

Shmanners 444: Casseroles

Published March 7, 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: There was a split-second...

Teresa: Hmm?

Travis: ... where I forgot the words. 'Cause I looked at you, and you looked so beautiful...

Teresa: Oh, thank you!

Travis: ... that I just— it was gone for half a second.

Teresa: Mm.

Travis: My brain short-circuited.

Teresa: Good.

Travis: I'm just glad we're not recording, 'cause this is too...

Teresa: But we are.

Travis: What?

Teresa: [giggles]

Travis: Oh, man. People are gonna know that I think my wife is attractive. Darn it! I try to keep these things private, you know? I want people to think this is purely a business relationship, a marriage of convenience.

Teresa: I don't think that they think that.

Travis: You don't think so?

Teresa: No.

Travis: Maybe it started as a marriage of convenience.

Teresa: Ohh!

Travis: My money, your family title...

Teresa: My favorite romance trope.

Travis: I know; that's true.

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: My favorite? Two people that just seem like...

Teresa: Enemies to lovers?

Travis: Well, not quite *enemies* so much as, like, annoyance to lovers, you know?

Teresa: That counts. That definitely counts.

Travis: That counts?

Teresa: Yeah, that's enemies to lovers.

Travis: Okay. That's *Bridgerton* season 2.

Teresa: Yeah.

Travis: It's why *Bridgerton* season 2 is my favorite out of them, you know what I mean?

Teresa: Yeah.

Travis: Ahh. But we're not here to talk about *Bridgerton* season 2.

Teresa: Not at all.

Travis: No— well, I don't know.

Teresa: Although we should soon.

Travis: Do they have casseroles in *Bridgerton*?

Teresa: Uh, actually, yes!

Travis: I knew it.

Teresa: At that time, they were probably called cassoulets.

Travis: Oh! Cool. So much more fancy.

Teresa: So much more fancy. But yes, they definitely did. And Regency England have casseroles.

Travis: Oh. That's so funny. I mean, we're gonna get into the history of it in a second, but like, when I think of casseroles, I associate it so firmly with, like, 1950s...

Teresa: And there's a reason...

Travis: ... 1960— yeah, okay.

Teresa: ... that we'll definitely get into that, right?

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: But yes, we are talking about casseroles today.

Travis: When was the first casserole? The ancient casseroles— so the cavemen killed a mastodon, and they had some left over, and they said, "You know what we can do with these leftovers..." right?

Teresa: [laughs] No, because...

Travis: Oh, okay.

Teresa: ... cavemen probably didn't have, uh, a cooking vessel like that.

Travis: Oh, that makes sense!

Teresa: But, um, 1250.

Travis: What!?

Teresa: CE. Yes.

Travis: CE. My dad has a friend named CE Wilson...

Teresa: Oh.

Travis: ... that I think about—

Teresa: Common Era Wilson?

Travis: I don't *think*—

Teresa: His name is Common Era?

Travis: I don't think his name is Common Era; I know his first real name is Clint, and I just assumed that my dad was so dominant in the Huntington area that he had to start going by CE, so that people wouldn't be like, "Oh, you're *another* Clint."

Teresa: Mm.

Travis: Or "You're the lesser Clint." Clint the Lesser, they would [crosstalk].

Teresa: I see.

Travis: That's what I assume.

Teresa: So, the French and the Italian—

Travis: You know what we should talk about?

Teresa: Oh.

Travis: We should do an episode about...

Teresa: [laughs] Okay.

Travis: ... like, have we done an episode about, like, "Junior," and, like, naming kid— where the first name, and then "Junior," and then why we have last names, and middle names, and everything?

Teresa: Hmm.

Travis: We could do a whole episode about the history of naming people.

Teresa: We've done nicknames. We've done honorifics.

Travis: We should do an episode about, like, naming.

Teresa: Okay!

Travis: How it's evolved over time.

Teresa: Write it down. Um, but we have the French and the Italians to thank for casseroles in general, right?

Travis: Ah. See, I would've pegged it as French. I guess Italian makes sense too, but it seems— I don't know, there's something—

Teresa: Well, and the reason that you peg it as French is because the word "casserole" is derived from a French word that means "saucepan."

Travis: Well, there it is. I mean... There it is.

Teresa: There it is!

Travis: Thank you for joining us on another episode...

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: Make sure to check out mcelroy.family.

Teresa: Um, so that first recipe that I mentioned, um, consists of pasta sheets cooked in water and then layered with cheese and spices.

Travis: Mm. Now, this is interesting.

Teresa: What does that sound like, maybe, to you?

Travis: Uh... a casserole?

Teresa: That casserole, what does *that* casserole sound like to you?

Travis: Say it again?

