Transcripts from 6.11 & 6.26

Lamb’s Quarters: Food Love Stories with Matthew Lopez-Jensen

1. **Lailani & Sebastian**

L: My name is Lailani.

S: Hello, my name is Sebastian.
L: I’ve been living in the Bronx all my life – born and raised in the Bronx, born at Jacoby Medical Center, moved around the Bronx for a few years…moved out of New York, and then was able to find an amazing home in the Bronx, tucked by the Botanical Garden.

S: I’ve lived in the Bronx for about 15 years. Lived in New York my whole life, but in the Bronx for 15 years. I lived on the other side, near Soundview, and then from Soundview over there, Near the botanicals.

L: So how did we meet?

S: Wow. I saw her a few times. I hadn’t had any real interactions – maybe once, like a slight introduction. I was working on a project and she was working with a company, in what they call a collective situation. I had to come in because there were some things that needed to looked over, and she was one of the people that was in the office. And she had a very strong personality. anybody that knows Lailani knows that she has a strong personality.

L: He is absolutely right, because I walked into this room and the meeting was going on and all I could think was, “Who are all these people in the office and why are they here?” Because I had been the only person in the office for months. And then he happened to sit at the table and his demeanor was so assertive, all I could think was, “Yeah, we can’t work together, I don’t like him, he’s not gonna sit here and demand things from me. We’re not doing this.”

I remember at the end of that meeting, I told my boss, “I will never work with him. We have an issue with him. I can’t work with him the way he works.” But that was history, we interacted at other events. And then for HIV and AIDs Legislative Day in 2016, we happened to not realize we were going on the same trip together. I was already on the bus with a mutual friend, and the minute he got on the bus - he stumbled on the stairs going up to the bus. He looked at his friend, and said “hi” to me and found his seat. We spent the whole day, instead of legislating, at McDonalds in Albany talking about life and everything that was going on.

S: We did, that whole day. There are so many things, when you’re interacting in the community - you don’t think you’re going to find your love like that. We’re fighting a battle, passing each other on the battlefield. One of the things I admired is that she is a great speaker. She has great presence on the stage. “She’s going to do amazing things,” - that’s what I thought about her. Prior to that I had saw her at the office, but our roles was a bit different. She was coming from a different company, and the companies were collaborating. I don’t think of myself as very demanding, I’m very focused. Even in work situations, I’ve very different from when I’m just hanging out. Sometimes when I’m a work situation, I’m laughing and talking…and you don’t realize that I’m really serious.

S: A food we love? We both love dumplings. Seafood is a food that we love. We spent our first year doing a lot of seafood – crabs, shrimp.

L: We actually did a lot of outdoor dating – we did a lot of restaurants and venues and traveling the first year we got together. We traveled a lot and went to different restaurants. For me, I love to cook. It’s like the concept of a bee, when a bee sings you, it leaves the stinger in you? That’s what I do with food, I sting you and leave the stinger in you. For me, I love to cook. Anything my husband likes and asks to eat, I make a point to look into it, if I don’t know how to do it. I think my biggest thing is like a seafood boil. Like a 6-ft table…and it’s just two of us…and we small! We small in frame.

S: It looks like a smorgasbord for about 10-15 people.

S: I can cook, I can cook very well, but she’s…it’s like: “Thank you, thank you, thank you.” Because, I do like to cook, but I don’t like to cook like that.

L: One of the things we tried together - he had seen something on social media and he had sent me the post. He was like, “This looks really good and I want to try it.” And I was like, “Ok.” I like to make my own things, and put my own spin on it. I don’t like to look at servings and stuff.

S: It was like one of the those Tik Tok things, like really quick to make, biscuits with pepperoni and sausage and meat, or even it could be chicken…with cheese and, oh my god, the olive oil…and the different seasonings - and she did it. It looks just like how the commercials always look, really nice.

L: Yeah, it was good.

S: It broke apart real nice - it was soft and fluffy and crispy. It was good.

1. **Julien & Joel**

JR: Hi, I’m Julien Rodriguez -

JJR: And I’m Joel Jessina Rodriguez.

JR: I came to this country when I was 3, lived in the Bronx for many, many years, most of my young adult life. And then I moved out and now I live in the Bronx.

JJR: I grew up in Brooklyn, but I moved to the Bronx after being together for 9 years or so. I now work in the Bronx, live in the Bronx, and I love it in the Bronx.

