

Yvonne Lee: People will forget what you said. People will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you make them feel. Maya Angelou.

Jason Lee: If you really want to make a friend go to someone's house and eat with him. The people who give you their food, give you their heart. Cesar Chavez.

Yvonne Lee: Feeling good, feeling fine, using story like a glass of wine.

Jason Lee: Feeling good, feeling fine, giving our heart to you, food for the mind.

Yvonne Lee: Welcome to our last episode of season two.

Jason Lee: Yes. Yes. Dear friends, welcome. Now, I've got to kick off our chat by repeating the quote from the top of the show, my quote from the top of the show, which is if you really want to make a friend go to someone's house and eat with him. The people who give you their food, give you their heart, Cesar Chavez. Now, I really dig that quote and I relate to it. I remember when I first moved to Los Angeles in 2000, I lived down in Echo Park and that's right around the area where Sunset Boulevard becomes Cesar Chavez Boulevard.

Jason Lee: And I'd grown up knowing about his work with the migrant workers here in Southern California. But it really kind of brought home when I moved here and became a Los Angelino, transplanted Los Angelino by the way of Chicago, I became more and more aware of his legacy and his work and his friendship with like Bobby Kennedy and all of his work here in Southern California. And that quote really resonates with me because of his food strike. If somebody had that relationship with food that he explores in that quote to then go on a food strike, that takes it to a whole other magnitude for me and it kind of launches me into this conversation, Yvonne, we're about to have. Today, I feel like this show has been an open invitation to our dining room table.

Yvonne Lee: Yeah. I love that quote as well, because I think that's how I operate. I always make sure your side of the family was in town. And all I know is that when we're hosting, I was like, "I always try to make sure that there's something for someone to eat."

Jason Lee: Yes.

Yvonne Lee: Whether I make it from my own hands, or I say, "Okay, let's Postmate it," which is kind of the new-

Jason Lee: Yes.

Yvonne Lee: That's the new thing. And COVID times you just Postmate it so you don't have to go out. But I love this idea that whatever's in my home is also yours and you should not leave my house hungry.

Jason Lee: And your family represents that, right? The Huff family, I remember when we first started dating and you brought me to your mom's home in Phoenix and you all were in the kitchen just whipping up a meal. The tradition I grew up around was around cocktails. You guys grew up around the kitchen, right?

Yvonne Lee: Yeah, no, it's definitely a part of, and I think it became even more as we got older, food was way for even us as siblings and with my mom to connect, because we all went to different schools and different parts of the country. And so with this show, the conversation is the food and all the delicious morsels within that conversation.

Jason Lee: I hear you. I hear you, my dear wife. I see you. And I know where you're going with that.

Yvonne Lee: My baby sister is here.

Jason Lee: Chef BB Huff in the house. Now your mom [inaudible 00:03:37] aka mama and daddy Huff was our guests in season one. And now we close this awesome Lagralane Spirits season two with your sister for our season finale.

Yvonne Lee: I'm really excited about our conversation today because we'll be talking about storytelling as we have been all season, but we're going to do it with a focus on how food, just like film, is a vehicle for using your voice to tell your own story. I love this topic because it's something we have all experienced in our own way, in our own home. But tonight you are going to hear about the very special way my sister, who is an acclaimed chef, yes, I'm proud, is bringing storytelling and food together to create meaningful connection and deep ... Sorry. I meant to say and deep intimacy.

Jason Lee: It's a good cocktail.

Yvonne Lee: It's a very good cocktail.

Jason Lee: Yeah. It's fascinating. Right? For anyone new listening to Lagralane Spirits, it bears repeating that we are actors, producers, financeers, parents, and so many other things. But in our hearts, we are storytellers. We provide opportunity for others to tell their stories through our company, the Lagralane Spirits and we also create and tell our own.

Yvonne Lee: Yep, exactly. Like your short film Lifeline, which has been enjoying a very nice festival run and appeared at the Lighthouse International Film Festival most recently.

Jason Lee: Yes. Yes. And in the way that I wrote that film, finding the right words to convey what I was wanting folks to feel and directing wise, trying to capture the shots that could best capture the intimacy of what we were exploring, it's almost like how your sister uses ingredients and dishes to tell a very personal and intimate story for, or I guess about her clients and probably herself too.

Yvonne Lee: And we'll talk more specifics with her later on this show, but right now let's look at the big picture of how story preserves culture and frames identity. This season, we've solidified that when you take action by telling your own story, this action helps you take your rightful place in the room. It can also open doors and create access for others. One of the broad strokes we talked about this season is the idea of knowing self first, so that you know when to stay and when to leave, when it comes to whether your story yourself is being honored or disrespected in a situation.

Jason Lee: Right, that sort of came out in episode one of season two, right? With our guests, [inaudible 00:06:28] and Monique Marshall. When we talked about systems of oppression and also in episode two with our guests, Chaz Ebert and Brenda Robinson,

when we talked about the magic of black spaces and faces in film development and production.