Teresa: Pasta sheets cooked in water...

Travis: It's lasagna!

Teresa: ... and then layered with cheese and spices.

Travis: Lasagna.

Teresa: Sure— okay, I suppose lasagna...

Travis: Macaroni and cheese.

Teresa: Macaroni and cheese!

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: Which is probably what Thomas Jefferson brought back with him in the form of a pasta machine, right?

Travis: And stuck a feather in his cap...

Teresa: And his daughter, Mary Randolph, prepared...

Travis: You're just going right past that?

Teresa: ... a similar dish with pasta and parmesan...

Travis: Just zooming over it?

Teresa: ... which was later replaced with cheddar cheese.

Travis: Just skipping right past it?

Teresa: That recipe [laughs] was served in Jefferson's White House...

Travis: Called it macaroni.

Teresa: ... starting in 1802...

Travis: Stuck a feather in his—

Teresa: ... and in 1824, it was featured in her cookbook...

Travis: Stuck a feather in his cap.

Teresa: ... *The Virginia House-Wife*.

Travis: And called it macaroni.

Teresa: Yeah.

Travis: That was, like, a song. We were doing— it was like a discordant harmony, and I loved it.

Teresa: Yeah? You loved it?

Travis: I did. I mean, it was funny to *me*. I hope people at home enjoyed it.

Teresa: Okay. [laughs]

Travis: You're smiling real big, so I hope everybody enjoyed it. People love when I interrupt you...

Teresa: Do they?

Travis: ... with inane BS. They love it.

Teresa: That is kind of the whole show. Um, so anyway—

Travis: It would be a lot shorter without me. That's fair.

Teresa: That's true. In the late 19th Century, casseroles became *very* popular in the United States as immigrants from countless cultures...

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: ... brought their dishes to the US, right? And every country had their own version of, like, a kind of one-vessel meal, right?

Travis: It's so interesting, 'cause like, I've been thinking about it— I've been listening to this book series, uh, by Louise Penny that's set in Canada. Uh, the *Inspector Gamache* series, for anybody curious. Really good.

If you enjoy, like, Agatha Christie, but you're like, "I love Agatha Christie, but I wish it was set in modern-day, Canada," oh, have I got a treat for you!

Teresa: Oh, yeah!

Travis: Check out the Armand Gamache. It starts with *Still Life*. But they will often talk about, like, bringing a— like, "Such-and-such made a casserole..."

Teresa: Mm-hmm.

Travis: ... but then when they describe it, it's like coq au vin, or it's like...

Teresa: Yeah!

Travis: And I'm like, "That's not casserole! That's coq au vin." That's the thing. But if the broader definition is, like, one, it's all baked in the same dish...

Teresa: Mm-hmm.

Travis: ... that makes a lot more sense to me. It's just not how I think of casserole.

Teresa: Well, so what is your favorite casserole? N— okay, I wanna say one more thing before you answer.

Travis: Okay, good. Give me some time.

Teresa: We think mostly, in the US, as casseroles as kind of like a midwestern, like, meal, right?

Travis: Right.

Teresa: Hot dish. Tater tot. Casseroles. Like, Jell-O molds. Things like that, right? Um, but like you said, almost any meal that can be cooked and served in the same pot...

Travis: Mm-hmm.

Teresa: ... all together is considered a casserole.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: Um, and here, in Ohio, I would say we're not quite midwestern. I had once heard us described as "the Heartland."

Travis: Ah!

Teresa: And I think that makes sense. Ohio's kind of where the heart should be. Shaped a little heart-ish.

Travis: We're the southern Midwest, you know?

Teresa: Eastern— the Mideast, I would say?

Travis: Yeah, I guess. I think Ohio falls into kind of a similar thing— I mean, West Virginia's Appalachia, right?

Teresa: Yeah.

Travis: But if you're trying to place, like, "Is West Virginia northern, southern, eastern, or western?" It's like, "Oh, yeah. The answer is yes." It's all of—

Teresa: Yes.

Travis: West Virginia is the most northern southern state, and the most southern northern state.

Teresa: That's why I can get behind "the Heartland."

Travis: But I do—

Teresa: With “the Heartland of America.”

Travis: I wanna put a stamp real quick, before there’s any confusion.

Teresa: Okay.

Travis: West Virginia is not a southern state.

Teresa: Correct.

Travis: West Virginia is not— was not a Confederate state, exists purely because it seceded from *Virginia* to become a Union state.

Teresa: Mm-hmm.

Travis: So if you see anybody flying *that* flag, you know the one - the Confederate one - in West Virginia, they are dumb. And in fact, if you see anyone flying that flag *anywhere*...

Teresa: They’re dumb.

Travis: ... they are dumb.

Teresa: So what’s your favorite casserole?