JR: I remember when I saw Joel for the first time; we were at a club that was called The Crash, and he was here visiting from Maryland, so I laid eyes on him and I knew from that moment that he was the one.

JJR: I was at the bar, having some drinks with some friends, it was birthday weekend, Pride weekend. And then he came up to me later on after we locked eyes and asked me if I wanted to dance. And that was it.

JR: We love pancakes, as a matter of fact the day after we met at The Crash dancing, we went to IHOP. I love the butter pecan pancakes. And you know he can tell you what he loves.

JJR: I love all pancakes, but that day it was chocolate chip. Chocolate chip pancakes, that’s very memorable.

JJR: There’s a lot of stuff we’ve tried together. I think one of the fun things we tried in the past couple years was Dominican sushi, and I think that was really nice—it’s very fun, very cultural. And it tasted amazing.

JR: Yeah, the sushi there is inspired by Dominican culture, so some of the dishes would be like *tres golpes,* which is a traditional dish in the DR that is made out of plantains, with eggs and salami and cheese. So, this particular sushi was modeled after that and it doesn’t disappoint.

JJR: Speaking of a cultural food in a cultural place, when we went to Puerto Rico for the first time - we went to Vieques. We were by the beach in the cabana, and we both tried breakfast with banana pancakes, which were fantastic. The sun, the weather, the ambiance – everything was beautiful, so I’d love to relive that moment again.

JR: I think it was called Billy Blues or something. I can’t remember the name of the place, but I hope it’s still there! When we went, it was pre-hurricane and I know the Vieques was affected tremendously by it. I hope that its still there, because I loved-loved-loved those pancakes. They were delicious.

1. **Michael and Tony**

M: Hi, how are you? This is Michael Brady and Tony Billups Brady.

M: We are proud Bronxites. I’ve lived in the Bronx for 20 years…

T: I’ve lived here for about 12 years and we both live and work in the borough. Tony, what do you do?

T: I work for the Bronx Chamber of Commerce.

M: And I’m the CEO for the 3rd Ave Business Improvement District.

T: The first time we met, it was actually Pride about 12 years ago. It was pretty much last call at The Eagle, and I was standing there talking to some random person and he (Michael) was sitting on the pool table.

M: Not that side of the pool table -

T: Well, not that side of the pool table. But we made eye contact - so we did that back and forth (you come to me, no you come to me), back and forth, and eventually I went over to where he was. At that time the lights actually came on, and we just exchanged information. Oddly enough him and the friend that he was with at the time, they went to an after-party down a few blocks south. The friend I was with that night, we had actually turned east. Somehow, we actually ended up at the same place, not knowing that’s where we would meet again. His friend was outside smoking a cigarette, and saw me. He was like, “Michael’s inside,” and I was like, “No, it’s already 4:30, this night’s over, I’m going home.” So, he went in and told Michael I was outside. He [Michael] came outside -

M: Right away -

T: Right away, and we actually went across the street and sat on the stoop from 5 am to 9 am the next morning, just talking.

M: Then Tony invited me to a BBQ the next day (in like 3 hours). I was like, “Ok, if you’re serious about it, then go home, shower, and then text me to make sure all the logistics are -

T: He didn’t think I was going to text -

M: I did not! But he did send the text message, and was like “Oh, it’s going to be a casual BBQ.” I was like, “Ok, cool,” and I didn’t know what to wear. We show up and I thought it was just like a BBQ in a park. No, it’s like one of his friends has a beautiful brownstone overlooking the parade route with a terrace and everything. I was like, “Ok, this is what we are dealing with!” Then, oddly enough, when we were looking out at the parade one of the other people at the party were like, “Oh, when did you guys meet? You guys have such good chemistry…” and right as that question was asked, The Eagle float went by.

T: I said, “Oddly enough, that’s where we met!”

M: 3 hours ago!

T: I was like, “What time is it?” But it was a legit situation that from our interaction in the group setting - everybody thought we had been together for a while. And one person asked, and I said, “Well, actually we met last night at The Eagle,” and they were like, “You brought a stranger to the house?” and I said, “Up until now, you guys didn’t realize that because we have such good chemistry! So, I said, “We’ll see where it goes.”