Yvonne Lee: Right. And in their own way, our guests, this season have been faced with pivotal moments when they did what they needed to preserve story, whether about something like identity or about people of color or when they needed to abandon story. I mean, for one of our guests, it was about abandoning a narrative about herself that she'd been holding onto and wasn't allowing herself to see the full picture of her identity.

Jason Lee: Yeah. Another broad stroke this season was about history, his story. Get it. His story.

Yvonne Lee: Yes. Yes. I get it. His story. I also like her story.

Jason Lee: Their story, our story. Look, I love me some history. Okay.

Yvonne Lee: Hey Jason, maybe you should write a his story book.

Jason Lee: Well, hey, hey, check me this summer, babe. And you'll see me sipping Sira in the South of France putting pin to paper on my next project. True story.

Yvonne Lee: Yes.

Jason Lee: But anyway, so many moments in the past affect us today. We've talked this season about the history and reality of cast in the US and how it must inform the action we take today. It's been a fascinating exploration for me.

Yvonne Lee: Yes. And me too. And the art and story of food, our topic today connects us to our past in a similar way. I mean, actually I think it's pivotal in maintaining our connection to the past. So I have a question for you, a little [inaudible 00:08:26] for our listeners.

Jason Lee: All right.

Yvonne Lee: What are your thoughts on food's role in preserving culture?

Jason Lee: That's interesting for me to answer because that's an interesting question. Yvonne.

Yvonne Lee: I'll ask it one more time just in case it stuns anybody. Let me just say it one more time. What are your thoughts on food's role in preserving culture?

Jason Lee: What are my thoughts on food's role in preserving culture? That throws me back to season one, our exploration of my adoption. I grew up in the Midwest and all due respect to the parents that raised me, we grew up on a lot of fast food and I'm not talking about double big Macs and whatnot like in today's world. I'm talking about 1970s and 1980s, fast food. I'm remembering going to Long John Silver with my father after my parents got divorced, that was a special time to bond and connect with my dad. I can't imagine him at that time being 40 years old, newly divorced with three kids and trying to find ways to connect and eat with us. But one thing I learned is I became an adult myself and became a man. I learned about my black side through food.

Jason Lee: Especially at barbecues. We have some dear friends whenever we have a barbecue we'll come on by the house and be like, "Yo, okay, Jason. It's okay. I got the grill," and I'll be like, "No, man, no, I'm going to go." He's like, "No, dude, no, I got the grill. Go and socialize, go mingle. You're hosting. That's what I'm here for." And there was a dude thing about that. There's a culture to that. So I guess my answer would be to your question. It is what you make of it. Does that make sense? So yeah. How do you feel about that?

Yvonne Lee: Well, I think that being black and Filipino and it's interesting because for me, food was really passed down through my mom. I knew that I needed to, at some point I was like, "I want to learn how to make Adobo."

Jason Lee: And you make a good Adobo.

Yvonne Lee: I do make a good Adobo, but I make a good Adobo because I make it the way that my mom makes it.

Jason Lee: Right. Right.

Yvonne Lee: And once I figured out what her combination of soy of vinegar was and then she added a European style of doing it, of browning everything before you braise it, because it's basically a braised meal. When I think about a chicken Adobo, one of the things and in so many cultures using soy and using some kind of acid, you did it that way because there wasn't refrigeration. There weren't the things out there to help the food stay for a long time. So you used the natural preservatives in soy and an acid. And so you could eat it you could make a bunch and then it would last for a few days. But that is probably the main way for me that I have passed down the culture of food through the Filipino experience.

Yvonne Lee: And it's the one that's really connecting me to my Filipino culture is food. And to add on to all of that and prep for our conversation today, I was reading an article about food as a communication tool for culture and everything from where we get it to the way we prepare it, how we consume it. And even who is at the table to enjoy it. It conveys a rich cultural history and that history then gets passed along to every generation that continues to eat, prepare and share the dishes of their ancestors.

Yvonne Lee: I think that food carries story naturally because it's something that has to be taught through hands and words and from person to person. And I think living in the states and because we're not a homogenous culture per se, everybody's come from somewhere else within each family whoever's table you go to eat at, you learn something about their culture and their history and how they experience being an American. I've always wanted someone to invite me over for any Jewish holiday, Hanukkah. And I wanted to eat at their table and I was like, "I want somebody to invite me over so I could see what happens in your home when you eat." Things like that. Just remembered over COVID how you got so fascinated by Korean barbecue.

Jason Lee: Yes.

Yvonne Lee: And you bought the little barbecue.

Jason Lee: The kit, the grill.

Yvonne Lee: Kit.

Jason Lee: Outdoor grill.

Yvonne Lee: And we sat outside and everybody had to cook their own food. It was really fun.