Travis: So this is gonna show my midwestern roots, ‘cause I’ve been sitting here, and half of my brain has been trying to, like, come up with a good, cool, coq au vin kind of answer.

Teresa: Mm-hmm.

Travis: But I don’t have that, because my favorite usage of the casserole is, like, leftover, um...

Teresa: Okay.

Travis: ... like, a leftover Chinese food casserole with, like, the rice as the base, and then veggies and stuff baked into it. My mom used to make this one that was, like, chicken and broccoli...

Teresa: Mm-hmm.

Travis: ... and, like, cream of mushroom soup, or something like that. And sesame seeds, and, like, crumbled-up Ritz crackers as the crunchy top.

Teresa: Mm-hmm.

Travis: Um, that I—

Teresa: Did you put any cheese in it?

Travis: What?

Teresa: Cheese? You put cheese in it?

Travis: Oh, yeah. Oh, yeah.

Teresa: Yeah.

Travis: Oh, yeah, there's cheese in it. I enjoyed that immensely.

Um, but I guess, as far as that goes, I will often, like, roast a chicken on top of the veggies that go with a— right? And then serve it all from there. So I guess that is maybe a casserole, 'cause it's all one dish? I don't know.

Teresa: [hesitantly] Mm... Well, but you're— okay, so if you're roasting a whole chicken on top of vegetables, I don't think that that's a casserole.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: I think it needs to be deconstructed a little bit...

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: ... and then put together again, right?

Travis: What's your favorite? Oh— man, the wind...

Teresa: The wind's here. We're under a wind advisory.

Travis: I don't know if *you guys* can pick that up, but man, the wind is spooky outside.

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: Um, mine is also chicken and broccoli, right? Um, my mom had this cookbook from when I was in elementary school, which is one of those, like, everybody in the school sent in their different favorite recipes.

Travis: Mm-hmm.

Teresa: And that one was in there. I don't think it had cream of mushroom soup, but it did have [laughs] a lot of mayonnaise.

Travis: Yeah, that might've been it, too.

Teresa: [laughs] Um, and you can—

Travis: 'Cause my dad hates mushrooms, so it probably wasn't mushrooms, actually, now that I think about it. Maybe it's sour cream, or cream cheese? Very midwestern.

Teresa: Maybe! Yeah. So those are our favorites. And you mentioned, already, lasagna.

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: That's definitely a casserole, especially if you, uh, have the sauce where you've cooked down your carrots and tomatoes, and all that kind of stuff, right?

Travis: But my favorite— I mean, my favorite usage of it is, like, the days after Christmas, or days after Thanksgiving...

Teresa: Mmm!

Travis: ... or something like that.

Teresa: You love leftovers.

Travis: I do! Why I like what— Tom, the guy who helps us with video stuff, recently described zombie food...

Teresa: Hm!

Travis: ... right? Where it's like, it's already been cooked once, and then you cook it again in a different way. And, like, that— making a casserole out of leftovers to make it into a new form...

Teresa: Mm-hmm.

Travis: ... a new serving thing, I enjoyed that immensely.

Teresa: Yeah, definitely. Um, and I think also, the thing about casserole is it's a family event, right? It is, you are making this tray of food for the entire family. It's a great, like, community-style meal.

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: That's why a lot of potlucks consist of a lot of casseroles, right? So it's not just, like, something that you throw together. It's made with a little more love than that, I think.

Travis: Well, like, beans and rice and, like, sausage— like, something like a jambalaya or a stew or something counts? One pot.

Teresa: [unsure] Mm... There might be some levels of, like, consistency...

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: ... the somewhere between soup, stew, casserole...

Travis: Does it have to come out in chunks?

Teresa: I don't know.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: Um, so in 1897...

Travis: Mm!

Teresa: ... this is why the casserole gained—

Travis: I don't know why I reacted to the year that— like, I don't know any— I couldn't pick 1897 out of a lineup. And yet when you said—

Teresa: Oh, I mean, it's right before the turn of the century.

Travis: I mean, yeah, obviously, but so is 1898, and 1896.

Teresa: [laughs] Okay.

Travis: And for some reason, I was like, "Mm, 1897, of course!"

Teresa: "Mm, right there!"

Travis: "Yes!"

Teresa: And here is the name of the man who changed the game... "Joseph A. Campbell."

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: Yeah. That's why.

Travis: Mm-hmm. Yeah.

Teresa: That's why. You had a premonition...

Travis: I knew it.

Teresa: ... about how important this was going to be.

Travis: His soupy ghost.

Teresa: That's right! Campbell's Soup...

Travis: His chunky ghost. [laughs]

Teresa: ... Company, uh, first started in New Jersey of that year, and first introduced— the first one was condensed tomato soup.