M: It was fun and that’s history you know? Within a few months he moved in, and you know we just continued our love for each other, and then we got married.

M: Is there a meal we both love? I think there is. So, we cook a lot; cooking is like our therapy for each other. I can’t say its therapeutic if we are both in the kitchen together, because we have a very small New York City kitchen, but we love to make potato soup. It’s like the one comfort food in the winter. I always like to say – when we met each other, we were like your typical young gay couple. Like we both didn’t have a lot of money, we both had crazy student loans, but potato soup was this one thing that didn’t cost a lot to make and it was delicious and it was so comforting during one of those cold dark nights in the winter, you know? It was really good.

M: And it has bacon and we love bacon! We’re not vegans.

M: I have to admit, I’m a little more open to trying new food. When Tony and I first met, he very “No, no.” So, I really enjoyed beets and Tony had this terrible, terrible experience with beets, so he would not eat them.

T: As a child I was traumatized by beets. My mother used to force them at me.

M: So, when I learned this, I was like “Ok, we’re going to try beets cooked in different ways together.”

T: So basically, his therapy for me to learn how to like beets was almost like feeding a toddler, like you have to sneak the food in so they don’t think they’re actually eating it. So that what he started to do!

M: I made beet pasta sauce, which he ate and liked, and he was like “Oh, this is really good. What’s in this? How’d you get it to be this color?” And I was like, “I have no idea!”

T: I was like… “Ugh, damn you…”

M: But then, I had never tried pickled beets, so we both were at a party at my sister-in-law’s house, and they’re Polish so everything is pickled or meat. There were pickled beets there, and I was like “Why don’t we both try this together?” And we did, and he loves pickled beets now.

T: I do. I love them.

M: We keep jars of them in the fridge now

T: It’s my go-to snack, who am I?

M: That’s not the sexiest story in the world but you know… over a good beet.

T: *(laughs)* You’re insane!

1. **Erica and Valentina**

E: Hello, I’m Erica -

V: And I’m Valentina -

E: And we happen to be married.

V: We have been married for 4 years going on 5 and we’ve been together for 7 years.

E: Yes, blissfully.

E: Well, we first met in New York in New York City. On Tinder, where everybody meets in this modern age.

V: We met for the first time at Tom’s Restaurant. That’s the place they show outside on *Seinfeld* – we went there!

E: Yes, it was a pretty bad coffee shop, but we had a lovely time.

V: We stayed there for 6 hours, just talking.

E: They hated us!

V: Yes, they hated us and the food was bad. I remember that the food was bad!

E: And for someone who was new to New York, I burst your bubble; something like, “*Seinfeld* wasn’t actually filmed in NYC at all, and all those great New York shows are actually filmed in Los Angeles…”

V: That was very, like, upsetting. *(laughs)*

E: We do like cooking together, experimenting, and being in the kitchen. We do a lot of experimenting, and trying different things. We’re not bound by recipes, so I think usually anything we come up with together…we’re usually both like, “Mmmm, that was good!”

V: We also have a lot of little rituals regarding food, like I’m Colombian and we consider cold coffee a blasphemy. It’s like what the fuck are you doing, putting ice in the coffee? *(laughs)* Americans just love cold coffee, and Erica loves cold coffee, and I like hot coffee, and at the beginning of our marriage we realized we were both trying to accommodate to the other. So it was like, Erica started drinking hot coffee because *I* like it and I started to drink cold coffee because *she* likes it, And I don’t know how it happened, but it was so cool when I realized that Erica would make me hot coffee in the morning and I would be in charge of making her the cold coffee in the afternoon, and I think that is one of the best things.

E: Yes! And now, we’ve found a beautiful seasonal coffee drinking where we both have hot coffee together in the winter and then we drink cold coffee together in the summer. It’s so cool how we melded that together.

E: Well, we were reminiscing today at lunch. We had gone to Peru on our honeymoon, and we took a cooking class one day where we got to go with a really awesome chef to a market and look at all the native ingredients. They taught us how to make *quinotto,* which then happened to be on the menu today at the restaurant here at the Garden!

V: Yeah, that was fantastic! It’s like quinoa and some sauce, so it’s like risotto… but it’s quinoa.

E: Yes, and it was creamy and nice

V: Ooh, and we also had *chicha morada* - pretty much everything from Peru was a novelty for the both of us.

