

Restaurateur Camilla Marcus: The (post-COVID) Business of Restaurants

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Melissa Biggs Bradley Hi, and welcome to Indagare's Global Conversations, a podcast about how traveling the world shapes our lives and perspectives. I'm Melissa Biggs Bradley of Indagare, a company I founded on the belief that how you travel matters. I'm sitting down with some of the most inspiring and innovative people I've met while on the road. They're activists and conservationists, designers and filmmakers, writers, chefs, and entrepreneurs. They will share stories about their travels and how they lead lives of passion and purpose. They inspire me, as I hope they will you. Welcome to the Conversation!

In this special bonus episode of the Indagare Global Conversation podcast, I'm delighted and inspired to be speaking with Camilla Marcus. I think I can safely assume that all of our lives, mine and anyone who is listening, has been deeply affected by COVID 19. And a lot of our industries have been not only disrupted, but irrevocably changed. I know mine has, but one of the ones that has been hardest hit by the many lockdowns across our country has been the restaurant industry. Many of our most beloved establishments, those special independently owned restaurants that we love to discover and share with family and friends, are in danger of disappearing forever. To make sure that doesn't happen, a coalition of incredibly committed restaurateurs and chefs has formed, first in York City and then nationally. On this podcast, I will be speaking with one of its founders, a true warrior in this fight for survival, Camilla Marcus. Originally from Los Angeles, Camilla found her way into the passionate culinary world via the much more practical ones of law. She's got a degree from NYU and of business, she graduated from Wharton. But via various twists of life which she will talk about, Camilla found herself working as the director of hospitality for legendary restaurateur and innovator Danny Meyer. The two of them shared a lot of similar passions, including fair business practices and sustainability, which Camilla put front and center in her own Soho restaurant — Westbourne, which she opened in 2016. Now opening a restaurant in New York City is always an extremely risky undertaking. But Camilla's congenial spot on the corner of Sullivan Street immediately drew a fan base thanks to its West Coast derived culinary ethos, its inclusive vibe and the fact that every purchase benefits a job training program. The Infatuation summed it up as "the food is great and you feel happier when you leave." Well, I think we're all now eager to return to those special kinds of places that serve great food, give back to their communities and yes, make us feel happier when we leave. Camilla is here to tell us how that can happen, to talk about her career path and what led her to founding the Independent Restaurant Coalition, but also why she's always lived by her mother's mantra that perfect is boring. I'm thrilled to be speaking to this powerhouse of a restaurant warrior and amazing woman.

So, Camilla, let's start with the immediate impact of the lockdown on your restaurant. Because I know for you, like so many others in the restaurant industry, lockdown shuttered your business, but that doesn't mean that you stopped working.

Camilla Marcus When this all started sort of coming down, you know, the pressure of closing down a restaurant with 48 hours notice. We shut down a little bit in advance of the city order. But it was, you know, emotional and taxing, more than I could ever describe. And then also really not being sure what to do. I mean,

there is so little known and, you know, I think I'm very risk neutral when it comes to myself, but very risk averse comes to my son. So we're here. It's myself, my husband and our son, we have two dogs. We live right by Washington Square Park. So I'm cooking more honestly than I ever have. And I think a lot of us chefs and restaurants are, as you know, you've got time. You know you're going to be home, you know, for every single day. And so being able to work on multi-day projects and baking bread for the first time, which has been just eye opening and a really good place to put my stress and anxiety. And honestly, I've never worked harder in my whole entire life, which is something I again hear from all restaurant people, which is...it's hard to believe because we work hard and at all hours, you know, seven days a week now, you know, so much is focused on advocacy and lobbying efforts and relief for our workers, as well as trying to figure out how we navigate this as our own businesses and spreading the word of what's going on in our industry. So lockdown is blissful, claustrophobic, productive, anxiety ridden and joyful. It's really a big mix of emotions. Being able to obviously see my son so much through this really pivotal time in his development is very special. And like I said, getting to cook more than I really normally ever get to. It's amazing. But I am also someone who is used to traveling every other week, if not more. I went to eight countries when I was pregnant. Everywhere from New Zealand to Copenhagen and everything in between. So this is a real challenge. And I'm an extrovert, so an extrovert who likes to travel and be busy all the time, some of that's a little out of sync with the lockdown now.