Travis: Mm-hmm.

Teresa: You know... there are lots of different kind of "cream of" soups.

Travis: Mm-hmm.

Teresa: Cream of chicken is a very useful one, as well. Cream of celery. Um, like you said, cream of mushroom. And these were— you know, they're puree, right?

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: They don't have a lot of, like, chunks or noodles or anything, and that would be a little more like— it would need a little more R&D, right?

Travis: Yeah. This is just laying down base.

Teresa: Right.

Travis: You just got the— this is the binding agent.

Teresa: And cream of mushroom, which is so central in a lot of different casseroles, was introduced in 1934.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: Um, and things—

Travis: When they first realized you could get cream from a mushroom.

Teresa: [laughs] Um, no, I mean, it's sautéed mushrooms. Pureed and—

Travis: I know! I know it's not real cream, Teresa!

Teresa: Okay!

Travis: I might *seem* dumb, but I just play dumb on TV.

Teresa: [giggling] Alright. Um—

Travis: I can't imagine there's someone out there trying to milk a little mushroom. I know that's not how it works.

Teresa: And the way that its star—

Travis: But can you picture it, someone milking one?

Teresa: I sure can.

Travis: It's kinda cute.

Teresa: The way that its star was shot up was from green bean casserole.

Travis: Mm! Mm-hmm.

Teresa: Campbell estimates that 40% of its cream of mushroom soup today is used in this recipe *alone*.

Travis: Wow.

Teresa: Um, 1955, it was invented by Dorcas Reilly, who was the head of Campbell's test kitchen. And Reilly's original recipe card, um, was donated to America's National Inventors Hall of Fame in 2002.

Travis: From, I think, the green bean casserole.

Teresa: The green bean casserole!

Travis: Brilliant.

Teresa: Yeah!

Travis: You know what else would be brilliant?

Teresa: What?

Travis: A quick word from another Maximum Fun show.

[theme song plays]

[ad plays]

[jovial plays in background]

Speaker 1: In two weeks...

Speaker 2: [voice shaking] Two weeks!

Speaker 1: Two weeks...

Speaker 2: Put on your Gecko shorts, and grab your Pogs. We're celebrating Max Fun Drive, 90s style!

Speaker 1: Support the shows you love...

Speaker 3: [distorted through static] ... and get some rad, retro-themed gifts!

Speaker 1: Meet-up day, bonus content, and more.

Speaker 2: So don't miss it!

[static crackles]

Speaker 3: [distorted] On the world-wide-web, March 17.

[another ad begins]

[heavenly music plays]

Narrator: Somewhere, in an alternate universe where Hollywood is smarter...

[harp strums notes, audience claps]

Announcer: And the Emmy nominees for outstanding comedy series are...
Jet Packula.

[audience claps]

Announcer: *Airport Mariott.*

[audience claps]

Announcer: *Crapple.*

[audience claps]

Announcer: *Dear America, We've Seen You Naked.*

[audience claps]

Announcer: *And Allah in the Family.*

Narrator: You know, stupid universe, you can't see any of these shows, but you *can* listen to them on *Dead Pilots Society*, the podcast that brings you hilarious comedy pilots that the networks and streamers bought, but never made.

Journey to the alternate television universe of *Dead Pilots Society* on maximumfun.org.

[ad ends]

Travis: Okay, we're back.

Teresa: Okay.

Travis: See, I told you it was brilliant.

Teresa: It *was* brilliant.

Travis: I told you!

Teresa: Um, casseroles are often equated with, I would say, um— let's go for peasant fare, [laughs] right? Let's say that. Because—

Travis: Well, it's awful, right? That kind of thing? Or, uh, rarebit?

Teresa: O'foul?

Travis: O'foul, right?

Teresa: Mm-hmm.

Travis: But if you had, uh— it wasn't a "W" F-U-L—

Teresa: Yes.

Travis: It was, like, the pieces you wouldn't use in other things, right?

Teresa: Sure.

Travis: And that kind of stuff that's like, "We're cobbling together stuff to make a dish out of it."

Teresa: Yes.

Travis: Right.

Teresa: And because of that reputation, um, and *in* that reputation, it was that the height of casseroles' popularity throughout decades occurred during economic depressions...

Travis: Yes.

Teresa: ... and recessions.

Travis: Makes complete sense.

Teresa: Um, both in the 1890s...

Travis: A good way to make things—

Teresa: ... and in the 1930s.

Travis: A good way to make things last longer, stretch further.

Teresa: Exactly. It became a very cost-effective way to feed a lot of people.

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: Um, a can of Campbell's soup at that time was \$.19 cents at the grocery store, and so you could mix that with veggies that you were growing in your garden and, you know, any kind of leftovers that you might've had. You could use up your potatoes from your cellar, you could put tinned meat in there as well.