E: Yes, we didn’t expect it to be such a culinary-focused trip, but that was probably the best food either of us have ever eaten.

V: But also, I used to not be an adventurous eater, and Erica used to be a chef. I used to not be open to the idea of sushi, so something that is raw is like, “No.” I don’t know how you convinced me, but I’m more adventurous, ever since I’ve been with you.

E: You’re a lot braver than I think you give yourself credit for, so I think you were open to the possibility. And you turned out to like a lot of things you didn’t even think you would like. Like sushi or a medium-cooked steak.

E: Yeah, I like something al fresco, or eating with some fresh herbs. We live in the city, but we have our little herbs we grow in the apartment that we grew very attached to. But we do have a lot of friends and family who live places where they grow herbs. We do enjoy when we go over to (especially) my sister-in-law’s. They have an abundance of mint, so we love going there and getting some extra mint and throwing it into…sometimes we make a drink, sometimes we throw it into a salad…Fresh herbs are something we really enjoy. We’re very into cilantro.

V: Yeah, I was thinking that one of the first things in our relationship was I gave you my tomato plant!

E: Oh yes! The gift you got. You were going back home for a while, and I held on to the tomato plant, and it grew a tiny tomato. Yeah, she was very cute on the windowsill. Yeah, that’s true, that was a good memory.

E: *Tomatito*! *(Laughs)*

1. **Eduardo and Partner**

E: Hello, my name is Eduardo and I am originally from Costa Rica. Now I’ve been living in New York for about 15 years.

E: We moved here recently, about 2 or 3 years ago, before the pandemic hit. We found a new home, so we made the Bronx our home. Now I’m working here, as well, which is wonderful.

P: The first time we saw each other was Halloween night about 15 years ago. I don’t even remember how long it is! *(laughs)* But, the first time we saw each other was Halloween night in a club, dancing, both of us with our own respective silly costumes.

P: So funny.

E: What were you dressed as?

P: I dressed up like, simple, in a rock-style jacket.

E: Uh-huh, you were half-naked *(laughs),* and I was dressed up as this completely scary gothic kid with like, a very white face and dark eye shadow and silly socks.

E: I like to think we both love food from our own countries, actually - Latino food as well as Central Asian food.

P: Asian, American…

E: You want to talk about *lomo saltado*? I think that is your favorite dish in the world.

P: Oh yeah - when I tried for the first time to eat *lomo saltado*, it reminded me of something familiar in my country’s food - but completely different flavor, different recipe-style, more juicy, and rich, different spices.

E: *Lomo saltado* is a Peruvian dish traditionally, but we also make it in other parts of Latin America. It’s steak with onions, peppers, and tomatoes and then its cooked heavily in soy sauce with traditional Latino spices on it. So, it has a different kick, a different style; it’s Latino/Asian fusion, but is very Peruvian. And it’s also cooked with French fries! So, the fries soak in the sauce, and you have a side of rice and salad (usually with avocado on top), and this very special home-made traditional dressing that’s made in Peru.

E: What food did we try together for the first time?

P: I remember we tried for the first time together…Thai food, in a Thai restaurant! For me, it was a completely different style and new food and I really loved the Basil duck.

E: I think Thai was the first time we tried food together that was new to us. I already loved Thai food, but there was a particular dish (I can’t remember the name exactly), sort of like a dumpling. It was a special way they made it. So that was the first time we had something different together, and I really loved it. But for him, it was very new at first.

E: For me, it’s really… if I think about something that’s special, that brought us together… I think about your own food, the food you cook, the way you brought [your country] into our home. There’s this delicious traditional dish called Pilaf with rice, raisins, soaked carrots - and traditionally it is made with lamb, so the meat is truly cooking and blending all these flavors. Everything is being brought together and mixed together in the pot, but everything is cooked in layers, so you don’t cook everything at the same time.

P: First the meat and the onion; after that: carrots, boiling one hour and adding the final finishings with rice and cumin and raisins… and then that’s it! After half an hour, it’s ready to attack! *(laughs)*

E: It’s truly incredible - mouth-watering, amazing, and unique flavors that I had never had before. So that’s amazing: the food I learned from him.

P: And mostly different kinds of greens, like dill, parsley, cilantro, lemon juice, and olive oil.

E: It sounds simple enough, but the way all the flavors bring together something new; it looks simple like a regular tomato salad, but it’s not. When you eat it, it’s something completely different. And he adds pomegranate juice to make it super unique!