MBB Can you tell us a little bit about your background and how you landed in the food world, so to speak? Because I know you got a law degree, you received a business degree, and then you ended up in hospitality, which is not the normal route. So can you talk a little bit about that and how you did end up in hospitality?

CM So I always loved food since I was young. I was...no one in my family is really into food. I was the kid that was eating everything crazy at a sushi restaurant when I was young. My dad worked in Japan most of my childhood, and so we actually grew up with a lot of Japanese food before it really proliferated through the US and I think that that really was the core of it for me always. I loved to cook since I was a young kid and was very into eating out in restaurants. And when I was in college, I knew I wanted to better culinary school at some point so I went right after college and that was the first time I was with people...You know, I worked in a lot of different jobs and I think it also is the first time I worked with people that I just adored. I mean, I you know, after working a tough shift, you know, that's the person that you still want to go have a drink with or celebrate your birthday with then. And that spoke to me in a big way. So I worked in a lot of different fields and a lot of different sides of the business. I got a JD MBA from NYU. I worked with Tom Colicchio on Riverpark and then became head of business development for Danny Meyer. But all of it was sort of opportunistic, taking what I could. I always worked multiple jobs at once. So in grad school, I was working on the Riverpark project when I was in culinary school. I worked at a restaurant called Dell'anima. I am like the queen at the side hustle. And a lot of that is because, you know, I knew food and hospitality was something I was really passionate about, but I didn't really know where I fit because I didn't have any family in it. You know, I wasn't working in a restaurant when I was 14. I was studying because I'm a nerd. And I always said I really envied...all my college roommates became doctors, and I always envied that sense of knowing exactly what the path is and what the latter is. So I really just always took on new and different projects and was willing to work, you know, while I was in school or doing a side project while I was working, you know, really trying to help myself find my path and feeling like, you know, you've got to grab as many monkey bars as you can if you don't exactly know where you're going.

MBB When you find that family, it really feels right. And that's probably a good clue that you're in the right place. Now, how did you end up working for Danny Meyer?

CM So it was interesting, actually, when we were working on what became Riverpark. True story. I cold called Peter Bentel of Bentel & Bentel, who's a big architect in New York. They actually built a lot of Danny's restaurants in the early days, including The Modern and a lot of their businesses. And I just thought his work really fit the project. And I called him up. I was 23 years old and I said, "I've got this, you know, I'm working on this project in the East Side. I love your work. I think if we can get someone like you to partner up with us, then we have a shot at getting a really great restaurateur to bring this whole project to life." And, you know, he said, "You're crazy, but come out to Long Island, to our studio, and, you know, I'll test you out, I guess." And I said, "Sure. Like, if you think I'm a psycho then I'll never call you again, but I think we'll get along well." And lo and behold, we did. And so he helped us actually pitch the product to both Danny and Tom. And so I had met Danny and his longtime partner in the business, Richard Corraine, at that time. We ended up going with Tom in the end, but had kept in touch. And when I was looking to get a job after grad school, I called Peter and I said, "Do you know if Danny is hiring?" And he said, well, "I don't know, but I will make a personal phone call on a recommendation." So I actually interviewed with Union Square Hospitality Group in 2012. I ended up moving back home to Los Angeles instead to work for a real estate private equity fund, who actually owned some of the buildings in and around New York that Danny's restaurants are in. And so it ended up being kind of a funny overlap of lives and just have kept in touch. And after about two years, I said, you know, "I've been thinking about that job we were talking about. Did you ever hire anyone?" And they said no. At the time, what was clear, they had all new C Suite executives. Shake Shack was in the process of preparing to go public the following year. They had five chef transitions and five openings, all in a 12 month period. And so, you know, they had their hands busy. So I said, you know, "Can I interview again?" And they said, would you move back to New York? And I said, in a heartbeat. So that's sort of how it happened. I'm the queen of the side hustle. And I'll tell you, I'm queen of the cold call. I'm the youngest three. I've got no shame.

MBB That's fine. I'm the third of four. And I'm also a proponent of the cold call and being willing to try just about anything. But clearly, in this case, it paid off. So did you create that role for the organization? And can you talk about what the vision was?

