

Shmanners 438: Table Manners, Part 1

Published January 18, 2025

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[theme music plays]

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

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

Travis: And you're listening to Shmanners.

Teresa: It's extraordinary etiquette...

Travis: For ordinary occasions. Hello, my dove.

Teresa: Hello, dear!

Travis: How are you?

Teresa: I'm well. How are you?

Travis: I'm, um... I'm, uh, ground well. I'm goo—good? I'm good.

Teresa: Good. [laughs]

Travis: Cold!

Teresa: Oh, okay.

Travis: Cold here in Cincinnati! It's one of those—do you ever experience where, like, it's a rela—it's like, complaining about cold is very relative?

Teresa: Of course.

Travis: Like, we work with people who live in, like, Wisconsin.

Teresa: Yeah.

Travis: And being like, "It's cold!" And they're like, "What, 30 degrees? That's like a summer day!" Or whatever.

Teresa: "I wear shorts in 30 degrees."

Travis: Yeah. And it's like, okay. It's still cold.

Teresa: [simultaneously] Says Amanda. [laughs]

Travis: I mean, it's still cold enough to freeze water. I think that's it. Once you hit below 32, I get to complain. It's, uh—this is what I've always said the best thing about turning—

Teresa: Or zero, for our Celsius friends.

Travis: Sure. The best thing about turning 30 is you're now the youngest old person. And you can start complaining about, like, your body aching and getting old. And people stop going like, "Uh, just wait." And then, like, you hit 40 and you're like, "Oh, my back hurts. I feel so old." And you don't get that like, "Ohh, this guy." You get, like, "Yeah." [laughs] It's, uh—it hits different.

Teresa: Yeah. I'm gonna be 40 this year.

Travis: Gross.

Teresa: Yeah.

Travis: Gross. I mean, I'm 41.

Teresa: I mean, gross.

Travis: And it's gross.

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: It's all gross.

Teresa: I have heard that there is an old adage that you should, um... really spend money on the things between you and the ground. So—so, like, for instance...

Travis: Your knees.

Teresa: No.

Travis: Oh.

Teresa: [laughs] A pair of good shoes, right?

Travis: Oh, okay.

Teresa: Or a pair—or, like, a good mattress.

Travis: Or like a rocket pack.

Teresa: No. Between you and the ground.

Travis: Well—

Teresa: That's between you and the sun.

Travis: Rocket shoes.

Teresa: [laughs] Well, but it's gonna save your body.

Travis: Or like a good chair.

Teresa: Yes.

Travis: At the table.

Teresa: [clears throat] Or your desk.

Travis: Where you need manners.

Teresa: Ohh!

Travis: And in fact—oh my god, what? What a beautiful segue! 'Cause actually, we're talking about table manners today.

Teresa: Well, we're—what we're talking about is table manners around the world.

Travis: So, like, on a big jet and you're flying around the world?

Teresa: Sure. I mean, these are, like, tidbits about the way that you eat in different places, right? And things—

Travis: Tidbits.

Teresa: —things that you should be aware of, should you do, as more than 50% of people of the population of the United States said in 2024, their new resolution wasn't to quit smoking or lower their screen time. It was to travel more!

Travis: Hmm. Yeah, that's not surprising, considering there were, like, two years there were travel was not an option for most.

Teresa: I guess that's true.

Travis: And the thing is, I'm interested to hear this, because it's such, like, a dad joke, and a joke you, like—it's one of those they always say, like, in movies and TV shows. But if you asked me to, like, name a specific example, I couldn't. But, like, where someone burps, and then they're like, "Oh my god, how rude."

And then someone says, like, "Well, in some countries, that's considered a great compliment. [fake laughter]"

Teresa: Yeah, it is.

Travis: I can't wait to see if that's true.

Teresa: Um, so, let's start... with North America.

Travis: Okay. That's where I live.

Teresa: It is where we live, yes, in the United States. The United States is quite large, and so there are differing table manners. But in regards to the way that we, say, use our knives and forks, right? There isn't really people who will look at you as if you have two heads if you do something different from what they're doing, right?

Travis: Now, there is with the knife and fork—I think we've talked about this on the show before. Like, a European style of like, which hand you hold it in and, you know, how you eat with it and stuff.

Teresa: Yes. And we will discuss that.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: Let's start with Canada, though.

Travis: Canada. Our neighbor to the north.

Teresa: Our neighbor to the north has the European sensibilities as far as drinks go.

Travis: Hmm.

Teresa: You are expected to take turns buying rounds of drinks, right? So if you're out with friends and there are three friends, you each pay for one round. So you pay for everybody's drink, the next person pays for everybody's drink, and the third person pays for everybody's drink. And so even if you, you know, if you go out to the bar and maybe you're not drinking, you would have to, like, explain this to your friends. Saying that, like, please don't buy me drinks, or whatever it is, right? Because this is the expected way. Not everybody—I feel like the way that we do it is everybody pretty much pays for their own drink every time.

