

## Shmanners 486: Fika

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["Shmanners Theme" by Brentalfloss 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:** [sighs] Hah... hello, dear.

**Travis:** Is that a sigh of contempt that the holidays are over?

**Teresa:** Maybe. Maybe it's the sigh of, let's take a break. [chuckles]

**Travis:** Happy new year! Or whatever.

**Teresa:** Yeah. Yeah, we made it. We made it through another year.

**Travis:** In mostly one piece, yay!

**Teresa:** [chuckles] I have a crown I'm waiting on, so...

**Travis:** Yeah, and I just hurt myself a lot throughout the year.

**Teresa:** [chuckles]

**Travis:** Little cuts and nicks and everything. I think it would all add up to, I don't know, maybe like just the tip of my pinky finger, if you were to add up all of them.

**Teresa:** Oh, okay, okay. All your various aches and pains?

**Travis:** And injuries.

**Teresa:** And injuries.

**Travis:** Mostly stupid.

**Teresa:** Yeah.

**Travis:** Do you remember when I cut myself with the hedge trimmer?

**Teresa:** I do. [chuckles]

**Travis:** And Bebe was with me, and for a while told people I had cut my finger off. "Yeah, I was there with you when the—when you cut your finger off."

**Teresa:** No.

**Travis:** I was like, "I didn't—that didn't happen."

**Teresa:** My favorite part of that story is it happened right after you told her, "Don't touch this part, it could cut you."

**Travis:** Yeah, you—well, what I said is you have to be careful. Because if you're not careful and your finger were to get caught between this, it would cut you. And it wasn't right after, it was like 15 minutes later.

**Teresa:** [chuckles]

**Travis:** And I—because if I had said, if it happens, we have to go to the emergency room. And then, suddenly, I dropped the thing and went inside. And I was like putting pressure on it with paper towels like, "Hey, we need to go." And she goes, "Did you cut yourself?" And I said, "Yes, I did." And she goes, "And we're going to the emergency room?"

**Teresa:** [chuckles]

**Travis:** And I said, "Yes, we are." She was six, I think?

**Teresa:** Yeah, so that didn't happen this year.

**Travis:** No. But what are we talking about? None of that.

**Teresa:** None of that.

**Travis:** None of that is what we're talking about.

**Teresa:** We are—we are talking about a very wholesome tradition that is brought by our good-natured friends abroad, the Swedes.

**Travis:** I've heard of them. From Sweden, correct?

**Teresa:** From Sweden, from Abba. From the Northern Lights and from IKEA.

**Travis:** Okay, for a second, I thought you meant we got an email from Abba.

**Teresa:** [laughs]

**Travis:** And on so many levels, I was confused.

**Teresa:** That would be amazing. That would be amazing.

**Travis:** It would be amazing! Are you kidding me? I would email them back and be like, "How do you feel about the fact that we used 'Take a Chance on Me' for so long on my brother—"

**Teresa:** [chuckles]

**Travis:** "Did you know about that? Oh, god, am I just now letting you know about it?"

**Teresa:** [chuckles]

**Travis:** "Please don't yell at us."

**Teresa:** So, today, we're going to talk about a Swedish custom that I think... I think everyone around the world should do. I think I especially will be doing this now.

**Travis:** Okay?

**Teresa:** So...

**Travis:** It's buying yourself a little treat.

**Teresa:** I mean, kind of.

**Travis:** *Really?*

**Teresa:** It is like a little treat!

**Travis:** A little treat?!

**Teresa:** It's a little treat, twice a day. And it is called fika.

**Travis:** Uh-huh.

**Teresa:** It is—

**Travis:** Might need to rebrand it for the US contention.

**Teresa:** It is the art of the Swedish coffee break.

**Travis:** Now, when I first saw this header in our email from Alex—hi, Alex. Thank you for everything. I misread it as "pika," which is—