CM Yeah, I mean, at that time, really, you know, they had obviously been doing business development because they had grown so extraordinarily so within their 30 year history, but they never really had a business development program or department. And that's true for a lot of companies. You know, what I always say is founders do that work until you're too big and it's hard for one person to do it, but it's hard to separate that. You know, when you have a founder that's really been doing that as sort of their core function. So I said it was really sort of like being able to do a startup within a 30 year massive company. So I said I was like the little speedboat, you know, building it from scratch attached to the cruise ship and trying to figure out how they interact. And the mission was really how do they shift gears towards being more proactive and building out a strategy for what they want to do in the long term, particularly as Shake Shack was separating. So one of my big initiatives was helping write the business plan for and conceiving of the idea of what became Enlightened Hospitality Fund, which is their strategic investing arm. And really thinking through, you know, how do you evaluate talent? How do you decide which of the businesses is ready to grow and how do we think about things like real estate partnerships or diversifying income? How do you expand the reach of the corporate office, things like that. So it was pretty broad based and and wild. And then my my departing initiative was moving, was relocating Union Square Cafe to its current new location.

MBB And to them, what made you decide to go from that sort of big strategic thinking to opening your restaurant, Westbourne?

CM I think that experience...I mean, even though it was working again for, you know, a larger institutional company, I really was sort of a two man band — myself and Richard Corraine. And I felt almost like I was building a business within a business and I just really loved that. And I would share this story, and it's true — I'm really a reluctant entrepreneur. I really always wanted...I always said I wanted someone to tell me on my job, "You are my person. You're my mentee. I want to grow you. I want you to stay here. You know, sky's the limit." And it just never really happened that way for me. And really, I didn't dream. I think there's so many people are like, I want to I want to run a startup. I'm like, I don't know if that's a job description. I think you should really love what you're actually creating and be passionate about that business plan, not passion about being an entrepreneur. But I was pretty hesitant. I don't know that that was ever really in my brain for a long time. And my dad wrote me an email every day for a month that said, just do it. We both loved *Shoe Dog*. That's my favorite book of all time. And in a lot of ways I, I share you know, Phil Knight, similarly, is kind of a reluctant mega entrepreneur, someone I admire greatly. I think that was sort of the inspiration, was seeing what I was able to create. And, you know, my dad sort of was like, "Look, people seem to think your ideas are pretty good. Why don't you try it out for yourself?" And I said, "Well, I guess that might be true." So it took kind of a, you know, a nudge out of the nest. And it really came from a place of really seeing an opportunity. You know, the Warby Parker's of the world and Tom's, and this sort of rise of conscious capitalism, more on the retail side of things, really hadn't made its way into hospitality. And seeing that there was a space for — we make more decisions about food and beverage in our everyday lives than pretty much anything. You know, everyone has to eat. It's something that binds us all as humans. And what if someone could plant that flag and say, you know what? You go about your daily life. You have this great experience, you nourish yourself. But that also has an added benefit of taking care of your community. Being mindful about our environment and really seeing hospitality as core change agents is really what what I started obsessing over. And sort of everyone in my world sort of said, look, this is what you talk about more than anything. So I think you've got to try your hand with it.

MBB And can you talk a little bit about how you put that philosophy into practice at Westbourne? Because it's very innovative.

CM So we are really top to bottom rethinking every element of what it means to be a restaurant. So we cross train our entire team. They're all generalists. Everyone learns wine. Everyone learns coffee. Everyone learns to cook, etc.. We have no porters, no dishwashers. It's a very collaborative team model, which ironically actually post COVID that I think is going to have to be more the norm than sort of the traditional hierarchy of a restaurant. On the mission side — so we partnered with Robin Hood from the start. One percent of every purchase goes to hospitality training for youth in the neighborhood. And then we hired from that very program. And then in the larger community sense, although with all of us being closed down, it's pretty heart wrenching. But we were actually the first zero we certified restaurant in Manhattan. So everything top to bottom, it's all about sustainability.

MBB That's unbelievable. And what were some of the biggest challenges in putting into practice something that was so unusual?