Um, and then you could feed everybody. It was a very popular way of preparing food in World War II...

Travis: Okay. So then, in the 1950s...

Teresa: Well, yeah. World War II, right? Because...

Travis: The '40s.

Teresa: ... rationing usually wouldn't allow, like, households to have very much of anything.

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: It could be a kind of community meal, right? Because you pull things together, and we make one big dish for several families to eat together.

Travis: Yes. And there was a lot of that, right?

Teresa: Right!

Travis: Of like, "We're banding together; we're all doing our part..."

Teresa: Mm-hmm.

Travis: "... get together and do these things," instead of like, individual meals for your home, and it might be like people are away in the war or working or whatever, so we're all gonna support each other, and do this thing.

Teresa: Right.

Travis: That makes sense.

Teresa: The next big thing for casseroles would be Tupperware and Pyrex.

Travis: Of course.

Teresa: Of course! In the 1950s, this widespread use of oven-proof cookware...

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: ... and canned foods made casseroles, like, the number one kind of recipe in recipe books from that time period.

Travis: Okay. This is also, if I remember correctly from, like, *Supersizers Go*, a big explosion, like, frozen thing...

Teresa: Mm-hmm.

Travis: ... so you could get, like, a bag of frozen veggies. You could get frozen meat. You could get these frozen things, right, and just throw those in. You weren't having to buy...

Teresa: Frozen *and* canned. Yeah, definitely.

Travis: Yeah. You weren't having to buy fresh veggies, fresh meat, fresh everything every time.

Teresa: Exactly!

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: Um, and certainly, both Pyrex and Tupperware made this kind of, like, dish a lot easier and more accessible to everyone. But they also were really good at the advertising.

Travis: Yeah! Tupperware— well, I mean, not just easy to cook, but if you had Tupperware and stuff, you would cook it - which is easy - and then store it, and have leftovers for a week!

Teresa: That's right. Pyrex specifically has some *wild* advertisements, and they really seemed invested [laughs] in getting women out of their high-paying manufacturing jobs, and back into the kitchen. [laughs]

Travis: [sarcastically] Oh, cool! Awesome.

Teresa: A lot of those advertisements center around, you know, “Turn yourself into a domestic goddess to please your husband, and stay home and make these casseroles, and you’ll be doing your part for the post-war America,” and stuff.

Travis: [jokingly] It’s so wild that Pyrex were the only ones doing that. Like, Pyrex...

Teresa: Uh-huh.

Travis: ... you know, imagine Pyrex sort of looked around...

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: ... and be like, “No one else is advertising like this. Why are we doing it?”

Teresa: No.

Travis: No?

Teresa: Obviously not.

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: Lots of people were using that angle to sell things. Um...

Travis: Seriously, though, I always think it’s interesting, like, these things—Pyrex *and* Tupperware both became synonymous with the thing that they were selling.

Teresa: Yeah.

Travis: Right? It’s like, I still know, like, people of our parents’ generation who refer to baking dishes as “my Pyrex,” and like, “the Pyrex...”

Teresa: Mm-hmm.

Travis: ... right? Instead of saying, like, "Hand me that casserole dish," or "Hand me that t—" they'll still say, "my Pyrex."

Teresa: Yeah.

Travis: And even I still just call everything Tupperware, right?

Teresa: Yeah. Any plastic food container can be Tupperware.

Travis: Yeah. Yeah.

Teresa: Yeah, it's true. Um, and by the way, if you are looking for Pyrex containers, and you find them in thrift stores, do your research to make sure that you have the original, um, tempered glass...

Travis: Uh-huh.

Teresa: ... Pyrex, because if you just put anything that has "Pyrex" on the label in the oven, you may have an explosion.

Travis: I'm also looking it up, because I know stuff from that time period, there was stuff that was like, "Also, check it for lead and uranium," and I don't know if that was Pyrex...

Teresa: Well, I think you're talking about Fiesta Ware.

Travis: Oh, is that what it was?

Teresa: Yeah. That's what you're talking about. Um, the need for recipes for casseroles was astronomical. The Betty Crocker test kitchen put out things like potato salad loaf...

Travis: Apparently Pyrex did also have uranium glass, maybe. Okay.

Teresa: Perhaps, at some point.

Travis: You guys, just double-check.

Teresa: Yeah. Do your research when you purchase, to make sure that you are using it correctly and that it is safe. Um, here's another one, bologna biscuits with vegetables.

Travis: Sorry? Bologna biscuits?

Teresa: Mm-hmm. Bologna biscuits with vegetables. And—

Travis: That sounds like an expletive someone would say instead of cursing.