Travis: Yeah, I think unless it's... like, you're opting in kind of thing. Like, "This round is on me," right? Like, it's usually a discussed thing.

Teresa: Sure, but if you went out to the bar and you said, "First round's on me!" Would you expect everyone else to then buy a round as well?

Travis: No.

Teresa: No. That's not the way that we operate. But French Canada, that's the way that they do it.

Travis: Okay. Keep that in mind.

Teresa: And also, Canada is a place where you tip. 10 to 20% is customary.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: Let's go the other way... to Mexico!

Travis: Okay, our neighbor to the south.

Teresa: Neighbor to the south. This was very interesting to me. Um, because it's not necessarily—

Travis: There, the waiter tips you.

Teresa: Ah!

Travis: Right? Is that it?

Teresa: Not necessarily table manners, but it's like an eating faux pas.

Travis: To what?

Teresa: To eat watermelon at night.

Travis: Squeeze?

Teresa: Uh, it is—

Travis: What?

Teresa: —thought that it will make you sick in different parts of Latin America.

Travis: Interesting.

Teresa: Yeah. So, I'm trying to think if there's something like that here. Is it maybe, like... hmm.

Travis: What, like eating an hour before swimming? Is that what you mean? Something like that?

Teresa: Maybe. [laughs]

Travis: 'Cause here's the thing. My new favorite thing, because of this show, right? Is thinking about stuff like that. Of like, can I find the root of that, right? Of like, something that has so much liquid in it, and then you eat it before bedtime, and you end up, like, feeling sloshy, or needing to go to the bathroom in the middle of the night or whatever, so then you would tell your kids, like, "Uh, no. We don't eat watermelon before bed. It makes us sick." Ugh.

Teresa: I don't know. I don't know exactly what the origin is.

Travis: I was told when I was in, like, middle school, elementary school, and I used to, like, because I have ADHD, like, write reminders on my hands, you know? And I had a health teacher who, let's be honest, here in North America, was a gym coach who worked as the health teacher so that they could coach gym. Uh, coach a team. But told me that I would get cancer from that. Ink poisoning. That was ink poisoning.

Teresa: Ink poisoning, Ink poisoning.

Travis: And I was told that if I swallowed my Ritalin without water, it would get stuck in my throat and give me throat cancer.

Teresa: [laughs] Oh my gosh.

Travis: Same guy. Same guy in both things. So maybe those are things, like Johnny Watermelon?

Teresa: Maybe. No, um, I have—there's the adage not to drink milk or eat yogurt before singing. Right?

Travis: Well, yeah. You get phlegm.

Teresa: But you—but you don't.

Travis: What?!

Teresa: Because—[laughs]

Travis: Really?!

Teresa: So if you have a dairy allergy, it could be bad for you. But the thing—the idea is that people say that it coats your vocal cords or that it will make you—

Travis: If it's going down your vocal cords, that's really bad.

Teresa: Exactly.

Travis: Yeah, I'm hearing it now, yeah.

Teresa: That's drowning is what that is. If your milk is touching your vocal cords, you're drowning. [laughs]

Travis: I've also heard, like, if you wanna, like, be warmed up or whatever with your voice, like, don't drink cold beverages.

Teresa: Again, yep.

Travis: Is that nothing?

Teresa: That is nothing. That's nothing, because it doesn't touch you. Um, it can make you feel kind of, like, chilly, I guess, if you drink something cool. But, like, it doesn't have anything to do with that.

Travis: So you can have all the cold watermelon smoothies you want.

Teresa: [laughs] Um, there are people, like I said, with milk allergies, that will feel more kind of, like, congested later on. But not while they're singing.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: Um, let's go a little further south to Brazil.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: Um—

Travis: Is Brazil the really country?

Teresa: No, that's—

Travis: That's on the sound there?

Teresa: No, that's Chile.

Travis: Okay. I think Brazil is long, too.

Teresa: Oh, okay!

Travis: I gotta look at a picture, now.

Teresa: Gonna go to pull up your world map.

Travis: Travis Googles.

Teresa: It says, "Do not mix milk and mangoes, because some Brazilians believe it can cause health problems," which isn't exactly true.

Travis: No. Brazil isn't the long one. You were right. Chile's the long one.

Teresa: Yeah. Here's the reason for that.

Travis: Oh my god, Brazil's huge!

Teresa: It's quite large, yeah.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: The idea that you weren't supposed to drink milk and mangoes is because this goes back to the colonizing times.

Travis: Sure.

Teresa: Um, where people... [laughs quietly] where the boss didn't want people working under them drinking their expensive milk.

Travis: Oh, okay.

Teresa: Mm-hmm. But it still manifests in, like, mango ice cream, right? Is not really a thing that people tend to eat in Brazil.