**Teresa:** Oh.

**Travis:** I believe, a mental thing where you eat non-edible, non-food related things.

**Teresa:** Yeah.

**Travis:** And I was like, that's—should be Sawbones, not us.

**Teresa:** Oh. Yeah, it's about a craving for non-edible, or like you said, non-food items.

**Travis:** Yes.

**Teresa:** Because somehow, there's a place in your brain that equates it with the mineral or something that you need.

**Travis:** Yes.

**Teresa:** Like you said, Sawbones, not Shmanners.

**Travis:** But this is... Is it—and it's fika.

**Teresa:** Fika. Here, let me give you—

**Travis:** See, the thing is, if that had an L, it'd be very problematic for the US contention, is what I'm saying.

**Teresa:** Yes, but what it is, is the syllables of coffee reversed.

**Travis:** So this is where you make coffee?

**Teresa:** No.

**Travis:** Or you spit coffee out.

**Teresa:** No.

**Travis:** You throw coffee away.

**Teresa:** No, it's coffee.

**Travis:** Oh.

**Teresa:** Fika. Right?

**Travis:** Okay. Oh! Wait, I hear it now.

**Teresa:** Yeah.

**Travis:** Okay. Took me a second. Sorry, everybody.

**Teresa:** Where, all over Sweden, workplaces included, work comes to a stop, and cake and coffee, or tea, are enjoyed. So, it's like, it's—I mean, it's like teatime, but like sanctioned, at 10:00 and 2:00.

**Travis:** I just had the best image in my head of a scene playing out, of like just some real hard, grody labor, where you end up like covered in like the dust of something while you're doing it.

**Teresa:** Mm-hm.

**Travis:** And then a bell rings, right? To signal the break. And some—they all just—

**Teresa:** Machinery grime.

**Travis:** Yeah, they just all step away as the machines shut down and then they have their little tea cups and cakes like, [spoofing a burly voice] "Yeah, another hard day out there, Carl."

**Teresa:** [titters] Mm-hm.

**Travis:** And it made me real happy to picture.

**Teresa:** Yeah. So, what it is, while—

**Travis:** [spoofing a burly voice] "Pinkies up, Steve."

**Teresa:** [chuckles] While us Americans, us uncultured Americans—

**Travis:** Thank you.

**Teresa:** May run and grab a coffee, right? And drink it on the way back to the office. No, no, no. That is not how the Swedes do. Fika is meant to be a true slow down. No working, no rushing through Fika.

**Travis:** I mean, people here have a hard time not working through lunch.

**Teresa:** It's true.

**Travis:** Let alone taking a little snacky break. A little treat break.

**Teresa:** Mm-hm. You walk away from your desk, you brew your coffee, you get a slice of cake, and you sit. You are not allowed to talk about work, and you must socialize or relax.

**Travis:** Er else.

**Teresa:** Or else. I mean, yeah, or else!

**Travis:** You're fired. "Hey, Steve, I've noticed you've not been socializing or relaxing enough. I'm docking your pay."

**Teresa:** Mm-hm. I mean, there's a really fun creator on TikTok that is doing a kind of like American versus French work ethic, and it is a little bit like that in France too, where you're not allowed to talk about work or like do after work functions as part of work. And I think that I would like to do that. But—

**Travis:** It's so funny, I think that we've made a hard shift in the US, or at least I hope it's heading this way, of you know, a decade ago, 20 years ago, right, the joke would have been, these other countries are so lazy or decadent or whatever for taking this time off of work, right?

**Teresa:** Mm-hm.

**Travis:** And a lot of that bootstrap kind of mentality here in the US. Which, by the way, if you don't know, is inherently dumb, because the idea of pulling yourself up by your bootstraps is, it's impossible.

**Teresa:** Yes.

**Travis:** You can't lift yourself up by your bootstraps.

**Teresa:** And I think that really started in the '80s, right?

**Travis:** Yeah.

**Teresa:** Because before that, people drank cocktails at the office and went on like—

**Travis:** Not that I'm saying people should do that again!

**Teresa:** Three hour lunch breaks and stuff.

**Travis:** But it sounds nice.

**Teresa:** So, hospitals, offices, schools, factories, doesn't matter. When it's time for Fika, it is time. And we do it.

