus, the show's not even an hour. It's 90 minutes.

**Dez:** Take that! Stupid rules.

**Dave:** We nailed it.

[music and advertisement end]

**Travis:** Okay. So, we haven't talked about... I think the bit— like, we mentioned vegan... ism. Ve— veganity?

**Teresa:** Yeah, yeah.

**Travis:** Vegan—

**Teresa:** Veganis... ist.

**Travis:** Sure. What about vegetarian and all this stuff?

**Teresa:** Well, it probably goes back about to 7000 BCE.

**Travis:** What?!

**Teresa:** I know, right?

**Travis:** That's so far back!

**Teresa:** In a town in the Indus River civilization, uh, which was about the time that the Hindu religion was taking off. Um, and so one of the philosophical tenets of that religion is abstaining from meat, specifically cow, because it's sacred.

**Travis:** Uh-huh.

**Teresa:** Um, and so many Buddhists eat vegetarian out of respect for all living things, right? There is also evidence to show that the Greeks would often practice, quote, "abstinence from beings with a soul," and that was noted, you know, all the way back in 500 BCE with Pythagoras as well.

**Travis:** I know that guy!

**Teresa:** [laughs]

**Travis:** Well, I mean, I don't *know* him know him, but... you know. Yeah.

**Teresa:** Right, yeah, you've heard of him and his theorem.

**Travis:** I wonder if he's heard of me?

**Teresa:** No, he's dead.

**Travis:** What?!

**Teresa:** He promoted benevolence towards all species and was very vocal about his vegetarianism. Veganism has a very similar history, although the term "vegan" wasn't coined until 1944, and it had to do with animal rights and ecofriendly way of life.

Um, Donald Watson and six other activists went through dozens of terms, but settled on the word "vegan" in the end because vegan was the beginning and the end of vegetarian, right? V-E—

**Travis:** Oh!

**Teresa:** —G, and then etar, and then A-N.

**Travis:** Okay!

**Teresa:** Pretty cool.

**Travis:** In the middle there is the word Atari, I think?

**Teresa:** What?

**Travis:** [sounding it out] Vegetari—A-T-A-R-I? Atari.

**Teresa:** Yeah, etari.

**Travis:** Right there in the middle. So they just took the Atari out and got vegan. That's probably how they thought about it too.

**Teresa:** Probably.

**Travis:** "Guys, we just cut the Atari out!"

**Teresa:** [laughs] Okay.

**Travis:** We got a lot of questions. Is it time for questions?

**Teresa:** A lot of questions, a lot of advice. I would like to say before we start... one of the things that we hear most often is, "Is it on the host to accommodate their guest and rework the menu, or is it the responsibility of the person with the diet to bring their own food?"

And we turn to the great-granddaughter of our patron saint, Emily Post, Lizzie Post, who says:

"It is absolutely all on the host."

**Travis:** I knew it!

**Teresa:** Um, "The primary goal as a host," she says, "should be making sure all of your guests are comfortable and happy. For that reason, do not hesitate to reach out and check in with your guests about the specificities of their dietary needs so you can plan the menu accordingly." Do they need the ingredient completely removed from the room?

**Travis:** Sure.

**Teresa:** Right? That's a common one, sometimes with peanuts, people do need it removed from the room. Or, are they alright being around a certain ingredient as long as they have different options of things to eat that are within their diet?

**Travis:** Sure.

**Teresa:** Um—

**Travis:** Cross-contamination—

**Teresa:** Exactly.

**Travis:** —of tools is another thing, too. Like, don't use the same knife to cut the steak as you use to cut up the vegetables.

**Teresa:** Right! Exactly. Um, and so... when you know what you're working with, it's not an inconvenience. It is keeping your guests happy and comfortable.

**Travis:** Right. This is the thing of, like, you would make sure you had enough chairs for everybody to sit on.

**Teresa:** Exactly.

**Travis:** Right? So, like, you need to make sure there's something for everyone to eat. And just to clarify, it doesn't mean, like, "There's some vegetables here." Right? Like, if you... [sighs] okay. If you know me in real life you will know that Travis McElroy loves hosting things.

**Teresa:** Indeed.

**Travis:** Like, I like to do too much. I like to go all out, right? So I can't imagine, like, making, like, a— a delicious, like, beef wellington, right? And, like, all of this, like, you know, mashed potatoes with whole milk and butter or whatever and, like, going all out to make a fancy meat and dairy-based thing, and then turn around and be like, "And here's some... carrots." Right?