E: Back home in Bolivia or in my other home in Central America, there is nothing like the flavors and preparations from his country’s traditional recipes, and he felt the same way about Bolivia's very unique traditional dishes. Our actual countries and their cuisine were a new discovery for the both of us.

1. **Deb & Maya**

D: I’m Deb Travis and I live here in the Bronx. I wasn’t born in NYC, I was born in Northern Michigan, but I’ve lived in the Bronx since 2016. Maya and I were introduced by mutual friends, and Maya used to work at the back bar at Henrietta’s, which was a bar that all the lesbians went to. And so, everyone kind of knew Maya by sight, and I knew her as that really mean back bartender. She had been to a few parties that I had been to, but I didn’t really hang out with her. And then there was a point where we both happened to be single and one of our friends said, “I’ll introduce you and you guys should go out.” We asked a different friend, “What do you think about this idea?” and she said, “I would be shocked if you actually went out with each other, but you should. You should stop dating the people you’ve been dating and date people like you. So, it would be a really good idea.”

D: Hmm, a strong food memory? We definitely don’t eat wild edibles because we’re afraid of things on the ground. Although, morels – up in Northern Michigan, our house is kind of perfectly situated on the north side of a sandy ridge in a shady maple forest with deep leaves. So, the first year we bought the house, we were up there with my family. I was out there weeding and raking and a morel popped up. Growing up in Michigan, morels are kind of a symbolic, sacred thing. It’s like deer season, you look around and suddenly everyone has gone off hunting. Morel season is the same way - people have their secret places they go. So, I was just flabbergasted to see this morel under the leaves. And I started to look more closely and there was another one over there, and another one over there, and I started collecting them. My family came over later that day and they were beyond excited. The kids were super excited, so the kids went out, and up in the whole hill and everything, and off in the forest to find morels. We came back with this huge…probably 2 gallons of morels. And they knew how to cook them; they were like, “Yeah, yeah, we got this.” And they cooked them right up, and they were delicious. We had a big feast on them. So, we went out on the boat and then had morels.

D: Hm, is there a food that we both tried for the first time together? Those morels, that was the first time I had had morels. I’m always a little suspicious of mushrooms, unless it’s a bland mushroom that’s been hanging out in the supermarket for a long time. I’m trying to think if there are other foods, though…I guess the thing in that category I would say, is when we travelled to Italy.

D: I remember going to Rome during artichoke season, and going with Maya because she is culturally Italian and she has a really good sense of the seasonality of food. She introduced me to this idea that all of the different cities have their seasons and their preparations and there are literally people in the world who go to Rome in spring just to get the artichokes. I thought that was really a wonderful…It’s kind of like discovering that birds migrate – this thing has been going on for so long and you didn’t really know.

D: Hm, is there a meal you both love? Probably – what are they called – scallops? Scallops are not safe around us. We both definitely like scallops a lot – that’s one of Maya’s top foods for sure. I love them because you really can’t go wrong. They are really easy to prepare and they are so delicate and delicious. You can do them in the winter, spring, fall, or wherever. They’re not heavy or too light and don’t require a grill. And not just barbecue with a sauce and the whole mechanism, but also [we love] grilling food. One of the best parts of when we get out of town is when there’s a grill, and just eating off the grill every night. All kinds of vegetables and just grilling them up.

M: Hello, my name is Maya and I’m the wife of Deb Travis. I live in the Bronx. I’ve lived here since 2016. I don’t work here, but I have an art studio here, and I love it here.

M: The first time Deb and I saw each other was in a bar in Brooklyn. Although, I should say, she saw me and knew of me before I knew of her. We were set up on a date, and we met at Caddyshack in Brooklyn, which I don’t think exists anymore. But since I was a bartender at Henrietta Hudson, for over a decade I was sort of…known. I can say more about that, but I won’t at this moment. I do remember that we used to eat at Supper in the East Village a lot when we were first dating. Deb lived on Avenue D and I lived in the far West Village at the time. We had both lived in those locales for a long time. I mean I grew up in the far West Village and she lived on D for over 10 years. Supper was an Italian restaurant on, I don’t remember the street, but it was pretty far East, and there was always a long line. We would meet there for dinner after she got off work at Techserve, which was always late because she worked till midnight. Sometimes we would meet at 10 or 11 o’clock if she got off early. I remember it was a place she liked to go so I embraced it as well.