**Travis:** Now, surely it matters if you're in the middle of like a surgery or something?

**Teresa:** Maybe they don't even schedule surgery at that time? I don't know, probably if you're in the middle of a surgery. [chuckles]

**Travis:** "I'm gonna need 10 more minutes."  
"No, it's Fika time, man!"

**Teresa:** This reminds me a lot of the—there's an Australian program on Netflix that our children have really picked up and are enjoying called Little Lunch.

**Travis:** Uh-huh.

**Teresa:** Which is kind of like morning recess and snack time, instead of like lunchtime, right? And this feels a lot like that, where like everybody kind of



like files out of the classroom. They go to the—to the playground and they have their snack.

**Travis:** I think Little Lunch is one of the best workplace comedies I've ever seen in my entire life.

**Teresa:** It's amazing!

**Travis:** I stand by the writing. Superb.

**Teresa:** Very good. Check it out on Netflix. Anyway... A lot of these informations that we have here was gathered from a book called Fika: The Art of The Swedish Coffee Break, by Anna Brones and Johanna Kindvall. And they say, functioning as both a verb and a noun, the concept of fika is simple. It is the moment that you take a break, often with a cup of coffee, but alternatively with tea, and find a baked good to pair with it. You can do it alone. You can do it with friends. You can do it at home, in a park, or at work. But the essential thing—

**Travis:** Would you could you on a train? Would you could you in the rain?

**Teresa:** Indeed. The essential thing is that you do it. On a train. In the rain?

**Travis:** With a goat or on a boat?

**Teresa:** And that you make time to take a break. That is what fika is all about.

**Travis:** Would you fika in a tree?

**Teresa:** Ooh.

**Travis:** Would you fika with a bee? I don't think that's the rhyme, is it?

**Teresa:** I don't think it is. But bees don't drink coffee.

**Travis:** No, they prefer tea, because we put honey in it!

**Teresa:** Mm-hm. So, how did this start? What is the origin? I shall tell you...

**Travis:** Right after this word from another Max Fun show! I know it's early, it was just, it was a really good time to do it, and I wanted to have an intense cliffhanger.

**Teresa:** And I wanted to take a break.

[theme music plays]

**Sierra:** Hello! I'm Sierra Katow, host of TV Chef Fantasy League. And I'm here with Max Fun Member of the Month, Dan Kotnik, who has been a Maximum Fun member since 2023.

**Dan:** Thank you very much!

**Sierra:** As the Max Fun Member of the Month, Dan, you'll be getting a \$25 gift card to the Maximum Fun Store.

**Dan:** Cool!

**Sierra:** And you get a special Member of the Month bumper sticker.

**Dan:** Yeah.

**Sierra:** This is a huge one, you get a parking spot at Max Fun headquarters, HQ, in Los Angeles, California!

**Dan:** Sounds good.

**Sierra:** Is there anything else you'd like to add as Member of the Month?

**Dan:** This is my opportunity to say thank you to everyone that is a part of Maximum Fun, because you guys have just created a media environment that clearly resonates with a lot of people. Being able to do that organically is really impressive, and I think that's the root of why I've been such a big supporter. And so, I want to just thank you guys for committing to that goal.

**Sierra:** It's for members like you, Dan. And you, specifically, are member of the month for a reason.

**Dan:** [chuckles] Thanks. Bye.

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[break]

**Travis:** You know, we've been doing My Brother, My Brother and Me for 15 years, and maybe—

**Justin:** Christ!

**Travis:** Maybe you stopped listening for a while, maybe you've never listened. And you're probably assuming, "Three white guys talking for 15 years, I know where this has ended up." But no!

**Justin:** No! You would be wrong! We're as shocked as you are that we have not fallen into some sort of horrific scandal or just turned into a big crypto thing. [chuckles]

**Travis:** Yeah! We don't even really know how crypto works!

**Griffin:** The only NFTs I'm into are naughty, funny things, which is what we talk about on My Brother, My Brother and Me.