Travis: Interesting. Speaking of the root of things, I was talking about this with you, like, over New Years I saw a bunch of, like, TikToks and social media posts that were like, uh, New Year's traditions and superstitions around the world, right?

Teresa: Mm-hmm.

Travis: And it was amazing to me how many of them I could pin back to, like, you know, 18th century, like a housewife making reasons to her husband of like, "Actually, I can't do the laundry right now."

Teresa: Ohh, yeah. Yeah.

Travis: "'Cause it's really bad luck. Oh, you—ah, listen. I'd love to sweep the floor right now, between New Years and Christmas, but if I do that I'll sweep all the good luck out." And the husband being like, "Makes complete sense." And I'm like, "You guys were nailing it. You were brilliant."

Teresa: Here's another one for Brazil and food. Talking about the preparation and presentation of rice and beans, which is a staple food, but apparently there's one part of Brazil where you put the rice on top of the beans, and there's another part where you put the beans on top of the rice.

Travis: Ohh.

Teresa: And it's much like the, uh... the scone in the UK, right? Is it cream, or is it—is it jam first?

Travis: Oh, see, this is also many parts of England and Europe in general where you talk about tea, and do you do the tea and then the milk, or do you do the milk and then the tea?

Teresa: Right, but we've talked about that, right? Which has its origins in the fine china available at the time, where if you had really expensive fine china, you could have a hot liquid in the actual cup and then cool it down without cracking it, right? But if you did not have expensive fine china, you had to have the cool liquid in first to temper the hot liquid—

Travis: [simultaneously] So you didn't get the rapid change.

Teresa: —so you didn't get the rapid change.

Travis: It's also, like, to once again compare it here in the US, it would be like if somebody was talking about—uh, well, it's called a lot of different things. But like, chicken fried steak, or Salisbury steak, or whatever you wanna call it, right? What do you put on it, right? Where it's just like, oh, you do gravy, or you do ketchup, or you do whatever, right?

Teresa: Sure.

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: Yeah. And one more thing about rice which is very important. Um, there is a dish called Christmas rice, which may or may not, depending on where you are, have raisins in it. Um, so if you go to Brazil and you have Christmas rice, don't even mention, "Where are the raisins?" Or conversely, "There's raisins in this?" Because it varies depending upon where you are.

Travis: I see. Though it would be fun if you're, like, the homeowner or whatever, or the host, and you serve it and you're like, "Oh, I forgot the raisins. Oh, no one's gonna mention it."

Teresa: [laughs] Maybe. Um, and then Chile is one area—

Travis: You know, there was one episode of My Brother, My Brother, and Me where I said Chile like that, and my brothers gave me such a hard time for saying Chile instead of Chile [pronounced like "chilly"].

Teresa: Really?

Travis: This is early days, before they were as cosmopolitan and international as I am.

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: But I was like, in Chile, and they were like, "Chile—you mean Chile [pronounced like "chilly"]?" And I was like, "I'm right. [laughs] I'm right!"

Teresa: I'm pretty sure. Uh, one does not eat with their hands.

Travis: Ever?

Teresa: Ever.

Travis: This is an interesting thing, um, especially having children, right? That we are often confronted with how much of especially in the US, eating with your hands is so conditional.

Teresa: Yeah. Very circumstantial.

Travis: And it's like, well, no, we eat chicken nuggets with our hands, but if you had, like, a chicken—like, fried chicken breast patty, we wouldn't pick that up.

And it's like, it doesn't scale up. It's not just like, chicken small, chicken big, both the same. But fried chicken we would eat with our hands. That's fine. It's just so completely conditional that, like, looking at a kid and being like, "That's fine, that's not. This is. It seems weird that you're doing that. I don't know—like, raw broccoli? Go for it. Steamed broccoli? No." [laughs]

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: It's like, "I don't know, man. I'm just telling you what you're gonna get a weird side-eye for at a restaurant when you're in your 30's. I don't know, bud."

Teresa: Yes. Uh, so we are talking pizza, fries, sandwich. When in doubt, use a knife and fork instead of your hands.

Travis: Interesting.

Teresa: Yeah.

Travis: I mean, listen. Can I say, I agree. Human beings are grody.

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: The world is grody. Use a knife and fork. That's my thing. That said, I still eat pizza—I eat everything with my hands. I'm just saying, like, ohh, I wish I wasn't conditioned to do this.

Teresa: "You—you people [laughs] should use your knife and fork."

Travis: Everybody else.

Teresa: "Everybody but me."

Travis: Everybody else, it's not too late for you. It's too late for me.

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: You don't have to go down the road I do. Eat with a knife and fork.

Teresa: Let's go to Europe.

Travis: My-ope or Your-ope?

Teresa: Aha.

Travis: Thank you. You know what? But first, how about a break for a word from another Max Fun show?

[theme music plays]

[ad break]

Travis: Okay. Now... we're in Europe. Oooh!