M: I’m trying to think of a food we tried for the first time together – I’m sure we have different memories of something like that. I do remember artichokes in Rome together on our honeymoon. It wasn’t the first time I’d had artichoke, but it was the first time I’d had it in that preparation and it had like a little piece of mozzarella on the inside and it was folded and delicious and we sat outside and it was very Roman.

M: A meal that we both love? Now, this is tricky because we both have very different palates. Deb is a true carnivore and I’m much more of a grazer – a vegetable, lettuce-y type of person. *(laughs)* So, foods that we enjoy together tend to be…there’s some pasta dishes that I make (which maybe that’s my bias that I think we both love it as much). For example, there’s a lasagna that I make that does have meat in it that is both passed down from my grandmother, but it’s also a very traditional recipe that is Tuscan. It only has parmesan chase and a Béchamel sauce so it’s quite creamy, and we made it together during the lockdown. We made fresh pasta together for the first time. Instead of making sourdough bread, we made fresh pasta. We brought out the pasta-maker which was my grandmother’s which had been shoved in the back of the cabinet for a long time. Actually, it was Deb that suggested that we bring that out because she’s much more adventurous about things like that. So, it’s a hand-crank and we experimented with that and it came out really great.

1. **Aimee & LaToya**

**L:** Hello, my name’s LaToya -

A: and my name is Aimee.

L: A connection to the Bronx is because Aimee lives here. Before we got together, I had never been to the borough.

A: My connection to the Bronx is that I also live here, I grew up here, I work here as well, I work here at the Garden. So, the Bronx is a huge part of my life.

L: The first time we saw each other, I actually saw her first. Our dirty little secret is that we met on Tinder. She’s actually my second girlfriend. In my past, I have…hardcore Christianity. We all know some of that trauma, it lasts for a very long time. It’s hard getting to a point where you can actually accept yourself and you’re ready to put yourself out there at the risk of losing friends and family. But, when I saw Aimee, I thought, “Ok, I’ve got to take this chance.” Her picture was so cute, she was at a comic shop, she was with one of the artists, Walt Simonson - she was with him and she had this big, beautiful smile on her face. And I was like, “Oh my gosh, I have to say hi to her, she looks like a fun person.” So, I contacted her.

A: Yeah, I remember seeing her on Tinder and I remember thinking, “Wow, she looks really pretty and really professional, and she’s not going to want to talk to someone like me.” At the time I was working at the Garden. I was working part-time in a comic shop as well, and I wound up working here full-time. But yeah, you were the first person to see the other person when we met. I was looking around and looking around and you were texting me, “I see you,” but I was like, “I don’t see you.” I thought you were taller than you were.

L: The funny thing is we were both on an app called Her, it’s a lesbian dating app, and when I shared with her who my ex was, it was so funny, she was like “I blocked her, she was scary!”

A: She did, she looked a little scary. Scared me a little bit!

L: The first meal we had was actually on our second date at my apartment. Aimee told me on our first date that her favorite cookie was chocolate cookie with peanut butter chips, and how she’s told everyone she ever dated that she loves them but no one had ever made them for her. So, I said, “Of course, this is easy, I’ll make that for her.” And, of course, we had tacos as a second meal. Everyone loves tacos, how can you not like tacos.

A: We had tacos last night, too.

L: We did. But I had decided to make it for her, I was like, “I really like her and I want her to be totally into me,” and let her know that my cooking and baking skills were on point. So, I did that for her and I was like, “Please, please, make sure this comes out right. Because, if it doesn’t, she’s probably never going to want to speak to me again.”

A: I thought it was so sweet that you made those cookies for me, because I had this ex before LaToya who went to baking school. I’m blowing it, but she got her degree in baking and she was like, “I’m a great baker, I’ll bake these cookies for you,” and she didn’t even make them for me. Even my mom – we went shopping and she bought a bag of flour, she bought the peanut butter chips, she bought the cocoa powder, and they went stale and rancid. And I was like “Ma, how come you never made the cookies? And she was like, “I never said I’d make those cookies for you.” I was like, “Ma, why would we even have any of these things in the house otherwise?” And she was swearing up and down, “I never said I was going to make these things,” and LaToya did, every 13th.