Jason Lee: Yeah. For me, from my adoption lens, these are lovely memories that I have of my adopted mother, Pam, but she would make tuna casserole. We were Tupperware families in the late '70s there and early '80s and we'd be on when you make the meatloaf, because it reminds me of my mom's meatloaf, but our big meals were like Thanksgiving and Christmas. It wasn't like Tuesday, we were Chef Boyardee family. We were just like, "Let's eat and go." So our culture, the culture I grew up around, and this is why, Yvonne, my dear lovely wife, we are a match made in heaven, your food culture, I grew up around cocktails. I learned how to pour my grandfather's scotch for him when I was seven years old. And so the bar element was our kind of connecting.

Jason Lee: I don't mean that we were drinking young, but we were socializing that way with our elders. And we were learning at cocktail parties with little bowls of goldfish crackers passing around how the adults were getting down and you can learn as much around a bar about people's culture and who they are and where they come from as you can in a kitchen at a dinner table at a dining table. I love the marriage of all of that. And I can't wait to hear what your sister, my sister-in-law, Chef BB has to say about all this. She'll be coming in here pretty soon. This just brings this full circle before we move on. Last season, I've found out mucho much about my birth parents. And all this stuff from the past. And it really affected me deeply. And the more I've learned and shared about my identity through this podcast in other creative spaces as well, Lifeline, the more I experienced firsthand the power of owning one story.

Yvonne Lee: Yeah. You definitely had a reckoning. Well, and for my own DNA results.

Jason Lee: Yes. Do tell because I know some of our listeners have been waiting for that information.

Yvonne Lee: Well, I did not have the same experience you did with the twisty turning reveals, but my DNA results reinforced really everything I knew about myself that I am literally where I come from. It was a grounding of what I'd already felt about being Filipino and black. I mean, I thought that there would be more Chinese or Spanish or any white identifying cultures, lots of other things, but it wasn't there. So what I found was that all the places in Africa that I'm from are places where slave trade happened and it was just fascinating to me to go, "Wow. I thought that there'd be some kind of Caucasian line, but there wasn't." I'm thinking atrocities that happened or free person who might have married someone who was white or something like that.

Yvonne Lee: I come from, especially on my mom's side where my mom grew up when we went there for the first time, you had to take three planes and then a big boat and then a little boat. And so it was remote, very remote from the city, very much in the province. And so people stayed within those small communities and didn't go very far. I remember my brother reading what the results were. He was like, "Mama, you got some strong, you

got some strong blood." None of us really realized how rooted we are in this very homogenous country.

Yvonne Lee: So anyway, it actually made me more excited about learning more of the history of where that part of the area where my mom comes from just to really see that on my dad's side, there wasn't a lot of mixing and to think about enslaved peoples that my dad's side of the family, we weren't like in anybody's house, nobody in my family was the house Negro. They were out. They made me think they're out in the fields, they're out doing the manual work. That's what's happened. So to picture, not that many generations ago that that's within my family, that it becomes very real for those, for people who say, "That happened 150 years ago. Why do we need reparations for that?" I'm like, "Come on now."

Jason Lee: Right. Right.

Yvonne Lee: That's not that long ago. We're not that far removed. And it's really important to remember, or maybe this is also true as I'm thinking about it is that there could also be peoples in my family that were not enslaved and stayed within their own community. So I don't know. There's a big question mark there, but I will say in terms of Huff, all the Huffs that I have seen when I do see a Huff, they're mostly white that I've seen, but I'm not saying I probably did about 25 minutes of research on that. So I will give that disclaimer.

Jason Lee: Well, we can leave that for a teaser for season three, because I actually have done research on my ancestry page of my lovely, talented, gifted wife's line and-

Yvonne Lee: Oh my God, when you showed me that.

Jason Lee: We can table that now because we have more things to discuss tonight. Please gentle listener, come back in season three and you'll learn more about Yvonne's people. Things to find out, things to find out.

Yvonne Lee: Yes. Speaking of this, this show is called Lagralane Spirits. We got to be. Where is our spirit this episode? I'm not going to lie, school is out and mama needs a drink. I need a drink.

Jason Lee: That's right. I am chomping at the bit here too. Okay. This season's final drink is called the Ala Ala. And let tell you why. So this is adjacent concoction. It's built upon the specs of other drinks as most drinks are, but this is a concoction that I made up myself and I was thinking about story. We're storytellers. And I was thinking about narratives and memoirs. And I got to thinking, I knew we were going to talk to your sister tonight. And I got to thinking about our lovely trips to the Philippines throughout the years, Yvonne, and I got to thinking about language and I wondered what memory and remembrance translates as into the Tagalog. And so I Google searched it and up came Ala Ala. And that stunned me. It stopped me in my tracks because I had it right here in front of me, my third grade year, my yearbook in 1980, we lived in Manila and I went to the International School in Manila.

Jason Lee: And the name of the book is Ala Ala. And this is 42 years ago. And I opened up the front page, the cover of the book, it says Ala Ala, 1980 and right underneath it says the Filipino

word for remembrance. And I was like, "Well, that just is a ridiculous serendipitous moment. The drink has got to be called Ala Ala. So what we will drink tonight is an Ala Ala and what it is, I've muddled sliced peaches, Riggins, orange bitters, you know me, I love bitters. Our listeners, if you've been with us for all of season one and in season two, you know how much I love bitters. So this is a very bitter drink.