Teresa: Oooh.

Travis: Ahh, look at the history.

Teresa: Uh, first off—

Travis: So many old buildings!

Teresa: —is Italy, speaking of old buildings. Some of the oldest around.

Travis: They have old buildings there?

Teresa: They surely do.

Travis: Sick.

Teresa: From the Roman days. Italy has a very large and historic coffee culture, and so one does not order a cafe latte, as it is called, in the afternoon or evening. And in fact, if you do, the server might give you a bombastic side-eye, or straight up refuse to serve you. [laughs]

Travis: This is—

Teresa: 'Cause that's what they do.

Travis: Another thing to keep in mind, if you are a first-time—especially if you're going to, like, uh, England or, uh, I assume this is true in a lot of European countries—um, like, drip coffee, the way that you walk into any, like, coffee shop in America in the US and say, like, "I'll just have a black coffee," or whatever, and fill it up. No.

Teresa: No.

Travis: You're gonna be getting an Americano, which is a shot of espresso with then hot water added to, like, fill up the cup. Um, it is always weird to me whenever, like, I'm in London or whatever, and it's like, "I just want... just a coffee." And it's like, "Americano?"

I'm like, "[tightly] Mm. Mm-hmm! Sounds great." Um, it's just—my assumption is, it's not... uh, either this is how it started or this is why it's still done, but it's just not a big enough coffee drinking culture to have, like, a whole pot made?

Teresa: Well, we've talked about origins, and my thought is that when you make an espresso, every pull is fresh, right? And so it's not sitting around all day.

Travis: That's what I'm saying is like, there's not enough of, like, if we made a pot of coffee or, like, had a big, you know, coffee machine that made a bunch, we probably wouldn't get through it in a day. And it's more economical and more, uh, you know, fresher, as you said, to just have espresso pulls every time.

Teresa: Yeah. Um, the other one—

Travis: Also, same beans. Then you're not, like—

Teresa: [simultaneously] Oh, yeah, beans.

Travis: —having to also get, like—yeah.

Teresa: Uh, one does not cut their pasta. I like to cut up my spaghetti. That's the way I like to eat it. Um, but I do not do that out in public. That is a—that's a home spaghetti Teresa-ism.

Travis: You know why I don't like cutting pasta?

Teresa: Why?

Travis: This is true. It feels like cutting jelly or something. Like, as I'm doing it I'm like, "Is this anything? Have I... "

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: I cannot—especially when it's just, like, in a big pile of, like, angel hair or spaghetti or whatever. I'm like, "I don't know if I've done anything to this." Because what I'm afraid of is I'm cutting, like, the same strand into, like, eight tiny pieces, and untouched everything else.

Teresa: Well, you're not practiced like I am.

Travis: No. I'm impatient, and a gorilla, so. Just Shrekin' around.

Teresa: But one does not, in Italy, cut pasta. Um, the idea is that if you cut the pasta, to make it easier to eat, you are speeding through your meal, right? Instead of taking the time to curate every bite with maybe one or two long strands that you've wrapped around your fork, right?

Travis: Also, from what I've seen, um—I have not been to Italy, but that's on my list. Um, but from what I've seen, when we here in the US get a pasta dish at a restaurant, there's so much pasta in it, right? The expectation is

like, you're not gonna finish this. You're taking some home with you, or whatever, right?

Teresa: Yeah. Portions are different in the US.

Travis: Yeah, portions are different. So there's way less of like, a "Where do I even start with this pasta?" When you're in Italy.

Teresa: Also, the sauces are different in the United States. Um, there's a whole, like—when you're in Italy...

Travis: It's almost like we don't do Italian food as good as Italy does.

Teresa: Oh, yeah! It's—it's true. It's true.

Travis: And I know that I'm taking a bold stance here.

Teresa: [laughs] In Italy there's a whole thing about the shape of the pasta matching with the weight of the sauce. For example, spaghetti bolognese would never happen, right? Because—

Travis: Yeah, the baloney just falls right off of it.

Teresa: Yeah, the baloney just falls right off. No, the heavy, meaty sauce doesn't stick.

Travis: You need a tube!

Teresa: I would agree. Doesn't stick to, like, spaghetti. Um, also, one does not put cheese on seafood, so shrimp alfredo is not—well, alfredo in general is not really a thing. But, like, shrimp alfredo does not—that's not what we do.

Travis: Hmm.

Teresa: In Italy. It is frowned upon. Um, moving on to Germany. You do not drink beer before 4 PM. I mean, it's not like a hard and fast rule, but like—

Travis: Yeah, you don't go—yeah.

Teresa: I mean... I think it's a—

Travis: [simultaneously] Straight to jail.

Teresa: —pretty good idea. If you're, like, you know, at Oktoberfest, you shouldn't get sloshed before 4, right?