**Justin:** We serve it up every Monday for you, if you're listening. And if not, we just leave it out back until it goes rotten. [chuckles]

**Travis:** So, check it out on Maximum Fun, or wherever you get your podcasts!

[break]

**Travis:** *Preh!* That's the back to work whistle.

**Teresa:** Oh, that's the back to work whistle?

**Travis:** Yeah, we're back. It's also kind of a bad air horn sound.

**Teresa:** Yeah.

**Travis:** *Preh!* Like the air horn is running out of pressure.

**Teresa:** [chuckles]

**Travis:** *Preh...*

**Teresa:** It's definitely dead now. Okay, so, the history of fika overlaps a lot with the history of coffee in Sweden. And I mean, that makes sense to me, because without coffee, there is no fika. Coffee, fika.

**Travis:** Yes, that makes complete sense. Well, you know, the coffee break is—the history of like espresso, at least, was—

**Teresa:** Sure.

**Travis:** Designed to be like, we need something that's fast, right? We got these people waiting around for their tea to steep and taking these tea breaks at work. This is taking too long, right? So, we're gonna have espresso, so it's like done *now*, and then they can—and it's a little shot they could take and get back to work!

**Teresa:** I mean, that is typically what people think of. They think of kind of like Italian cappuccinos or like French cafés when they think of coffee. But according to that book I told you about, the Swedes drink an average of 39 gallons of coffee per person, per year.

**Travis:** Pretty good. That's almost Brennan Lee Mulligan numbers.

**Teresa:** Do you think so?

**Travis:** That fool loves—that one time—

**Teresa:** He drinks—oh, tell the story—

**Travis:** Yeah, one time, he was drinking coffee when we were on the JoCo Cruise. And I saw him consume quite a bit. And I asked him, "Brennan, how much coffee do you drink in a day?" And he said, "I drink coffee 'til the coffee is gone." And I said, "Oh, okay, cool!" And this was like 11PM at night. [chuckles]

**Teresa:** So—

**Travis:** So, he was vibrating, and they used that to power the ship.

**Teresa:** Oh, yeah.

**Travis:** Yeah, they just took them up to the engines, and he turned it like an organ grinder monkey.

**Teresa:** [laughs] Full steam ahead. And I, at first, I was like, really? Coffee in Sweden? I really didn't know. But here's the thing, right? Brönes and Kindvall point out that the southernmost tip of Sweden is still on the same latitude as Moscow.

**Travis:** Cold.

**Teresa:** It is cold, right? A warm, caffeinated beverage would be helpful to get people through the chilly nature, right?

**Travis:** Plus, coffee is an anytime food, as far as I'm concerned. Year-round, I don't care if it's hot or cold. I like—I drink my coffee black and hot, and bitter. I want it to hurt.

**Teresa:** [chuckles]

**Travis:** Right? Because then I know—

**Teresa:** You want it to punish you. [chuckles]

**Travis:** I want to know I'm making my way through something, right?

**Teresa:** [laughs]

**Travis:** I don't believe coffee should be enjoyed. I believe that coffee is the equivalent—I get from coffee—like when people talk about like a runner's high.

**Teresa:** Mm-hm.

**Travis:** Because as someone with ADHD, I don't really get caffeine the way other people do. It doesn't work that way. So much as I'm like, yes, this is self-flagellation. I am—

**Teresa:** [chuckles]

**Travis:** I've earned whatever comes next. I am here, I am present now.

**Teresa:** I like coffee-flavored sugar.

**Travis:** I do put like an ice cube or two in my coffee, because I don't wanna burn my little tongue.

**Teresa:** Hm...

**Travis:** Which one time a barista did refer to as child's temperature, which, okay, thank—I didn't need that, I'm a grown man.

**Teresa:** Mm-hm.

**Travis:** I'm a big boy!

**Teresa:** So, coffee was introduced to Sweden in the late 17<sup>th</sup> century, but much like its more adorable sister drink, hot chocolate, it was primarily a drink for the ultra-wealthy. Because back then, in order to buy a kilo of coffee, it would have cost the average farmer an entire year of wages.