Yvonne Lee: We have 50 of them here.

Jason Lee: We do. I've muddled sliced peaches with Riggins, orange bitters, [inaudible 00:20:02], charred Cedar and currant from Bitters Lab and hella bitters smoked chili bitters for a little bit of kick. Then it's two ounces of, we're drinking some cognac tonight, so it's two ounces of Pierre Ferrand cognac. I'm doing a quarter ounce of, and I know whenever I pronounce this in front of mom and daddy, your mom, she always corrects me. So I hope I get this right. It's a quarter ounce of a cognac liquor called lambanog. And then we're going to do half ounce of simple syrup. We'll shake that up. We'll do a half ounce of sparkling water or club soda on top. And then for the garnish, we have a tangerine peel or blood orange peel. Because of the fruit, it has a shook drink. That will be our cocktail for this evening.

Yvonne Lee: That sounds delicious. Ala Ala, remembrance. That goes so perfectly with-

Jason Lee: Memory.

Yvonne Lee: ... with talking about history and story and how that translates into food and drink. Okay. I think we're ready. Let's call Chef BB.

Jason Lee: Let's do it. BB, you there?

BB Huff: Hey, what's up? What's up? What's up?

Jason Lee: Hey.

Yvonne Lee: My sister's here. Yes.

Jason Lee: How you doing, BB? It's great to have you on. Thank you for taking the time to jump on with us here. It's great to have you on our podcast.

BB Huff: Well, thank you for having me. I'm always down for a good cocktail and conversation.

Jason Lee: That's right. That's right. And that's what we shall have this evening, for sure.

Yvonne Lee: So BB, I'm so excited that you're here and it's interesting to have family talking so people are kind of invited to our living room. And so we've been talking about food and story and identity and culture. And so we thought like, "How do we talk about getting into action and changing the narrative, but use a different art form?" And the culinary arts. And you were just the perfect person that really understands all the values that we're talking about because we're family and also because it's something that we somehow have developed even in our separate paths.

BB Huff: It's a love language, right? Food is a love language. That's the first thing that you ask someone when they enter your home. Have you eaten? What's the first thing you do when you're going to go collect a loved one from the airport? You make sure something's cooking, so when they come in, they're like, "You prepared for me. I'm welcomed here." It's a love language. So it's a language that mama was taught and then she taught us. And now Grace and Maya and Maximo are learning it as well. So it's a dialect and I've worked with clients who didn't learn that language when they were growing up, but it's something that they taught themselves and therefore taught the next generation. You're learning a language that can be smelled, that you can hear, that you can taste, that you can touch and that you can share with multiple people at a dinner table. It's kind of awesome.

Jason Lee: It is. And BB, you mentioned it. I was not raised necessarily with that love letter. I was fed and provided for, but I was raised to sit down around the bar. And first things we were asked were, "Are you thirsty?" Your sister's and my's marriage is a marriage made in heaven because you all have the love quotient of the kitchen. And then I come in with a cocktail to hopefully kind of lift it off to another level too. And then we just sit down and chop it up.

Jason Lee: And so I just wanted to take a quick second to talk about the origin of Lagralane Spirits and introduce tonight's cocktail because you basically, aunt BB, inspired us to launch into what has become Lagralane Spirits with your work before you launched Salted Parlor. But your storytelling work inspired me to examine my research and ancestry and create cocktails that have a story of location, that have a grounding in it, that have a deeper story than just let's sit down and booze. And so tonight's drink is also inspired by your family in name, I've created this drink myself, I've named it Ala Ala, which is Tagalog for remembrance and memory. But I would love to hear about how you came upon the name, The Salted Parlor and your work there as you launched your catering company.

BB Huff: First of all, that's an awesome sounding cocktail. And I can't wait to get into the bits of what's in it because everyone wants a little Ala Ala in their lives. I'm just saying. One big rock. Yeah.

Jason Lee: Right on.

BB Huff: So The Salted Parlor is something that organically grew at a family. So let's talk about that. I named it The Salted Parlor, one, because everything needs a little bit of salt. It's a flavor enhancer, salt anoints, it purifies and parlor because that's the place in the house where people come and connect to create community and share stories. In terms of starting The Salted Parlor. Again, it just responding to friends and family, or, "I love your food. I want you to cook for me." Starting a hundred percent full time, which is about a year. Look at me.

Jason Lee: Yeah.

Yvonne Lee: Look at you. Yay.

Jason Lee: Yes.



BB Huff: And it came from a place of it's time to be my own boss. We talk about pandemic and it was the generation of resignation. I don't know. I don't know if I would claim that for myself as much as releasing myself of the fear of failure, releasing myself of fear, period. And part of that's just like, "I'm done."

Jason Lee: Yeah.

BB Huff: I'm done.