**Teresa:** Right.

**Travis:** Like, it's not the same level. You want everyone to not only have something to eat but feel that they were given the same amount of thought. For example, if it was drinks, right? And you had someone who was underage or didn't drink for whatever reason, you wouldn't be like, "Well, I created eight different kinds of punch and all these fancy cocktails, and I guess there's water."

Like, you wanna have options for everybody.

**Teresa:** Exactly. It really— it is the biggest fear of anyone with dietary restrictions that they are a burden on the party, right? That's kind of, like, the hang-up there.

**Travis:** Nobody wants to feel different.

**Teresa:** Exactly!

**Travis:** Nobody wants to feel like their presence is a burden, and that's... ugh.

**Teresa:** So make a few, like, you know, entree size master dishes, right? Like a casserole that's both vegan and gluten-free.

**Travis:** And delicious.

**Teresa:** And delicious, can cover a variety of dietary restrictions. Um, and it's very easy to perhaps leave the one thing out of a recipe, right? So if you're making pecan cheesecake, leave out the pecans and Bebe can eat it!

**Travis:** Switch to macadamia nuts. I think they're better. Uh, or you can do basically, [laughs quietly] like, any other thing. Right?

**Teresa:** [laughs]

**Travis:** Like, substitutions. Consider it a challenge.

**Teresa:** Well, that— I mention that specifically because my sister is making one, a pecan cheesecake, for Thanksgiving, and she asked— very kindly, she said, "Does it need to be— like, can I even bring this in the room? Do I need to make something else?"

I was like, "Absolutely not. You can absolutely make a pecan cheesecake, but I'll ask, because Bebe loves cheesecake, if you would leave out a small serving without pecans."



**Travis:** Sure.

**Teresa:** She'll love it.

**Travis:** Okay, so here are our questions. Erica asks:

"If you're a strict vegan who is bothered by cross-contamination of their food with meal products— uh, with meat products, is it rude to ask chefs to make sure they use separate utensils for everything and don't cross-contaminate?"

Is it rude? No, absolutely not.

**Teresa:** Will your request always be accommodated? No, it will not.

**Travis:** Especially I would say, like, with a restaurant. If you have specific dietary needs, make a reservation, and while you're making the reservation say, like, "And also, I want to make you aware, make sure that this can be accommodated." Right? Because you don't wanna get there and sit down and then ask, and now you're in that position, right? And unfortunately, a lot of places will say, like, "We don't do substitutions, or we don't—" I'll tell you, Bebe has a walnut allergy, and the number of times that we've asked, like, "Does this thing have walnuts in it?"

And the person has either said "No," and then it did— and thank God we checked— or "I have no idea." And it's like, "Okay, great. [laughs quietly] Totally cool."

**Teresa:** Yeah. Go find out, please.

**Travis:** Yeah. So... it is good to prepare for that ahead of time.

**Teresa:** My biggest suggestion would be to find a restaurant where someone can— everyone can find something they like, um, but it would cater to the person with the most specific needs.

**Travis:** Yeah.

**Teresa:** That seems like a very specific need, so why not go to a vegan— like, a completely vegan restaurant, and encourage your friends to try new things?

**Travis:** Yes. Uh, let's see. Kirsten asks:

"When bringing food to a potluck and knowing that at least one person has dietary restrictions— not allergies, but food they choose not to eat—

is it considered rude to bring a food containing ingredients they cannot have, knowing other food should be available?"

**Teresa:** No, it's not, because a potluck is everyone brings a very— a nice dish to share, and people choose what to eat. There should be plenty of options, but I would recommend that if you— you know, you know the thing that's in the food, so write down a little place card and say that it contains that food so that nobody's surprised. There should be plenty of options, though. If it's your dish, it's your dish, and that's okay.

**Travis:** I would encourage you to consider whether that ingredient is swappable with something else without inherently changing—

**Teresa:** Or could be omitted.

**Travis:** Right. Um, but I also think if you are organizer of a potluck, making sure to enquire of peoples', like, dietary restrictions as you're organizing it, like, put it as part of the RSVP, like "If you have any dietary restrictions or concerns please include it in your response," right? So that way—

**Teresa:** Certainly.

**Travis:** —you can make sure people at least have it in mind, you know what I mean? 'Cause you don't want somebody to not be thinking about it and, like, make a dish, not put any kind of notice on it, and then you have a problem.