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: When they're like, "Aw, bologna biscuits!"

Teresa: Tuna and Jell-O pie.

Travis: No!

Teresa: What?

Travis: No! [jokingly stern] No, Teresa...

Teresa: [giggles]

Travis: No!

Teresa: Yes! Actually, which has a lot of its roots in aspic, fish and aspic.

Travis: I mean, sure.

Teresa: Totally.

Travis: Hey, did you ever go...

Teresa: [laughing]

Travis: ... to a Tupperware party? Was that real? Is that a real thing?

Teresa: Um, I have never been to a Tupperware-branded party. I *have* been to a Pampered Chef party, which is another type of one of those, like, kitchenware things. I think they also do, like, spices and stuff.

Travis: I have, in my head, an image of my mom having a Tupperware party when I was very little, but I might've just, like, conflated that with hearing it talked about a lot.

Teresa: Mm-hmm.

Travis: But like, what a wild thing. I guess people still do it now, for different MLMs. But the idea of, like, "We're gonna have a Tupperware rep there; you're gonna come and look at Tupperware in my house," is just so wild to me.

But then again, if somebody right now was like, "Here's an excuse to come hang out with me, and someone's gonna talk to us about Tupperware," I'd be like, "I'm actually pretty interested in that."

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: "Thank you very much."

Teresa: So the, quote, "creativity" of the casserole, right, has become a little bit of a joke, especially on movies and TV, right? And not only is it that these monstrosities...

Travis: Mm-hmm.

Teresa: ... right, the tuna and Jell-O pie or whatever, but also the idea that it's kind of, like, slap-dash, you can just throw whatever you want in there, and put it in the oven, and *that's* a casserole is also one of the tropes that we see on television.

Um, it's the idea that you don't have the money or the expertise to make a, quote, "real" meal. And so you've just gotten all these things in a dish, right?

Travis: Sure.

Teresa: Um, but you'll find that the casserole— although it is the butt of a lot of jokes, it is the heart of a lot of families, right? If you look up on TikTok all of these, like, casserole recipes, you can see that these are things that fed people throughout their childhoods.

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: Right? Um, and maybe you didn't have the ingredients for this specific one, so you guys changed it a little bit for what you *did* have. Um...

Travis: There's a lot of flexibility in it, right?

Teresa: Absolutely!

Travis: Like, you can break a thing down of, like, "You need a carb; you need some kind of binding, flavoring thing..."

Teresa: Mm-hmm.

Travis: "... you need veggie, a protein maybe, and some kind of—" I mean, *I* like to add some kind of crunch to it. But like, you can mix and match so many different things, but I can also see, like, especially during times of economic downturn, right...

Teresa: Mm-hmm.

Travis: ... it being like, "Listen, man. This is what we have, and I know you don't wanna eat this, and *I* don't wanna eat it either..."

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: "... but we do need to eat to live."

Teresa: Well, not every single one is gonna be a banger.

Travis: Yes.

Teresa: But once you get the hang of it, and you can kind of cater to your family's tastes and needs, and even though, like I said, it's kind of the butt of a lot of jokes - especially those mid-century ones - they are really good at what they do.

Travis: Yeah, man. Now, would you include, like, dessert casseroles in there?

Teresa: Oh, you mean like, um, dirt cakes, and...

Travis: Like dirt cake, ambrosia...

Teresa: ... or ambrosia? Sure. I would call ambrosia more of a salad.

Travis: Really?

Teresa: I would call that a dessert salad.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: Yeah.

Travis: Maybe— well, it's not a trifle, 'cause there's no bread in it. Ambrosia, for those listening - I looked it up so I could talk about it - I found a recipe here. Heavy whipping cream, powdered sugar, plain yogurt or vanilla, shredded coconut, and then can of mandarin oranges, can of pineapple tidbits, cup of maraschino cherries, mini marshmallows, and you can add in, uh, bananas, chopped apples, pecans, whatever.

Teresa: Mm-hmm.

Travis: Mix it up. And man, it's a really good way to trick little Midwest kids into eating some fruit.

Teresa: [laughs] I would definitely call that a salad. Uh, Snickers salad is another one that people do a lot. That's, um, really tart Granny Smith apples and chopped-up Snickers and, again, cool whip or the yogurt or something like that, right.

Travis: Mm-hmm.

Teresa: But if you are going to make casseroles for your friends and family, I'd like to go over some etiquette.

Travis: Okay. Please.

Teresa: Um, casseroles tend to have several ingredients in them. Make sure that whoever you are giving it to or serving it to, uh, doesn't have any allergies, right? Because with all of the different - especially processed - ingredients, you need to make sure that you have gone through all of those thoroughly.