Jason Lee: Your origin story of Salted Parlor is similar to our origin story of Lagralane group. You want to gain control of whatever you can in the space that you can control it. And I'm just remembering going on an audition with Maya 10 years ago and being at the becking call of whoever was sending me on this audition. And I was like, "This isn't going to work for me because it's 4:45. I'm on the 4:05 and this baby should be having dinner and then I should be giving her a bath and putting her to bed." That's what should be happening right now. How can I create an environment that's conducive to that? And it seems like your Salted Parlor origin story came out of a similar place, right?

BB Huff: Absolutely. I mean, when I talk about the agency that I want for my clients and the people who sit around the table where my food is presented, that comes from giving myself agency. And there's something really freeing in shedding the fear that you created yourself and taking a leap and just trusting that the wings going to come at some point.

Jason Lee: Yeah.

BB Huff: The wings are going to come at some point.

Jason Lee: Leap of faith.

BB Huff: And knowing that you surrounded yourself with family and friends who will not let you fail. And I'm blessed in that way.

Yvonne Lee: Well, and I've told you this before. I was like, "BB, you're supposed to be the boss. You're trying to work in this corporate world, making them all this money. And all they're doing is using your talents that you could be using for yourself." Everybody has those same fears that you just explained, but being able to leverage the privileges that we have that other people don't get. They don't get the loving family. Even our family was unstable for a lot of our lives but you had people who stepped to make sure that you didn't fall through the cracks. So leveraging those privileges and knowing that it's our responsibility to use them and use them for good.

Jason Lee: And when you get the opportunity, throw down the way you've been throwing down. When you get that opportunity, do it. Go hard.

BB Huff: And the idea of doing storytelling through food actually came with my very first proper gig for Greg and [inaudible 00:28:53].

Yvonne Lee: Yeah.

BB Huff: Those of you listening, Greg-

Yvonne Lee: That's right.

BB Huff: And Greg was the efficient at Yvonne and Jason's wedding.

Jason Lee: For our listeners real quick. Greg Daniel [inaudible 00:29:03] Jones are partners in our nonprofit, Lower Depth Theater, their dear, dear friends of ours.

BB Huff: For people who may not know Greg, he's probably one of the most acclaimed directors in theater in LA, I would say globally, but he's one of the most humble about his accomplishments. And doesn't like to talk about it boastfully or anything like that, but his wife has no problem. And working with her, we basically created a menu for 60th birthday that took a dish for every decade of his life and made that edible. So for example, he had really deep Jamaican [inaudible 00:29:45] as well as roots in London. And so we did this traditional English trifle, but brought in Jamaican flavor profiles, which was just delicious. One of his greatest accomplishments is having a daughter who was a flower child at your wedding.

Jason Lee: That's right. Kennedy. Yes, yes.

BB Huff: Kennedy. And so that's the only child that they had. And so I was like, "We're going to do lamb." And I didn't know at the time when I put it on the menu that they're like, "That's my favorite meat, lamb." And so it became this opportunity where the food became a character and a play on this set that was his 60th birthday. And it was a way to acknowledge his accomplishments. Some of which people may not have even known, but do it in a way that made it engaging for the guests. They understood why the food was there, the intention behind it. And so that's where it started.

Jason Lee: And as you explain his 60th birthday, that also reminds me, BB, of the Sundance Festival. It's just a really cool concept.

BB Huff: That was such a fun project. For those of you listening. This was the Chicago Media Project. And Sundance was a way for them to give a big, thank you to folks who were willing to invest and independent film and this sort of links back to being in the culinary world. This is my second career. My first career was doing 15, 20 years of fundraising, which really informs how I approach projects because they have an experience that they want to have. They're not quite sure how to get there, but they know it's important to them.

BB Huff: Some people might feel like they don't have a story, but when you ask open ended authentic searching for your individual truth questions, then they realize like, "Yeah, I do have a story." So working with The Salted Parlor, telling people's story through culinary experiences is an extension of the work that I did for 15, 20 years, helping people connect to missions that resonated with them in a meaningful, authentic way and giving them an opportunity to have impactful agency in the communities that they're a part of. Now, it just happens around the table.

Jason Lee: Everyone hit up Chef BB. She's brilliant. She's brilliant.

Yvonne Lee: Right now we're kind of clocking the moment of Greg's 60th birthday. And then the next one was you just talked about-

Jason Lee: Sundance.

Yvonne Lee: Sundance, doing the Chicago Media Project.

BB Huff: And then there was Safe Harbor as well.

Jason Lee: Yes.

Yvonne Lee: Right. Safe Harbor was a play that our theater company, Lower Depth Theater did with our friends, Greg and [inaudible 00:32:28] who we mentioned earlier. They're co-founders in creating the company and we created a Lower Depth Salon. This was right before the pandemic.

Jason Lee: It was fall, winter of 2019.

Yvonne Lee: It was our first ever Lower Depth Salon. And we wanted to figure out how can we translate the story of Safe Harbor which was written by-

Jason Lee: Our friend Terra Palmquist who's a-

Yvonne Lee: Just a wonderful ... Terra Palmquist.