Travis: I remember the first time, like, as like a full-blown adult, you know, like, 28, and I was working at the theater. And, like, it was just admin work. I wasn't, like, building anything that day. And, like, went to lunch with people and, like, had the realization of like, "I can have a beer with lunch!"

Teresa: Hmm!

Travis: "And no one's—I'm not—this isn't even rebellious!"

Teresa: Yep.

Travis: "This is just, okay, that guy's doing it. Okay." And it being like, "Am I gonna get in trouble?"

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: Right? And it's like, well, you're gonna have lunch for an hour and you're eating food. It's not like you're going—you're not driving. I'd walk there, right? And it wasn't like I had to build anything. I wasn't gonna be on ladders. And I remember it being like, "Ooh-la-la." It feels so—"Ooh! I'm, like, one of those admin in the '60s!"

Teresa: [laughs] Also in Germany, similar to like I talked about the cafe, right? Cafe latte. There is specific sausages for specific times of day. There's a Bavarian sausage that's white. We've had them here.

Travis: Oh yeah.

Teresa: Because Aldi. Um, that is specifically only for breakfast. It must be eaten before noon. Um, because—

Travis: If you eat it after, you turn into a Gremlin.

Teresa: Well...

Travis: Starts as Mogwai. Then Gremlin.

Teresa: Because...

Travis: Do you think there's a third iteration that they never get to in the movie? Where it's like, you're Mogwai if you eat—if you don't—if you follow the rules. And then they become a Gremlin if you eat after midnight. But then, if you eat during the full moon, now they're a Pegasus or something. Like there's a third one that we never get to. Hey, Gremlins 3? Hit me up.

Teresa: I'm looking forward to you writing that fanfic. Um because... before there was proper, uh, refrigeration, this specific sausage must be cooked, not fried.

Travis: Oh.

Teresa: So it was more perishable. So it was in your best interest to eat it quicker. And also, most sausages have an outer casing. This one specifically must be peeled.

Travis: Hmm, okay.

Teresa: I like to peel the casing off of a lot of my sausages, just because I don't like it. But some people enjoy the snap. This one must be peeled.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: France!

Travis: I've heard of this.

Teresa: Hmm.

Travis: That's where the, uh, French live, right?

Teresa: [pause] That is, that is.

Travis: I mean, not—I'm sure there's some of 'em in other places, too. But most... a lot of French people live in France.

Teresa: They do. There are lots of very specific rules around French food, cooking French food. It's a very food-centric kind of culture.

Travis: Yeah, man. You should see what they do to their toast.

Teresa: [laughs] In that way, just leave the slicing of any cheese to the French. Don't, like, offer to do it. There's a specific way for each cheese, and you probably don't know how it's supposed to be. We went a little bit through this with the charcuterie episode. But, like, just—just... don't. Don't do it.

Travis: And here's the other thing I'll say. A lot of people... um, if you're traveling, especially to, like, France or somewhere like Italy, somewhere where you're like, "I think these people are going to be pretentious about this thing." Right?

Teresa: Hm.

Travis: There are things that we do here in the US that we are just so used to being pretentious about, right? And having opinions about, that doesn't occur to you that it's just a di—so if you're like, "Oh, with their wine and cheese, and they'll have opinions on that."

It's like, man, if they were here and they said a thing about this, or they made a comment about this, you would judge them. Everybody does it. Every country, every culture, everybody has a thing that is very near and dear to their hearts or that they take pride in being the best at, or whatever.

Teresa: Absolutely.

Travis: And it just happens to be that the things that you connect to France, we consider pretentious. Right? But I promise you, the best thing you can do is just trust, like, they know what they're doing. Right? And I'm going to enjoy the experience of letting this person be an expert at it. Or like, man, there's nothing I like more than, like—for me, I get, like, an ASMR from, like, "Yeah. You take care of me. Please. Thank you."

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: And just, like, watching a person who's really skilled at a thing, or, like, takes a lot of pride in a thing, while I just sit there and, like, nod excitedly. Like, yeah, no, please. I love this. Right? Like, that—enjoy that thing. Don't be prideful about it.

Teresa: Yeah. Apparently, Paris especially is a place where one should leave a bite or two of food on their plate. I don't know how anybody does that. I—I'm a food monster. I love to eat. And so especially if it's, like, good food, the idea that leaving a bite is very hard... but it's—

Travis: It's cheeses for us meeses. You gotta leave it for—when Ratatouille comes around, he needs some stuff.

Teresa: [laughs] It's supposed to be a compliment to the chef, saying, uh, if you eat all the food on your plate, you have signaled that you need more, that you weren't served enough.

Travis: Ohh. I thought you were gonna say the compliment is like, "This food is so good, I can't destroy all of it. I must leave some for history."

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: Okay. So, are we gonna talk about, like, the holding the utensils when we get to, like, England? Or—I wanna be reminded which one it is, 'cause I can't remember!