**Travis:** Get out of the town.

**Teresa:** Yeah.

**Travis:** That's too much!

**Teresa:** Mm-hm.

**Travis:** If you ask me. When I travel back in time, that's the first thing I'm changing. No, there's other stuff.

**Teresa:** The price of coffee beans?

**Travis:** No, there—I have a much—

**Teresa:** In Sweden?

**Travis:** I have a longer list than that.

**Teresa:** Okay.

**Travis:** Yeah.

**Teresa:** That's good. But it's on there?

**Travis:** Hm, pretty far down.

**Teresa:** I think that wealth inequity, just in general.

**Travis:** But I don't know where to start with that via time travel. I guess... I mean, I'll talk to some people, I'll get like a game plan going and see what I can do.

**Teresa:** But it got even more popular throughout the century and later, because between the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, Sweden attempted to ban coffee!

**Travis:** Oh, yeah, so it got huge.

**Teresa:** No less than five times did they attempt to ban coffee. [chuckles]

**Travis:** Ban coffee?!

**Teresa:** Yeah!

**Travis:** Why?!

**Teresa:** I mean, because—

**Travis:** It's the devil's drink!

**Teresa:** Well, so, it wasn't that they were annoyed by the frivolousness of coffee or whatever, but there was a true concern that coffee was an addictive substance, on par with drinking, gambling or illicit drug use. And they were concerned, quote, "For the safety of their citizens." Probably not really... And the Swedish monarchy attempted to ban the drink from their borders. Which made it even more sexy, right? So, everybody wanted that coffee drink. [chuckles]

**Travis:** Listen, I understand that that's the reason given.

**Teresa:** Exactly.

**Travis:** But I also guarantee it's because there was an import, and not being produced in Sweden. So, they were probably like, "People aren't consuming the stuff we make here!"

**Teresa:** Mm-hm.

**Travis:** "They're drinking this coffee that we're bringing in. How do we do this?" Or whatever, right?

**Teresa:** Or it was getting ever popular, and the rabble—

**Travis:** Oh, yeah!

**Teresa:** Was getting in on it. And so, in order to keep it to the elite, they started banning it, so that the people who couldn't afford it, couldn't get it.



And the people who could afford it could always get it, even though it was banned.

**Travis:** Sort of like prohibition.

**Teresa:** Like, yeah, prohibition or French brandy in the Regency period.

**Travis:** We've talked before too about like coffee houses and ale houses and stuff being meeting places for people. I don't know what politics were like in Sweden at that time, but I wouldn't be surprised if it was like, "Yeah, we don't want people getting together and having coffee, staying clear-headed, awake, maybe kind of riled up and like getting together at these coffee houses. No way."

**Teresa:** No way! Next, we have Swiss pâtissiers who are moving to Sweden and opening up schwitteries.

**Travis:** Sorry?

**Teresa:** I believe. Switchiers? I'm not quite sure. It's a traditional bakery that gave the Swedes the chance to enjoy delicious baked goods along with their delicious coffee. And hence, fika.

**Travis:** Well, there you go. Yeah, there you—I mean—

**Teresa:** Their tradition. In the way that, let's equate it to like pub culture in the UK, right? Café culture is essential to Sweden. According to the Euromonitor, there were 1145 cafes throughout Sweden as of 2020, and 97% of those were locally-owned businesses!

**Travis:** Ooh, nice!

**Teresa:** Good on you, Sweden.

**Travis:** Yeah!

**Teresa:** No Starbucks around here.

**Travis:** I wasn't gonna say it, but I was thinking it, yeah, yeah, yeah.

**Teresa:** [chuckles] I saw it in your eyes. And so, it has become such a universally big part of like entertainment, I would suppose? I don't want to say—

**Travis:** Culture.

**Teresa:** Yeah, sure, but it's not—it's also about the art of entertaining. That's what I want to say.

**Travis:** Oh, okay.

**Teresa:** Because it's expected that if you are serving coffee, you're also showing off your baking skills as a host, making sure that you have arrays of cookies or cakes or other delicious treats to offer to your guests. In fact, there is a baking tradition known as seven types of cookies and seven types of cake. And Swedish cookbooks are filled with these.