Jason Lee: She's an extraordinary human playwright and friend of ours and Safe Harbor deals with the complicated issues and themes surrounding human trafficking. And so it's a kind of-

Yvonne Lee: Child sex trafficking.

Jason Lee: It's a hard play, but she brought a humanity to it that was so right on.

Yvonne Lee: And so talking to you, BB, about how can we, we want to have a conversation about this and I said, "This is what the play's about. How do we turn this story into food?" And you said, "It's about turning lemons into lemonade." And I was like, "Yeah, it's about taking things that people would rather like say no to. And in viewing them with hope and imbuing them with flavor and imbuing them with a beautiful story that is yet to be told-"

BB Huff: You guys put me in contact with the playwright. And she was basically like, "How are you going to make this edible? No one wants to eat sex trafficking." She was like, "How are you going to do this?"

Jason Lee: Right.

BB Huff: But when she started sharing with me about her research into the project, about who are the victims. They're women, they're people of color, they're children. They are people who, for whatever reason on their path, no one saw the beauty and the joy and the potential of what can happen if you nurture it in that moment. And so it became really clear, that happens with food all the time. People have things they have no idea what to do with. I remember I went to a farmer's market and I was looking for what are

called seconds. And so seconds are those produce that the farmer or whoever deems subpar. If it's not sold today, it's going to get thrown. And so I specifically went asking farmers like, "Where are your seconds?" And I got the best peaches anyone's ever seen in the ... They were juicy, juicy, juicy.

BB Huff: They were bruised. They were odd colors. But from the purposes that I was going to use them, they were delicious. And I remember they were radishes, all these different colors. And the farmer was selling them with the actual greens. And it was just in a bag on the ground. And I was like, "What are you going to do with those?" He's like, "Do you want these?" I'm like, "Yeah." He's like, "People didn't want them. They just wanted the radishes. They didn't know that greens were edible." And they're freaking delicious.

Yvonne Lee: Wow.

BB Huff: And so it was a great opportunity to, from a culinary perspective, to find the things that people don't see worth in, but turn them into delicious thing that people are like, "Who knew?" Well now you know.

Yvonne Lee: That actually gave me more of an appreciation of food as art. And the purpose of art is to help people heal and see new perspectives and to really reflect upon themselves in their relationship to the world. And when you said, "Let's take the broccoli stocks," and the part usually people just save the florets, then you kind of get trained that way when you go to the grocery store because they separate the stock from the flowers. And so you took them and put them in these beautiful rectangular pieces and you fried them.

BB Huff: They were awesome.

Yvonne Lee: They were so beautiful.

BB Huff: I peeled off the thick part. I mean, if you spend the time just peeling that off or just use the knife to cut it and you fry them, they actually taste like sunchokes. They're freaking delicious.

Yvonne Lee: Yeah. Yeah. So it was cool. And then what ended up happening is that actually [inaudible 00:36:43] Halliburton, who was in our first episode, he talked about food deserts and he talked about what it was in Inglewood and what it was like where there's no whole foods there. You have to go to Santa Monica for a farmer's market and how people were not investing in that neighborhood.

Jason Lee: Yeah. There's liquor stores and smoke shops. Yeah.

Yvonne Lee: Right. You're not investing in that neighborhood for people who need nutritious food. And that's what was so gorgeous about all of that.

Jason Lee: I remember, Yvonne, our conversations throughout the years, about what you've wanted with regards to when we produce a play or a film, you want other art forms to be influenced as well. You want to poem them, you want to haiku, a dance, other explorations of the theme being explored in the story. And both of you have that same understanding and creativity. And I wonder if you both would just want to riff on where that came from for you guys. I mean, did you guys have conversations growing up

together because what you're exploring, BB, not just in the food space, but in your developmental work, like you mentioned earlier, is similar to what your sister has been exploring in her creative storytelling, film, and TV and theater career throughout the years. And I'm fascinated that you both have that shared, but different thrust.

BB Huff: I always get the question like, "How did you learn to cook? And where'd that start?" And the reality is we're latchkey kids. Give me a packet of ramen and some hot dogs and an egg and some frozen spinach and a packet of soy sauce. I'm going to crush that.

Yvonne Lee: I was like, "How do I get creative with all of stuff? What do I have?" And even when I went to college, I was like, "I'm cooking. I'm going to cut off this green onion. I'm going to swirl this egg just so the strips just long enough. So that it's swirling in there."

BB Huff: Part of it is necessity. Right?

Jason Lee: Right.

BB Huff: They say necessity's the mother of invention. I also have very clear memories of one big super huge food buy at the beginning of the month. And that's when things would go into the freezer, they go into the pantry, they go into the fridge and everything else came from the garden.

Yvonne Lee: Because we went to the commissary.

BB Huff: From the [inaudible 00:39:11] air force base.

Jason Lee: Right.