Teresa: Ohh.

Travis: It's from me. 'Cause—okay. I—

Teresa: So—so—

Travis: Fork, knife...

Teresa: In the United States, we are known for the switcheroo. We do the switch. So you would hold your knife in your right hand—

Travis: This is assuming for, like, right handed people, right? Or is this standard?

Teresa: This is standard.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: You would hold your knife in your right hand and your fork to steady the food. Then you cut the food. You put the knife down. You switch the fork from your left hand to your right hand to pick up the food to eat.

Travis: Right.

Teresa: That is not how it is done in most places in Europe. In most places in Europe, you have your fork continually in your right hand, and you cut with your left hand. You then use that fork that is already in your right hand to pick up the food to eat.

Travis: The other thing that I think—I don't think this is standard in the US, but I've seen with that method is then having the knife to kind of steady the fork, right? Or to steady the food.

Teresa: Steady the food.

Travis: To get the fork. Um, which I do envy. But I'm so bad with my left hand. Just the idea of trying to cut with a knife in my left hand, I'm worried that I would look like an animal trying to use tools for the first time? And they're like, "He's doing it! Look at him! Aww, they're just like us!"

Um, and I would be too embarrassed to do that. And I'd be like, "Can I have a sandwich, please?"

Teresa: I believe that there is also, um, a hierarchy of what foods should be pierced with the fork. I don't think that most foods are able to be scooped with a fork. You would use a spoon for that in Europe, whereas in the United States that's not a problem.

Travis: Now, what I've been developing, and I think I've talked about this on the show before, a fourth utensil.

Teresa: Yeah?

Travis: You got your knife, your fork, your spoon. Where it's basically like a spoon, but think more shaped like a dustpan, right? Where it's flat.

Teresa: [simultaneously] Yeah. You've told me about this.

Travis: And you can put it on the thing. 'Cause with a spoon, you have to scoop it under, and with a fork it rolls off the side. Now imagine it's fwah, fwah, right? Two—three sides, one on the back, two on the sides.

Teresa: That's a shovel.

Travis: Yes. It's like a little food shovel to, like, pick up your peas and your small things, right? So you just kind of scoop it in and lift it up, and then you have a shovel. And listen, I understand the implications of shoveling food in your mouth, and yes, it would be that.

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: But think of the convenience!

Teresa: Okay, let's go to Spain. Uh, Spain is famous for... [pause]

Travis: Like, Spanish food?

Teresa: No, tapas. Tapas.

Travis: Okay. If you thought I was gonna try to guess what you were thinking, you were wrong.

Teresa: Okay. [laughs]

Travis: So tapas is like, uh—

Teresa: Small plates.

Travis: Small plates. Shared. The idea of like, instead of, like, one big meal, everything's, you know... either shared or, like, individual kind of, uh—not tasting, but you know what I mean? Like, you're not filling up on one dish.

Teresa: Right, exactly. There's no, like, entree idea, right? Um, and one of these rules that comes with tapas is that one should not add condiments to the bread, if the bread already has something on it, like meat or cheese or anything else. Right? Um, and again, when you are eating cured meats especially, they are to be enjoyed exactly as they are, not with any additional sauces.

Travis: Oh.

Teresa: It is thought to be disrespectful to the way that the natural flavoring of the meat is. Right?

Travis: That does make sense. Because, like, when you're curing something, you're putting so much work and time into achieving, like, the curing of that meat that you want. Right? And then the idea of like—not like—I think it's a thing too of when—I think US travelers get a lot of bad rap, because we are so used to the idea of food at speed.

Teresa: Hmm.

Travis: Right? Of like, fast food or, like, it's ready in seconds, right? This kind of idea.

Teresa: Yeah.

Travis: And the idea being like, "And then you add stuff to it." Right? So we can cook a bunch of these really fast, and then you choose what goes on it. You add stuff to it. You top it with things. Right? To create the thing that you want.

Versus a culture where it's like, "No, I as the chef have, like, meticulously figured what—"

Teresa: [simultaneously] Decide every taste, yeah.

Travis: "—has gone—what goes best with this. And I'm serving it to you, and giving you, like, the best experience I can."

Teresa: Yeah. Um, let's take a tour of some North African countries as well.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: Morocco.

Travis: That's on my list, too.

Teresa: Yeah, definitely. Um, so there is no rushing a meal, like you were saying, in Morocco. It's considered extremely rude. Um, so things can take a very, very long time if you are at a meal in Morocco, and expect it.

Travis: That's the other—yeah, that's the other thing is I think, too, here in the US, at least in my experience, that a lot of it is like, we will do a meal before going to a movie, or going to the theater, or going to this thing, right? And so you get a lot of that like, I have an hour and here's the thing. As opposed to like, the meal is the thing we're doing tonight.

Teresa: Yes, yes.