**Travis:** So, would you compare it to—what you've just described immediately made me think of like a US equivalent. And I know that we don't like claim—we don't own these things. But like if I were gonna throw like a cocktail party with like a charcuterie and like crudité.

**Teresa:** Mm-hm.

**Travis:** Versus like have friends over for coffee and cookies and cake.

**Teresa:** Mm-hm. Sure!

**Travis:** It's like a similar vibe of—I mean, not vibe, but you know what I mean. Like—

**Teresa:** Yeah.

**Travis:** Do this instead.

**Teresa:** And there is a whole vocabulary associated with it, and I'm going to do the best that I can.

**Travis:** I believe in you.

**Teresa:** So, a fik is a place to have fika. Fikapaus is a break, to have fika. Fikarast is a specific time in the day for fika, like in the workplace. Fikastund is the moment you have fika. Fika—

**Travis:** Okay, wait, hold on. It's getting very specific and I love this. Fikarast is the time when you do. But fika—

**Teresa:** Stund.

**Travis:** Stund—

**Teresa:** Is the moment.

**Travis:** is the moment!

**Teresa:** Fikarum, which is the break room or the kitchen, right?

**Travis:** That one I could have guessed.

**Teresa:** Fikaställe, which is a place to have fika again.

**Travis:** Wait, hold on, so there's fikarum and then fikaställe.

**Teresa:** And a fik.

**Travis:** And a fik.

**Teresa:** And then there is a fikasdugen, which is to have a coffee craving. And then there is—

**Travis:** I like that one a lot.

**Teresa:** And cupfika, which is a cup of coffee.

**Travis:** Fikasdugen makes me so happy, because that's one of those where, even if I—

**Teresa:** Maybe sugen. Fikasugen.

**Travis:** Sugen. Even if I didn't know what it meant, and someone was just like, "Can I tell you right now, I'm just really feeling like fikasugen." I'd be like, "You need coffee." [titters]

**Teresa:** [laughs] So, friends, listeners, Shmanners Fanners, what do you do during fika? I'm gonna tell you. You sit down—

**Travis:** Right after this break! No, sorry, wait, no, we've already had one of those. We can take another break now, just a fika break real quick.

**Teresa:** [chuckles] Just a fika break.

**Travis:** You said two a day, right?

**Teresa:** It's too late for me to have coffee. I'll never go to sleep. [chuckles]

**Travis:** That's fair.

**Teresa:** Maybe decaf.

**Travis:** It's all I want right now. It's all I want. It's 6:59PM, and it's all I want right now.

**Teresa:** Maybe—

**Travis:** We've been talking about it too much.

**Teresa:** Maybe we can brew some decaf. [titters]

**Travis:** Okay.

**Teresa:** You have—you have to sit down. It is meant to be a break from responsibilities, so that you can connect with each other over good food and

drink. So, it cannot be done, you know, out in the world, walking around, shopping. You can't—you can't do it like that. You have to sit down and take a break. It is meant to be savored. It's kind of a tradition about indulging in the little luxuries that we may not otherwise allow ourselves. For example, it is traditional that fika is served on a nice porcelain set, right? Of cup and saucer.

**Travis:** Like what they feed the cats in in that Fancy Feast commercial.

**Teresa:** Yeah. Well—

**Travis:** No?

**Teresa:** No, not a crystal goblet.

**Travis:** Oh, okay. Can I tell you, when I was a kid and I would see those commercials where they're like bringing it, maybe it was Cesars or something, I always thought like, listen, I know that cat food—

**Teresa:** Fancy Feast, that's what it is.

**Travis:** But I'd be like, I know that's cat food, but I want to eat it.

**Teresa:** [titters]

**Travis:** But that's luxury right there. That cat's life is better than mine will ever be.

**Teresa:** Yeah.

**Travis:** It's eating off a crystal like goblet and it's got that little mint leaf on it. Look at that cat. Man, I wish I was in that cat.