BB Huff: But also the necessity knowing you got towards the end of the month, you have what you had. You had to get creative with it. And also being clear that when the pantry and the fridge were full, it was a sign of times were good. And when it wasn't so full, times were not good. So for me, this connection of joy of having a bountiful table and wanting that experience for people that you care about, there's a reason why this is a love language. Right? I remember I'm like, "Okay, life is good. We got lobster. We got crab legs." What? Oh my gosh, we're going to Red Lobster. Yes. I said that, Red Lobster.

Yvonne Lee: Oh my God. I loved it when we went to Red Lobster. I've never been in the past five years, but yes.

BB Huff: It was a starting point.

Jason Lee: But I also, I clock our trips, Yvonne, to Guiwan but the one thing I saw and the two times I've been to your mother's home in Guiwan, in the Philippines. And I remember having Adobo at an auntie's home and the food was plentiful. And I was like, "Where's all this food coming from?" I don't know how to better articulate that. It just amazed me the attention to you're here now, you're family, we're eating. And that was just really-

BB Huff: You're here now. And I'm going to feed you because you're family.

Jason Lee: I'm going to feed you. Yeah, yeah.

BB Huff: Yeah. That's a love language.

Jason Lee: Yeah.

BB Huff: I also want to take a little side step and talk about action that you guys are talking about around food. I never take a client unless I meet with them for 30 minutes on the phone, Zoom. And I share with them my philosophy and my approach to food. And I thoroughly believe in family style because the family that eats together, stays together. I firmly believe that one should have the agency to place whatever they want on their plate. It's not because someone else gave it to them and says, "This is what you get to eat." So even that minimal level of action of agency about choosing what you put on your plate, I think is powerful. Even from a young age, this is where children start flexing their independence muscles, what they wear, what they eat.

Yvonne Lee: Can you think of a meal that you created when you were telling a story that you were like, "Man, that meal, it was right on"?

BB Huff: Oh gosh, I did a three day women's retreat in January, 22, this year. And it's a retreat where people are doing really awesome work about releasing that which no longer serves us, all this sort of internal work so they can be their best selves. If there's a session in the morning, the lunch that I served reflected what was the work that they were doing in the morning so that the conversation could continue. Gosh, that was an awesome menu. It was a lot of hard work. It was awesome freaking menu.

BB Huff: So one of the most difficult portions that they did was answering the question if, but not for this thing that happened in my life, that was traumatic and the moment I wouldn't be on the path that I am and sort of recognizing what that is. And when I first approached how to create this into a meal, I was just like, "Okay, bitterness. How do I bitter?" I was like, "Bitter moments happen in life. And so what do you do with that?" So I was approaching it from the left, like how do you deal with these bitter moments when I should have been approaching it from the right, which was in the culinary world, bitter is awesome. Bitter can define [inaudible 00:43:06]-

Jason Lee: In the cocktail space, bitters, come on, I am there with you 100%.

BB Huff: Jason. And so when I shared with them that we're doing Moroccan Tajine, we're working with all the bitter things. The lemon that's pickled.

Jason Lee: Yeah.

BB Huff: And Jason, you have them in your fridge, you have them in your fridge, my jealousy.

Yvonne Lee: I'm about to go get it right now.

BB Huff: I can tell you exactly where it is in the fridge. My jealousy, it's hanging out there. Preserved lemon, boom.

Yvonne Lee: Preserved lemon.

BB Huff: Preserved lemon.

Jason Lee: Yes. Yes, yes.

BB Huff: Preserved lemon is super, super, super sour, but it's typically used in a way where it basically infuses its flavor into something. And so I made this a Moroccan Tajine in an actual Tajine. It was fun. And I had people taste that preserved lemon by itself. And they're like, "Oh my gosh, that's really bitter." And then I had them tasted after it when I was in the broth. And it really doesn't taste like anything because it's basically given itself to the broth, to the sauce and based on all the other different sweet, salt, sour, umami components and the braising liquid, it brought that bitterness to heal.

BB Huff: But if you ever want to get authentic with Moroccan cooking, you need preserved lemon. That bitterness has a place and it can actually be a beautiful defining thing that if it's missing, it's not an authentic dish. So again, Yvonne to your point, a dish that was banging that for me personally, and I had to switch my brain about how I was thinking about this moment. And how it was something to release versus something to embrace.

Yvonne Lee: So you really learned something yourself.

BB Huff: Yeah. Totally.

Yvonne Lee: Because of what the story was that the people were trying to tell. It gave you as much as you were trying to give.

BB Huff: Exactly. Exactly. And sometimes people are scared of bitter, but Jason, you know all about the bitters.

Jason Lee: Don't be scared of bitters. Do not be scared of bitters. Dear family, I think we could go on and on in this conversation.