Travis: Especially if you are making it from leftovers.

Teresa: Yes.

Travis: Because then, you need to make sure you're including what the ingredients were from the *original* as well, not just like, "I put chicken in there," but if it was like cashew chicken that you put in there, right?

Teresa: Mm-hmm.

Travis: Then it's like, include what the original recipes were that you used that.

Teresa: Same thing with cross-contamination, right?

Travis: Right.

Teresa: Because maybe in one meal, you had those, and then in the next meal that you are making, you didn't have those, but if you made them from each other or at the same time...

Travis: Right.

Teresa: ... right? So just be careful about that. It's always good to check in, and make sure before you give away your casseroles.

Um, casseroles are often a part of, like I said, potlucks or meal trains. And if you don't know what that is, you set up a meal train for, perhaps, someone who is recovering from surgery, or childbirth, or...

Travis: Bereavement.

Teresa: ... or bereavement. And you make it so that you and your friends take care of them by bringing them meals every couple days, right?

Travis: Mm-hmm.

Teresa: So if you're doing that, do coordinate, so that this person doesn't end up with six lasagnas.

Travis: Unless they have a deep freeze.

Teresa: And they love lasagna.

Travis: Yeah, man. If they're Garfield, and they have a deep freeze...

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: ... go for it.

Teresa: Um, speaking of *lasagna*...

Travis: Wait, hold on. Along those same lines, if you're doing that...

Teresa: Mm-hmm.

Travis: ... make sure to label if you expect your dish back.

Teresa: Yes.

Travis: Some kind of label on it, or some identifier thing, right, so that—especially if they're getting a bunch of them from a bunch of people, or it's a potluck or something like that...

Teresa: Mm-hmm.

Travis: ... that it's easily identified as *yours* when it comes to having to return it. I would also say, uh, finding a tactful way of saying, like, "And just let me know when you're done with it, and I can come back to pick up the dish..."

Teresa: Right.

Travis: ... or something like that.

Teresa: This is an instance where I would recommend disposable containers.

Travis: Yes.

Teresa: Especially those aluminum catering cans are perfect for these!

Travis: Perfect for it.

Teresa: Right?

Travis: Yep.

Teresa: Not only can you layer it in those pans, you can cook it in that pan, you can put that pan in the refrigerator— can't put it in the microwave; don't do that.

Travis: No, that would be bad.

Teresa: [laughs] Um, but that's like a one-stop shop. And speaking of labeling, they *also* often come with those paper or cardboard lids, right, with the foil on one side, and the white surface on the other, which is perfect for labeling!

Travis: Yes.

Teresa: Use a Sharpie, write what it is, write the date, write ingredients if you need to...

Travis: And any, like, reheating or cooking instructions.

Teresa: Exactly!

Travis: If it's like, "If you're gonna eat this, pop it in the oven, 400 for 10 minutes, and it's ready to go," or whatever it is.

Teresa: Right. And I would also say, in that same line, there are a *lot* of really great casseroles that are ready-made. Marie Callender comes to mind.

Travis: Mm-hmm.

Teresa: Um, there's like the lasagna that they have, and there's a baked macaroni and cheese. There's the pot pies, of course, which aren't technically casseroles 'cause it's in a pie shell, but you know what I mean, right?

If you're doing a meal train like we talked about, those are perfectly acceptable to help make somebody's life easier.

Travis: I would also say, like, even if you're somebody who doesn't consider themselves a cook or good at cooking...

Teresa: Mm-hmm.

Travis: ... one of the really nice things about casserole is - aside from, like, if you're making something with prepared, separate ingredients that then you mix into a casserole - it doesn't require a lot of technique or skill, right?

Teresa: Sure.

Travis: So having a recipe and following the recipe will result in an edible, perfectly fine casserole.

Teresa: Yes.

Travis: So that doesn't require you to quote, unquote, "Know what you're doing."

Teresa: I feel like, for a lot of casseroles, they're usually one step, which is "Everything in a pan in the oven."

Travis: Yes.

Teresa: There may be, probably, two or three more steps, depending upon if you need to ground meat...

Travis: Sautee veggies.

Teresa: ... sauté veggies, or boil potatoes or pasta.

Travis: Or steam rice, or something like that, yeah.

Teresa: Sure. But there are also a lot of recipes you can find where those go in *uncooked*, and you cook 'em up a little longer in the oven, right?

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: So, you know, we talked about how not only do they have a long-storied history, they've come in and out of fashion, but they have always been...

Travis: I love the— yeah, I just pictured a casserole fashion show...

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: ... and it made me so happy.

Teresa: They have always been—

Travis: “Oh, it looks like she’s showcasing— ooh, is that green bean?”

Teresa: [giggles]

Travis: I loved it.