CM Probably just the early days of convincing people that it could be done. I mean, all my friends and restaurants, as much as they are wonderful and supportive and loving people, sort of said, like, good luck trying to get anyone to agree to work there. And I sort of told the original team, brick by brick, we're gonna find the bricks that fit and we're going to put them all together. And, you know, I don't care how long it takes, we're gonna go person by person by person. So that initial, I think, really showing that it can be done

differently. I think with any operation, brand or business — doing something outside of the norm in a very competitive and difficult industry is tough. It's a tough proposition to say, hey, we're going to risk that we can do it differently when the stakes are high. You know, the margins are slim and the industry is very competitive. But once we started sort of getting traction and you could see it resonated with our guests. I mean, we hear so often how much people love our team and how much they notice that they work together. They're touched by the diversity of our community and our team. You could see it start to catch on and that people really picked up on it and valued it. But the initial sort of getting people into the boat definitely was not without its challenges.

MBB Was there a moment or were there a couple of milestones that allowed you to recognize that you weren't just a reluctant entrepreneur, but that you had actually become a successful one?

CM I don't know. I think that entrepreneurs always sort of shed yesterday and look to tomorrow. So I don't know that I'm a good...I really probably annoying to my team in that regard. I mean, I think there's a place for celebration and reflection, but I'm I'm always sort of on to the next thing and thinking about next steps. I think probably the fact that people started to really understand what we did and hearing, you know, guests and brands seek us out and seeing media really understand the nuance of what we're doing. You know, when we first launched, I told our PR team at the time, I don't want to single article unless they're willing to talk about our mission. I don't care. I don't need to be in any magazine. I don't need to be anywhere. If they're not going to tell our real story and they just want to put it as you know, every other restaurant opening cuisine type, all the stuff, you know, they wanted menu. They wanted pictures of our food and all that stuff. And I said that that's not really the point of this. The point of this is our mission and how are contributing to and giving back to our community in a new way; that's important. And if they're not willing to write on it, I don't want it.

MBB That was pretty bold of you because I think that most people would take any and all the press that they could get around a new venture. Particularly around a restaurant opening in New York. But I guess you also had a very innovative approach to how you hire and think about working with your employees. How do you foster engagement and retention? Can you talk about that?

CM I think everything we do is geared towards that. I think that, you know, even our generalist model is all about learning. You know, I used to tell our team we're part restaurant and employer. We're part, you know, education and school, and then we're part really, sort of, social services and mentored you there for people to help them know through life. A lot of our team members, this is their first job. A lot are facing a lot of really intense circumstances in their private lives, which look, regardless of what kind of company and what socioeconomic level you are, everyone has stuff going on. Right? We all had problems. We all have things that we're grappling with. I think making space for part of that to be possible in the workplace has done wonders for people to feel like they can actually bring their full selves to work, and that work can be a positive, stabilizing and forward moving place in their lives. I think another big thing that we've always done — I mean, I'm just a very open book and we do a lot of feedback sessions. We do a lot of impromptu check ins. We don't rely...we do, two to three times a year, full formal 360 reviews. But we feel like those are the anchors, but that we actually do a lot more regularly. And I think even just sitting down with someone, I mean, the people that are really core to your team, I mean, everyone on my team who are those people, I have sat down with them myself and said, look, I want you to be a lifer here. What keeps you here? What do you want? You know, what can I give you? What can we talk through that's going to make it so you never want to leave because I don't want you to leave. If tomorrow you decide you want to make napkins, like, let's talk about that and figure out if there's a way to do it here. You know, I think people are so afraid. I see so many employers so

afraid. It's like, oh, well then they have you by the balls. It's like, no, they don't. They actually then feel valued and they know that they matter. And it can also then be collaborative to allow you to fit into what they actually want rather than you imposing what you think they want. Ask the question and have those conversations often. So, for example, talking with someone and saying, like, what are you afraid of? Or what keeps you from the next phase or what keeps you here? I had someone — so our heard of People & Culture — her first six months in her review, I said, All right, so what keeps you here? What have you wanted to do that you haven't been able to do that I can give you? And it turned out she had wanted in H.R. certification and every prior job denied her for and the cost was \$500d. And I said, really? And she makes you know, she's a salaried employee. And I said, really? I mean, she worked for a big hotel group, worked for a big restaurant group before us. And I said every person has said no to this. She said, "Yeah. And, you know, I just have always wanted it. It would make me feel that I'm really on par with others in my part of the profession." And I go, great. Let's do it. Done. And like, she just cried. And I said, well, it's not that complicated. So I do think...I think the biggest perspective is having that dialogue, being open to hearing the answer. And third is not scripting it for the other person and making it really one for one. I think so often people create programs and things that, you know, accommodate the broad swath. And I actually think therein lies the problem. Every person is individual and what they might want actually, frankly, might even be easier for you to give than what you think in your mind and create.