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: Exactly. Um, in Egypt, one should not salt their food at the table. Um, it shows that you don't think that the chef seasoned your meal enough.

That's like you were talking about, right? Like, at restaurants in the United States, we often have salt and pepper, and you might have, like, Tabasco or ketchup or, um, you know, all those kind of things, right? That you kind of, like, adjust at your plate. But that is not—that's not how it's done other places.

Travis: As a general rule, here in the US, and I assume other places as well, don't salt your food until you've tried a bite of it.

Teresa: Oh, yeah.

Travis: I mean, but that's—you say "Oh, yeah." Right? And assumed everybody knows that. Everybody doesn't know that. So, like, if you go to a friend's house for dinner, or you go to a restaurant or whatever, try a bite of the food before you salt it. One, it might not need salt! But two, it's saying, "I know better," and that's rude.

Teresa: We serve our children a lot of steamed vegetables, and so I do salt mean before it gets to my mouth. [laughs]

Travis: Well, yeah. If you make it...

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: If you're the one making it, you're not gonna offend yourself.

Teresa: Yeah. They don't want salt on it. But I do.

Travis: They want butter on it.

Teresa: Yeah.

Travis: Because they're children of class and the Midwest.

Teresa: [laughs] Hey, listen. Just because you put butter on the vegetables doesn't negate how good the vegetables are for you.

Travis: No. They eat the vegetables. Listen, our kid eat vegetables great. There just happens to be butter on it.

Teresa: Um, Ethiopian table manners. We used to have an Ethiopian restaurant here in Cincinnati that we have been to a couple times. Um, there is a flatbread that is served. It's kind of a spongy flatbread called injera.

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: Um, and so that's placed in the middle of the table, so everyone can tear off pieces of the bread and use it to pick up the stews, or the curries, or the salads, or whatever it is. Um, but you do not—in the same way that you don't double dip your potato chip... uh, you do not lick your fingers while you are eating, okay? Because if you're—

Travis: 'Cause everybody's touching the stuff.

Teresa: Everybody's touching the same stuff, right? So if your fingers make it to your mouth, you are essentially putting your mouth on all the dishes and the bread and stuff, so don't. Don't do that.

Travis: There's a lot of places, too, and cultures, where you'll get, like, kind of a side bowl to almost, like, wash your fingers in.

Teresa: Mm-hmm.

Travis: Um, that's what that's for. Not for drinking.

Teresa: Not for drinking.

Travis: And hey, listen. Can I tell you—there's another thing. That just in general, as someone who travels, lose—get rid of whatever thing you have of like, "I'm worried about asking about this thing 'cause I'm afraid of feeling embarrassed or stupid or whatever."

Of, like, take on the mind of a child when you are experiencing a new, like, eating culture, and be willing to say, like, "And what do I do with this? Oh, that's great!" Right?

Be enthusiastic and curious. Because, like, that thing of like, the second you're sitting there and thinking, "Oh, I'm so anxious that I don't know what I'm doing. But if I ask what to do, I'll look like I don't know what I'm doing, and they'll judge me, or whatever."

It's like, lose that. Get that out of there. Right? Be open to the experience. Be curious. Not judgmental, as Ted Lasso would say.

Teresa: Not Judgmental.

Travis: Including of yourself. Don't be judgmental of yourself.

Teresa: Aww. How sweet. Moving on to Asia, Japanese table manners, if you're eating ramen, feel free to slurp those noodles. It's a compliment. It is okay.

Travis: And it's almost impossible not to.

Teresa: I mean, yeah. It's delicious, and long noodles...

Travis: How are you gonna cut your soup? You know?

Teresa: [laughs] There are lots of different, like, chopstick rules. In general, don't stick your chopsticks upright in your rice. It is reminiscent of a burial ceremony look.

Travis: Hmm.

Teresa: So, like, it's—there's a special offering reserved for Buddhist and Shinto ceremonies, so you need to be very mindful that you don't represent—like, make it look like that offering.

Travis: Got it.

Teresa: Also, um, any place that you find chopsticks while you're eating, do not point them at people. Not even for, like, gesticulating. Put the chopsticks down to talk with your hands, because it's very impolite.

Travis: Just like you wouldn't point a knife at someone. Like, if you're cutting a steak and you're talking, you wouldn't, like, do that with your steak knife, either.

Teresa: Mm-hmm. One does not spear with the chopsticks. That's not what they are for. And unlike what sometimes people do here in the US, do not mix soy sauce and wasabi. They are separate condiments.

Travis: The other day when I was traveling and I got a poke bowl and it came in, like, in a, uh—instead of, like, in a bowl, it came in, like, a card—you know, one of those, like, uh... like, it wasn't Styrofoam, but like, with the boxes. You know, with the lid that flips open.

Teresa: Like a tray.