Um, let's see. Lynn asks:

"Is there a polite way to ask for people to stop bringing up my dietary restrictions for me? I feel like a lot of friends and family will go out of their way to tell everyone, even though I try not to bring it up unless I need to."

**Teresa:** This is— this is very delicate, because we know that they're trying to help. Uh, especially if it is a severe allergic reaction where, you know, it might result in a hospital trip if you're exposed, right? So, let's assume that they're trying to help and not ridicule.

I think you need to talk to people one-on-one, the ones that you hang out with the most, and be like, "I really appreciate what you're trying to do for me, but it makes me feel singled out in social settings, so let's just take it down a notch, and I will be extra careful to take care of myself."

**Travis:** Right, yeah, I think so. Ask for what you need.

**Teresa:** Yeah. And like I said, not in a group. Don't— don't do this outside, like, at a restaurant, in front of everyone, calling people out. Don't do that. One at a time, where— in a situation where the pressure is very low.

**Travis:** Yes. Smalls asks:

"Is it considered rude to eat before an event because you don't want to bother anyone with your dietary restrictions?"

**Teresa:** Is it rude? No, it's not. Um, but it does make it so that you really can't participate in the food scene, right? Here's what Lizzie Post says.

**Travis:** Okay.

**Teresa:** If it is something where you've been invited to, say, a friend's house to eat dinner, and you're worried, and so you eat dinner at your house beforehand, one thing that you can do, Lizzie says, is call them up and say "I'm excited to hang out with you. I'm a vegetarian. Is there anything I can bring?" Or insert whatever it is, right? So, offer to bring something that you can eat. It is by no means necessary, but it does sound like this question-asker is worried about it.

**Travis:** I would also encourage you— and this is just a big, broad note— but if these people want to spend time with you, to the point where they are inviting you to a thing, you are not a bother. Asking for the things that you need, making it clear where your boundaries are, whether that be food or otherwise, is not a bother, right? The worst that can happen is them say, "I don't know if we'll be able to accommodate that, because this and this and this reason. What can we do? What can we figure out?" Right?

**Teresa:** And then you can say, "It's alright, I can eat— I can make sure I'm not hungry before I come, and then we—"

**Travis:** Or "I'll bring something for myself so we can all eat together."

**Teresa:** Or "I'll bring something for myself," exactly, exactly. Um, if you... I mean, but let's turn this on its head. If you want to eat your own dinner by yourself at home, that's fine!

**Travis:** Yeah.

**Teresa:** But do please come and hang out when people want you to hang out.

**Travis:** And I would say that if you— if your desire is, "Listen, I don't want, I don't know, to feel different or singled out or whatever, so I'd rather just eat by myself," make sure you say it as a declarative statement. "I will be eating dinner before I arrive because of my dietary restrictions, but I'm happy to come hang out with you."

Instead of, like, "Well, I don't want to be a bother, and I don't want anyone to have to worry," because then they'll feel like they need to go out of their way to make you feel wel— state your needs.

**Teresa:** Exactly. And it helps if you have a, uh— have a partner that can support you in this. I'm always reminded of our time in LA where our friends very kindly wanted to include me in a softball game, and I said, "No thanks." And they're like, "Aww, come on!"

**Travis:** "You'll be fine! It's okay if you're not that good! It's okay!"

And it's like, "No, I don't want to."

**Teresa:** [laughs] And Travis is always there to say, "No, no. She says... no."

**Travis:** If she says no, don't bother her anymore. Which is a good rule in a lot of situations.

**Teresa:** Indeed.

**Travis:** Um, let's see. Pip asks:

"We've got a community snack shelf at work. I love to munch on hickory smoked almonds and trail mix kind of stuff, but I'm unsure if anyone in the studio has nut allergies. Can I bring them anyway, or find a way to ask the rather large team if anyone has sensitivities?"

**Teresa:** Okay. So, here's what you can do. You can absolutely ask if there is a nut allergy, because there does seem to be a lot of tho— a lot of people with nut allergies, like we said, that the particles or whatever linger in the air and things like that.

**Travis:** Right.

**Teresa:** But also, here are some things that you can do. You can do your community shelf, but make sure that the nuts are kept in a airtight, closed container.

**Travis:** Mm-hmm.

**Teresa:** That way, if someone does have a nut allergy, they wouldn't be ambushed by it, right? If it's in an airtight, sealed container, then they can look at it and see, "Oh no, nuts." Then they—[laughs]

**Travis:** "Nuts!"

**Teresa:** "Aw, nuts!"

**Travis:** "Nuts!"

**Teresa:** They might be able to make an announcement and say, "I noticed someone brought in nuts. If we could please keep those at our desk and away from the community snack shelf, that would be much safer for me and my allergy."