MBB That's a really great point. Now, where did you draw your inspiration for the restaurant in terms of the design and the food? You talked earlier about travel, but can you talk a little bit about the creative inspiration and how it came to bear in Westbourne?

CM So I was an artist growing up, a draw and a painter. I always say I would love to be an interior designer, but I only want clients who say yes and don't talk back, which, you know, isn't great. And I also say the same about being a travel agent. It's great — if I give great travel notes. I had these little guides that I give to friends. But, you know, there's no...I want it to be a monologue, not a dialogue. So I would make a terrible travel agent. But a lot of the inspiration is really Japan meets Los Angeles, meets Rome. I love Italy. Everything about Italian culture. My husband and I lived...in our first year of dating, we lived in Rome. So the three have so much overlap for me as far as community attention to detail, you know, really embracing natural elements. Thinking about how something progresses throughout someone's day. And then in the interior design, it was really all about, you know, community. How do you encourage...I mean, when we opened, New Yorkers don't really sit next to each other. Post-COVID, you know, there's a whole new reshaping of that. But again, that was one of the things that was so special to see. I mean, in the first two months, people were very, very anti sitting with strangers. And then a year later, we had people dating because they met in the restaurant. People were writing together. I would matchmake tables, which my team is very uncomfortable with, but really bringing people together in a way that is very West Coast. You know, we're much more laid back and communal in that way. And then culinarily, it's really all about Los Angeles in a really pure time. So it's about, you know, great produce, great products, highlighting really niche purveyors. We do a lot with the California brands, bringing them to the East Coast. I have a very strong pension for female run companies for sure. And culinarily, that takes on a lot, you know, Japanese, Korean, Vietnamese, Mexican as well as sort of the Chez Panisse type California cuisine, I think all kind of find a little bit of a place in our cuisine perspective. So that's sort of the blend. And I think, again, I saw so many people really picking up on it. And when we designed the restaurant, we actually started with a list of all of the restaurant trends. And I said, if any of you show up in the design like you're out. We worked with Studio My an amazing designer named Mila Garcia out Los Angeles. I'd been again, I followed their work for about a decade and I cold called him and I said, OK, but this project was before we found out space. And he said, well, I'm working on a hotel in New York. I'll give you five minutes

over coffee. But we're very busy and we don't take on new clients. I said, great. Give me five minutes. And he and I are close, the closest of friends still to this day. One of my favorite humans. And sometimes I sent him that email he wrote back just to make him laugh.

MBB There's the third child thing coming out again, knowing that pushing for a chance is half the battle. But that sounds like it was a particularly serendipitous partnership that you created. And now I want to ask you about your latest project with the International Restaurant Coalition and how you went from not just trying to help your own employees in COVID, but moved pretty immediately into trying to help the whole industry. Can you talk a little bit about how that initiative started and what you were trying to do with it?