**Teresa:** [chuckles] But you are not to have paper plates or throw away coffee bottles, okay? The cups and saucers are so important to Swedish coffee culture that the vessels are for sale all over the world with delightful arrays of traditional designs. So like, I have one... I think I got it... did I get it as a wedding present? I have a singular, large porcelain cup with flowers

painted on it and a saucer that matches. It's not part of a set. It is just a single one. It doesn't match anything else. And I love it. You could do that.

**Travis:** I have many giant cups that make me feel normal-sized.

**Teresa:** Mm-hm. You love your giant cups.

**Travis:** I do!

**Teresa:** Desserts are also essential. Fika without desserts is like a beach day without the sun.

**Travis:** I'd be fine with that, actually.

**Teresa:** Oh, you would.

**Travis:** Yeah. I like a nice stormy beach where it really feels like I've been cast away, right? And it's just me and the elements. I like my coffee to hurt! And I like my beaches rainy. I don't enjoy things.

**Teresa:** [laughs]

**Travis:** I'm a man without joy!

**Teresa:** That is what it sounds like.

**Travis:** That's my thing! Ask anyone, "Tell me about Travis McElroy," and they'd say, "Oh, a bleak existence that man lives. So bitter!"

**Teresa:** [chuckles]

**Travis:** No, I'm just an emo boy.

**Teresa:** [chuckles] An emo boy.

**Travis:** I'm an emo boy trapped in this effervescent, excitable man.

**Teresa:** [chuckles] Whatever sweet treat you have doesn't exactly matter, but it is preferable to tradition that it be homemade. So, small cookies or chocolate balls or cakes or cinnamon rolls, cardamom rolls, are just a few staple Swedish favorites.

**Travis:** Once again, can I tell you how happy I would be to be in a workplace where I would have an excuse to bake little treats for my—

**Teresa:** Ah, you would love that.

**Travis:** For my employees and my co-workers and everything. Like, thank you so much—this is one of the problems I run into here, I love baking. But if I make anything like more complicated than like, you know, like cookies or cake, my kids are like, "Eh... Oh, yeah, that was good." And I'm like, "Do you want more?" And they're like, "No!" And I've made enough for like 12 people, and like a third of it gets eaten. And most of that is Teresa and I being like, I gotta eat more.

**Teresa:** [chuckles] You made a really delicious bread pudding. From leftover donuts and cinnamon rolls.

**Travis:** Leftover donut and cinnamon roll bread pudding. You can bread pudding out of anything. I made a 'Queen of Sheba' chocolate torte, used some of that in there too.

**Teresa:** It was great.

**Travis:** Threw some chocolate chips in there, brown butter. It was incredible.

**Teresa:** Americans have the water cooler, and the Swedes have an entire place at work, the fika room, like we said.

**Travis:** The water cooler is BS, by the way, we can all agree, because like you don't sit down. The idea is go grab, go back to your desk. And even now it's like, "No, bring a water bottle. I don't want to see you wasting time. Drink it right at your desk."

**Teresa:** Yeah... So, can everybody—everybody can go there. Usually there are like—I mean, obviously, there are places to sit. Some are more, I would say, comfortable than others. So like, may not have couches, might just be more like a kind of kitchenette situation with chairs and tables or whatever.

**Travis:** Still.

**Teresa:** But a little break.

**Travis:** A little break! A little treat.

**Teresa:** A little treat, a little break. Studies have shown that this cozy ritual contributes to a much better work-life balance and a sense of community belonging. In fact, many Swedish employers say that this little timeout is vital to their employee well-being, and that it reduces burnout and boosts creativity! The HR digest puts it, "Fika is a reset button. In a world where everyone is hustling, the true meaning of fika prompts us to step away from the desk. Take it as a chance to stretch your legs, clear your mind and return to work with renewed focus."