**Travis:** One last question, from Joe.

"What's the etiquette of asking for alternatives at a set menu at, say, a wedding or banquet?"

**Teresa:** Just like you said before, writing in on the response. So, if there's a way to— you know, there's the "Check chicken or fish" or whatever, right? Uh, write in what you need. "No peanuts," or whatever it is, right?

Um, and then I would say, call the couple. Call them and talk to them about your specific needs, and whether or not you need to— they need to let the caterer know, or if it's something where— you know, just something has to be omitted from the table. Uh, things like that. So, always talk it out, and don't suffer in silence. That's not cool. Nobody wants you to do that.

**Travis:** And I also think the sooner you can get that response to them and get that information to them the better, rather than, like, the day before be like, "Hey, I just wanted to check and see if it was possible to, like, substitute this for thi—" it's, like, the farther—

**Teresa:** That's— that's too late.

**Travis:** Yeah. The farther you let 'em know ahead of time, right? The easier it is to accommodate whatever you need.

**Teresa:** Exactly, exactly.

**Travis:** Okay! That's gonna do it for us. Thank you so much for joining us. But you know who I wanna thank especially? Alex.

**Teresa:** Alex, thank you Alex!

**Travis:** Without you, Alex, we wouldn't be able to do the show. Alex is our researcher and helps us do each episode. Also, thank you to Rachel, our editor, who helps us make each episode. Thank you, Rachel. Uh, thank you to you. We got some really good questions, as you can see from this one.

**Teresa:** Yeah, these were great!

**Travis:** Oh, I love this one.

**Teresa:** Hey, if you have more questions about things, go ahead and email them to us in topic form.

**Travis:** Yes. "Oh, you guys touched on this, but you know what? I think it could be a whole episode. What about the—" Or, if it has nothing to do with what we talked about today and is like, "You guys have yet to cover..." I don't know, 'cause we would've thought about it right now. [laughs quietly]

**Teresa:** Alex reads all those emails, and you can send those to [shmatterscast@gmail.com](mailto:shmatterscast@gmail.com).

**Travis:** That is correct! You can also, uh, follow us on Twitter @shmatterscast, and that is where we got all these great questions from, because when we need questions for an episode, we will tweet about it, and then you will respond, and then we will [through gritted teeth] answer your questions!

**Teresa:** [laughs]

**Travis:** And that's the way it works! Also, thank you to our podcast home, Maximumfun.org. Check out all the other amazing shows there. If you wanna see all the other McElroy projects, you can go to [mcelroy.family](http://mcelroy.family). Go to [mcelroymerch.com](http://mcelroymerch.com) to check out all the McElroy merch.

**Teresa:** Tell us about the very special McElroy project that's coming out.

**Travis:** Which one— oh, the one that just came out today? So—

**Teresa:** She nods her head vigorously!

**Travis:** Yes. So, we are starting a video series. We've *started* a video series, the first episode came out on Wednesday, called "*Zone of Adventure*," which is the video series version, I guess, of *Adventure Zone*. Uh, and this series is called *Imbalance*, and it's a three episode series with Aabria Iyengar.

**Teresa:** And your favorite characters from Balance, TAZ Balance!

**Travis:** And what are their names, Teresa?

**Teresa:** Merle.

**Travis:** Uh-huh?

**Teresa:** Highchurch.

**Travis:** Sure— ooh!

**Teresa:** Mm-hmm.

**Travis:** I didn't expect that.

**Teresa:** Uh, Magnus Burnside's.

**Travis:** Uh-huh.

**Teresa:** And Taako.

**Travis:** That's correct. Uh, and also, Griffin— and I think you'll know this by now— playing Davenport, which is very, very fun.

**Teresa:** Oooh!

**Travis:** Uh, so go check that out at the McElroy Family YouTube. Just search McElroy Family on YouTube. Uh, who have we not thanked?

**Teresa:** Well, we always thank Brent "brentalfloss" Black for writing our theme music, which is available as a ringtone where those are found. Also, thank you to Kayla M. Wasil for our Twitter thumbnail art, one more time, @shmannerscast. [laughs] Thank you to Bruja Betty Pinup Photography for the cover picture of our fan-run Facebook group, *Shmanners* Fanners. Join that group if you love to give and get and excellent advice from other fans!

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

[chord]

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