Yvonne Lee: Yes. We're ready. Are you ready for your cocktail confession? Okay. It might feel like you've already confessed, but you haven't. One of the most common ways we use food is in the construction of our personal identities. And two of the things that I think of for our family here and taking mama's legacies, making Adobo and then we came up with a new one over the pandemic where I was like, "Let's do a birthday cookie." So those are two things I hope that our family will always pass on is how to make Adobo and how to make a birthday cookie cake rather than buying something from the store. And so this leads me to your cocktail confession question. Is food central or trivial to the formation of someone's identity and do you think it has the power to transform hearts and minds later in life?

BB Huff: I think it depends on the individual. I've met people for whom food isn't really that important to them. It's just an intake of calories that they need for their body to function. So in that instance, food, it's not part of their love language. That said, there's a reason why countries have national dishes, point of pride, reflection of their agriculture. Again, we're going back to your word, Jason, intentionality. I think that it has the ability to bring people together in powerful ways, if it's important to them. In my world, my best client, people that I work with are the ones they came for this, they're here for this. We share the same love language. And then there are folks that they don't and that's okay. That's okay. That's why I choose to work with the people we share the

same love language, because I know beautiful things happen and they appreciate the art that I create for them.

BB Huff: I've been transforming hearts and minds for a while now. People have to be willing to go there. And I've worked with people who didn't know it could be a thing. Jason, I go back to Sundance. The whole idea about taking, what was it, 12 independent films that were accepted into Sundance and making them edible and the house that it was all being cooked in, moved from just being a house that where people were staying in to being like a ground base for people to come and talk about-

Jason Lee: A communal shared space. Yeah.

BB Huff: Communal shared space for people to not only get good food, but to share what they've been experiencing. And the question was, would this food change the experience? And the answer is yeah.

Jason Lee: Yeah. There's so much going on in your answer right now, BB, and I just have to share this. My biological mother's people were Germans who settled along the Volga river and there was a massive famine. There were several massive famines in the along the Volga in Russia, in the 1920s and before in the 1880s and it led to exoduses out of the region because you couldn't eat. When the food runs out, things change, things shift, and it impacts cultures. And like you mentioned earlier, BB, about the commissary, if the cupboards are full on January 1st, but they're kind of running out by January 24th, then you make due with what you have. And the storyteller in me wants to tell more of those stories as well, about how we nourish and nurture ourselves. I hope that made sense.

BB Huff: No, you're making total sense because there's layers to that question aside from the semicolon in the middle, because if you're coming from a place of just trying to get enough food on the table so that your child will have the mental capacity to learn versus anything other than that.

Jason Lee: Yeah. Yeah.

BB Huff: I mean, it's a difference. You're not trying to get an identity. It's like, I'm just trying to get caloric intake into my child so that they can-

Jason Lee: They need to eat. Yeah, yeah, yeah.

BB Huff: Brains and they can learn and yeah. So I'm blessed to be able to answer that question not starting from that place, if that makes sense.

Jason Lee: Well, that leads me to this, Chef BB. This is our season finale. And so I have one final question. If food is a conversation starter, what comes after they leave your table?

BB Huff: That's an awesome question. Hopefully really good digestion. And my hope is that the conversations continue. My hope is that the next time they smell roasted garlic and saffron, that they're reminded of the conversation that they had around that table. My hope is that the next time they have a steak and they're reminded of the sous vide beef tenderloin with salsa verde on it, they're like, "I remember that steak. And oh my gosh. Remember what we talked about?" Food is so sensory and memories are so connected



to senses, I should say. And so my hope is that the conversation continues even away from the table and that they want to continue to have this type of intimate connection with the food and the people that are around the table that this becomes their new norm, that they want this love language in their life.

Jason Lee: Yeah, absolutely.

Yvonne Lee: Yeah. So interesting. As I reflect on, that's what we did at the beginning of this particular episode, thinking about all the conversations they're having about identity and exploring those things and what I love about what we've been talking about is that when you have access and when you have a community that is there to support you and when you're exposed to other ways of being and doing, and when you understand your history, when you are in a place where you understand other people's history, how rich the soil becomes in order to create someone who can actually realize their potential.

Jason Lee: I feel emotional having my sister-in-law and my wife in conversation like this simply because of the depth of the creativity that is being explored, both in storytelling and in the kitchen. And I thank you both for, well, Yvonne, I thank you for marrying me and BB, I thank you for welcoming me into your family. No, I mean that, I mean that. We share a lot of similarities in our truth in storytelling and in the faith that we have in humanity to sit around a table. BB, thank you for coming on our podcast.

BB Huff: And thank you for having me.

Jason Lee: Gentle listener, if you're hearing this and you want to explore, reach out to Chef BB here. She has an incredible way of telling your story through food.

Yvonne Lee: And I think as we end it as well, is that whatever your story is, whatever it is that you've been wanting to say, however, you've been wanting to connect with your community, your story is important. And if it comes through culinary arts, as BB has found, or if it comes through film, if it comes through short story, novel writing any of the arts, if it comes through activism, being a lawyer, being a teacher, pursue that.

Jason Lee: Yes.

BB Huff: Cin-cin.

Jason Lee: Cin-cin.