**Travis:** Ah, yeah! That sounds like something everybody could use.

**Teresa:** And you can do it yourself! Here's how!

**Travis:** Get out of the town. What?

**Teresa:** With your friends, designate a place to gather, maybe a café or a calm room at the office, or just in your own living room, have people over. Invite everyone—

**Travis:** You could even have a virtual fika, over Zoom!

**Teresa:** I bet you could! It's a community coffee break, so schedule a time and stick to it. I would suggest either 10AM or 2:00, weekly. And it should only be about 15 to 30 minutes, right? So, schedule that time, sit down, relax, and don't use that time to talk about work.

**Travis:** No.



**Teresa:** Serve it from proper cups and saucers. And for a note, it is traditional that the coffee be brewed fresh. And because of this, the brew is often *very hot*. Because of this, it is common, or it was, to pour a little bit from the cup directly onto the saucer, and drink it from there. So, the first sip from the saucer. Well, because—

**Travis:** No! I know that I looked incredulous, so much as I'm like—

**Teresa:** You did.

**Travis:** I love this.

**Teresa:** Oh, okay.

**Travis:** Yeah.

**Teresa:** Let me explain why this works, because it will cool off faster, as it has a larger surface area for the liquid to cool. In a cup like that, it all kind of like—the top layer might be cool, but then underneath you have the scalding-hot coffee. But if you pour it into your saucer, it becomes a very shallow vessel.

**Travis:** Yes.

**Teresa:** Right? To drink from.

**Travis:** Yes.

**Teresa:** And this is—

**Travis:** I love it.

**Teresa:** This is called "dricka fa pat," which translates to "drink from the saucer."

**Travis:** I love it. I love all of this.

**Teresa:** Let's see. Here are some other things you can do. You can "dricka kaffe fa bit," which means "drink coffee on the sugar cube." So. you can put the sugar cube in your mouth, between your teeth, and drink the coffee through the sugar cube. You don't—you don't have to do any of this, but it's a fun thing to do. [chuckles]

**Travis:** I mean, everybody likes a little challenge. It starts to feel a little bit like that game where you're supposed to inhale and hold the card against your mouth, and pass it on to the next person. Except you're kissing the coffee.

**Teresa:** [chuckles] Here's one, "kaffe gok," which is the Swedish term for coffee with a shot of vodka in it.

**Travis:** Ooh-la-la.

**Teresa:** And so, you should go to your fika, have your fika, and talk about things that are not work.

**Travis:** Yeah. Fika as much as you want.

**Teresa:** Indeed. And if someone invites you to a home fika, or generally a fika that isn't in a cafe, bring a treat and make it homemade, because that will be in the best spirit of the fika coffee break.

**Travis:** You could listen to Mika while you fika.

**Teresa:** [chuckles] Ooh, he's got a new album coming out.

**Travis:** He does. I'm very excited. Hey, everybody, thank you so much for joining us. Thank you to Alex, our researcher, without whom we could not do the show. Thank you to Rachel, our editor, without whom we could not do the show. Thank you to you for listening! You are the saucer to our cup.

**Teresa:** Aww.

**Travis:** Which means we could sit down on the table without you, but it just wouldn't feel right. You know what I mean? Go check out McElroy Family, for

all the other shows we do, mcelroy.family. Also, McElroy Merch, for the merch up there. I feel like it's been eight months since I last did one of these.

**Teresa:** [chuckles] It's been like three weeks.

**Travis:** What else, Teresa? What am I forgetting?

**Teresa:** Well, we always thank Brent 'brentalfloss' Black for writing our theme music, which is available as a ringtone where those are found. We also thank Bruja Betty Pin-up 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. And as always, we are taking your topic submissions, your questions, your idioms. Please send those to [shmannerscast@gmail.com](mailto:shmannerscast@gmail.com), and say hi to Alexx, because she reads every single 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 Shmanners.

**Teresa:** Manners, Shmanners, get it?

["Shmanners Theme" by brentalfloss plays]

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