Travis: So I'm, like, eating with a spoon and, uh, I hit a corner and, like, took a big bite of rice, and realized as I was chewing it I had picked up also the entire ball of wasabi.

Teresa: [laughs] Oh no!

Travis: And it was like, "Oh, I got some wasabi in there." And then it, like, kept doubling and doubling, until eventually I had to spit it into my hand like a toddler?

Teresa: [through laughter] Oh no!

Travis: And I was just sitting by myself in a hotel room so I didn't have to tell anyone this story.

Teresa: [laughs] Well, and wasabi in the United States is not usually real wasabi. It's usually horseradish.

Travis: Yeah. It was—but it was still—especially when you're not ready for it, and it's basically just like a thin layer of rice with a big ball of it underneath, it was a lot!

Teresa: That sounds like a lot, honey.

Travis: And I was just—I was just in it by myself, with no distraction.

Teresa: Um, in China it is considered a compliment to the chef if you burp at table.

Travis: Huh.

Teresa: Um, you know, don't make, like, a huge deal out of it. But, like—

Travis: Yeah, don't do the ABCs.

Teresa: Yeah. Um, also, specifically if you are served a whole fish, it is impolite to flip the fish over to eat it. What you would do is you would eat the filet off the one side, then remove the bones, in kind of like a peeling motion, and then eat the second filet, instead of flipping it over to eat it from the other side.

Um, it is considered representative of a boat capsizing, but can also be a sign of betrayal, because you're literally turning the back.

Travis: Well, and I would also look at that of like, if I'm the chef and I'm preparing it, right? Especially if it's something where it's, like, grilled or, like, pan fried or whatever, right? I want to present the best side in the plating. And, like, checking behind the scenes almost, it feels like, "Hey, that's not the side I wanted to show you. Don't do that."

Teresa: Mm-hmm. South Korea is a country that deeply respects their elders, and so it's customary to wait until the oldest person begins eating. In a similar way, more respecting everyone, you are also to pour everyone else's drinks before your own.

Travis: Now, before we run out of time...

Teresa: Okay.

Travis: I know that there is a very unique thing on here that you specifically told Alexx you were excited you were included, so I want to get to that before we wrap up.

Teresa: Um, so in Antarctica...

Travis: Uh-huh.

Teresa: ... when sharing a fish with your best penguin friends, please do not bring up polar bears.

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: Not only do they have a shaky history, but polar bears don't even live in the Antarctic, so you'll look very foolish and rude.

Travis: You're gonna confuse them. And listen, they dressed up for this.

Teresa: So...

Travis: Look at that penguin. He's wearing his best tuxedo.

Teresa: So also wear your tuxedo.

Travis: Yeah. You'll blend right in.

Teresa: [laughs] It's literally the least you could do.

Travis: It's the least you could do. Just wear a tuxedo. And maybe a jacket, if it's a big, puffy tuxedo jacket. Then you look like a big, puffy penguin.

Teresa: I really loved this. I think that we should do a part 2.

Travis: Okay! I'd love that. I'd love that.

Teresa: Let's do it. I love that for us.

Travis: I bet there's a whole bunch more about, like, conversational etiquette and all kinds of things. So let's do 'em.

Teresa: Well, there are lots of countries that we didn't even cover. Let's find some more.

Travis: Yeah, we'll come back. Alright. Hey, everybody. Thank you so much. Thank you for joining us. Thank you to our researcher, Alexx, without whom we wouldn't be able to do this show. Thank you to our editor, Rachel, without whom we would not be able to do this show. Thank you to you for listening. We could do this show without you, but that would be absolutely bonkers.

Teresa: I don't want to.

Travis: No. No! We'd just be screaming into the void.

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: About manners! Right? And the void would be like, "I—what am I supposed to do with this?"

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: "Why are you telling me—I'm a void."

Um, also wanna say, it is a new month and a new year, so if you haven't checked out the McElroy Merch store to find out what's there, go to mcelroymerch.com. Also, we've got some My Brother, My Brother, and Mes and Adventure Zones coming up in Florida. It's our first Adventure Zone in Florida, I believe.

Teresa: Ooh!

Travis: So if you go to mcelroy.family, or I believe bit.ly/mcelroytours, you can find the stuff there. Go check that out. 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. Also, thank

you to Bruja Betty Pinup Photography for the cover picture of our fan-run Facebook group, Shmanners Fanners! If you love to give and get excellent advice from other fans, go ahead and join that group today.

As always, we are taking topic submission, and questions, and idioms. And if you have a specific country table manner tidbit you would like to share, please send those to shmannerscast@gmail.com, and say hi to Alexx, when she reads every one.

Travis: You know, I would also love, along those same lines, whether it's like a fact about your country or even your state or whatever, or just something of like, "When I was growing up, my parents always told me blank. And it wasn't until I was an adult that I was like, 'Wait a minute. They just didn't want me to do that thing.'" I'd love to hear those too.

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: 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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