Teresa: They’ve always been a really great way to, one, trick children into eating vegetables.

Travis: And fruit.

Teresa: And fruit. And, two, feed a lot of people for not a lot of money.

Travis: Yes. You could do apple and sausage in, like, a savory thing.

Teresa: Certainly! Like an egg bake?

Travis: Yeah. Yeah!

Teresa: Yeah, you could do a breakfast strata or something with cinnamon apples and sausage and, like, bread pudding-style stuff.

Travis: Here’s what you’re gonna do.

Teresa: Absolutely.

Travis: I’m gonna show you my head right now. You’re gonna get some apples and some sausage. You’re gonna cut ‘em up really small. Then, you’re gonna get some of those fluffy layered biscuits out of a tube, and you’re gonna peel them apart in layers. And do layer of biscuit stuff, and

then this apple/sausage/maybe cheese paste, and layer it almost like a lasagna.

Teresa: Hmm.

Travis: Right? With layers of biscuit, and sausage, and apple, and maybe some Gruyere in there. Uh, a little bit of fennel and rosemary. Out of the park.

Teresa: Sure.

Travis: Enjoy.

Teresa: Go make it, then.

Travis: Throw some parsnip and carrot in there?

Teresa: Go make me one.

Travis: I really wanna make this now.

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: It sounds really good.

Alright, everybody, thank you so much for listening. I'm gonna tell you a couple of exciting announcements.

First of all, the first leg of the 20-Thunder-Drive tour is here; *My Brother, My Brother and Me* and *The Adventure Zone* are going on tour. We're going to be in Virginia, North Carolina, Michigan, Minnesota, Ohio - I think that Ohio one, maybe I'll try to talk my wife into joining us, we'll see. You might get to meet my wife, finally. You guys are gonna love her when you get to know her.

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: Um, all the *TAZ* shows are gonna be *TAZ Versus*, which is— we started with *TAZ Versus Dracula*, and now we've done a bunch of them as one-shots. Um, this year, I believe all the shows are going to be *TAZ Versus* a Shakespeare thing. We did *TAZ Versus Romeo Versus Juliet* down in Tampa. Um, and it went super well, so...

You don't need to know anything about the preexisting campaign to enjoy these shows. Uh, tickets are on sale now. You can get all the info and ticket links at bit.ly/mcelroytours.

Also, check out our new merch over at mcelroymerch.com. Um, and we've partnered with Kin Ship Goods, which is a company that I absolutely love and make a lot of really great stuff, but a lot of it is West Virginia stuff, and specifically Huntington and Charleston stuff, which I enjoy.

And we have, uh— so I have this concept for a shirt that is based on Collis P. Huntington, the founder of Huntington, was looking at a town to build a new train depot, and it's gonna be huge for the town. And I think— it was either Guyandotte or Holderby's Landing, but he was there, and he tied up his horse somewhere he wasn't supposed to, and he got a parking ticket.

And he was like, "You're gonna give me a parking ticket? I'm about to put this down on the map." And the cop was like, "Yeah." And he said, "Alright. I'm just gonna build my *own* town right next door, and put the train depot there, so kiss my butt." And then that was Huntington.

Teresa: Huntington was born!

Travis: And Huntington eventually grew so large that it incorporated the town that he got the parking ticket in. Um, and so the t-shirt says, "Huntington, West Virginia: Born of Spite," and has a raging horse on it.

So you can check *that* out at kinshipgoods.com/mcelroy. The shirt was designed by Pepper Raccoon. Uh, you can find Pepper Raccoon on Instagram. One more time: kinshipgoods.com/mcelroy.

We wanna say thank you to our editor, Rachel, without whom we could not make the show. Thank you to our researcher, Alex, without whom we could

not make the show. And thank you to *you* for listening; you're part of the casserole of the show.

Teresa: Aww!

Travis: You're the binding agent. Without you, it would all just be loose, flopping around in the pan, gross. So thank you.

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: So 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're taking your topic submissions. If you want to send us casserole recipes...

Travis: Oh, my God, that would be amazing.

Teresa: ... I would love that. Uh, topic submissions, and questions, and any—

Travis: Okay, I'm gonna put a pin in that.

Teresa: Okay.

Travis: Send us casserole recipes that your— like, family recipes. Don't just, like, google "casserole recipe."

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: I want it to be something that's like, "I have fond memories of this," or "I make this for my family all the time." Not just, like, random recipes.

Teresa: Great. Okay. I like that. Um, and when you write to us at shmatterscast@gmail.com, say hi to Alexx, our writer and researcher, who reads every one!

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 *Shmatters*.

Teresa: Manners, *Shmatters*. Get it?

[theme music plays]

[acoustic guitar sting]

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