A: We met on the 13th, we met on LaToya’s birthday. And you know it a roll of the dice, I was like, “What if you don’t like me, what if you don’t like the way I smell?” But you said you would like me, and you did. So, on the 13th of the month, she would always make these cookies, and I didn’t know until 6 months in or so that you were making them from scratch. I thought she was making them from a mix, like just getting chocolate cookie dough mix.

L: No, I am a true baker, everything is made from scratch in my kitchen.

A: Oh, and you said, “Do you mind if I put chocolate chips in with the cookies?” Because your favorite cookie is chocolate chip and my cookie is chocolate peanut butter chip. So, I said, “Oh, that’s fine,” and now when you make that, that’s like our cookie.

L: Yes, that is our cookie.

A: If there’s ever any leftovers, I’ll bring them to work and everyone get jelly in my department.

L: Only to the ones that are worthy.

A: They’re all worthy.

L: For the first food we tried together, it was either dragon fruit or passion fruit – it was dragon fruit. Of course, not really knowing anything about that particular fruit, it was terrible! Because obviously, it wasn’t ripe - because we didn’t know any better. But we actually tried it again later and it was pretty good.

A: What I usually try to do, how I used get to her house is, I would take the LIRR and I would pass by H-Mart, so I would always try to pick out a weird fruit or veggie – maybe not weird, but something I’ve never tried before or LaToya’s never tried before. And every week, it would be like – “Hey babe, I got lychees.” “I got Meyer Lemon.” “I got yuzu,” or Japanese yams, or cherimoyas. Or something like that. So that’s usually that, we try to incorporate different things.

L: I think my two favorite things that you introduced to me are matcha (I absolutely worship that stuff now, it’s an everyday thing) and *quenapas*. Those are SO good, and it’s like, “Oh, they sell them up the street from me.” Instantly I was like, “How are they supposed to look?” And now I’m a pro at picking them out.

A: Oh absolutely, she’ll be like “Babe! I got the *quenapas*!” I’m like, “How many?” “I got the whole bag.” “Yes, bring them to work, give some to the kids!”

A: The usual is, if we go out to eat, we’ll try to find something different. Like, we went to Portland, we wanted to go this place like McMenaman’s or something. We found this place, and it wasn’t open or something, and the people were rude outside. We were like “Hey, are you guys open?” and they were just being passive aggressive – like, thanks for nothing. And we were starved. They had just shut down in the middle of the day, and we just wanted to eat. It was like 4 o’clock. We didn’t want to wait, we wanted to be like old ladies. And we found – was it like the Israeli place? Like, Ali Baba or something like that?
L: Habibi.

A: Yes, Habibi! Ali Baba is on 33rd. And you were like, “I’m not sure if I’m going to like Israeli,” but I was like, “do you trust me?” And usually when I ask, “Do you trust me?” - it’s going to be a pretty good meal.

1. **Douglas & Fabio**

D: Hi I’m Douglas.

F: Hi, I’m Fabio.

D: I was born in the Midwest, and we live here now. Work from home. Yeah, we love it here.

F: We love it here. We work from home. We love the Bronx.

D: We met on Fire Island, at the beach one summer 20 years ago.

F: 2002, 20 years ago the first time that we saw each other.

F: It’s been 20 years that we’ve been together. It was a summer day, end of the summer.

D: Hot day, we were both at the beach. He was wearing a tiny green Speedo.

F: At the point where people gave up all hopes of finding someone and we found each other at the end of that summer.

F: We both love every kind of food. We love Brazilian food.

D: Brazilian food is really good.

F: I guess *feijoada* is a dish we both love, which is a Brazilian national dish. Pork stew with black beans, it’s usually eaten on Saturdays, but the majority of people start cooking on Wednesday and they overcook it until Saturday so that it becomes thicker and better. So Wednesday also became a day of cooking and so it’s Wednesday and traditionally Saturday!

D: A meal in a memorable place?

F: I think we both had had a lot of excellent food in Guadeloupe, which is a French Caribbean island. So, the mix of all the natural fish and anything coming from the ocean, but done in a French way. It was really mind-blowing being in that Paradise and just eating every meal. Every meal was excellent.

D: Yeah, a deck sticking out over the water.

F: Right, exactly, a memorable place with a memorable meal. French done with local produce.