CM Yes, so Sunday, March 15th we closed our doors, and throughout that weekend, pretty much everyone I knew in the city had closed and had let go of their teams pretty much overnight. And when I started talking with friends and lawmakers and people in major agencies in New York, I realized they had no clue what was happening. You know, and I would say to them, you do realize that hundreds of thousands in New York are out of work as of today. They're like, well, why aren't they in the numbers? I go, well, we just crashed your unemployment site, so much so that you had to stagger applications for one day a week. So you won't see these numbers for three weeks. And it was pretty alarming to realize that there is just an immense amount of cognitive dissonance and no one was seeing this total and utter collapse because we're not on the stock market. We're not in the stock market. You know, we're not a bank that has massive lobbying power. We really have been apolitical as an industry, I think, for a long time, and I think to our detriment. So what happened was that Wednesday, I called three friends, Shawn Fini, who is one of the owners of Misi and Lilia I along with Missy Robbins, Dana Cowin, who is the former editor of Food & Wine magazine for over two decades. And then Adam Saper, who brought Eataly to North America. And I sort of said to them, look, we all kind of represent different types of owners and different people in the industry and different perspectives. And I said, are you seeing what I'm seeing? And they said, yeah, we're scared. And I said, great, we need to get on the phone with as many people as we can, because if this isn't just an 'us' problem, then we got a real big problem and we got to do something about it now. So we sent out an email collectively to about 30 to 50 business owners. Everyone from the Stephen Stars of the world to Tom Colicchio to smaller restaurants like Mimi Cheng's and really everything in between, and we said everyone want to jump on the phone at 6:00 p.m. and, you know, these are people who I mean, trying to get all those people on the phone in a normal week would be literally near impossible, except for all of us had no businesses, no teams, were in dire straits and home with computers. So we did a Zoom with 50 people by 6:00 p.m. and then we had our [change.org](https://www.change.org) petition to Governor Cuomo up the next day. And that was how ROAR was born. So it's Relief Opportunities for All Restaurants. We're focusing on New York state advocacy in partnership with some of the city groups like New York City Hospitality Alliance. And then that very same day after we spoke, Tom Colicchio called me and said, you don't know this, but the same thing is happening on the national level. Would you like to be one of the co-founders and jump on that, too? And I said for sure. So IRC was then born basically the same dander, essentially the same premise, except for their nationally focused and focused on Congress and the White House. So two thirds of restaurants across the country are independently owned, which I think most people don't know. We actually vastly outweigh chains, public companies and those that have traditionally been our representatives in government. And we're...I think, either one or two largest private employer in the country, New York state, to give an essence, restaurants employ more people in New York state than airlines nationwide. Just to give you an idea of scope and scale; we're four percent of GDP. Facts and figures that I think are astounding to people and I think really have never been publicly accepted or regarded. And I think government at every level has never really thought of us as a major industry. And I think this is really a reckoning in that regard. And we're fighting like hell.

MBB I know I speak for everyone when I say we're so grateful for the work that you're doing and the awareness that you're bringing to the table. Now, what do you envision? I know it's hard to make predictions at this moment, but if you have to look at the restaurant industry post COVID, what are you imagining right now?

CM You know, honestly, it's anyone's game. I am truly not trying to dodge the question, but we are on the brink of a total industry collapse. I think, unfortunately, so many of the questions are like that. You know, what's the future bring? What's reopening? What's it going to look like? I sort of have to stop people in our tracks and say, yeah, don't you wonder what a world is like when none of those restaurants exist for the next year and a half? Because that's what we're facing. So I think instead of worrying about sort of the future and what the trends and what it will look like, I think everyone should be concerned as to what does it look like if they aren't there, regardless of what they offer, what their approach to hospitality is in a post COVID world. We're dying to get to that question. I mean, we want to, with all of our hearts, get to what is, you know, V2 look like in post COVID. We exist to socially gather and we have the least access to capital and we employ the most amount of people. So when you talk about the perfect storm of who's, what industries are harmed, we're at the top of that list. And we have been all but ignored when it comes to specific relief packages.

MBB On that note, what can people do to be more supportive of the industry right now?

CM So we partnered with Robin Hood and that's one way to help and we're going to be keeping the fund open for as long as this goes, which I think will at least be through this year, the more we raise, the more people we can help. And then on the other end, I would say follow @roar.ny and follow the Independent Restaurant Coalition. We have calls to action, you know, things that you can sign, Congress people you can call, you know, every week there's something different and it is going to take a village. I mean, it's going to take every single level of government to realize this is what the public needs and wants. The more that you can social post, the more that you can call your congresspeople. If you have connections to anyone in government urging them to meet with ROAR and take seriously, that to save our restaurants is going to be critical to avoid a depression. We're not at that tipping point yet. I think it's starting to percolate and we do need every member of the public to realize that this is as much an issue for you as it is for our industry.

MBB That is so true and perhaps also to envision what we would be losing if we don't fight for our favorite restaurants. Speaking of which, what are some of yours in New York City? I know that's a tough question a lot.

CM A lot! I love King. I love Pasquale Jones. I love the ABC Restaurants. Dan Kluger, Loring Place. Shuka's one of our faves. I love Coperon for soba. Tacombi for tacos. Los Tacos Number Uno also for tacos. We go to K Town a lot for Korean barbecue. I love Misi in Brooklyn, Shawn's restaurant and Missy Robins restaurant. I don't know. But I'm also again, I'm someone who I will say if it's usually either a friend's restaurant or a hole in the wall or something that's new that we just want to try and sort of see, you know, what different people are doing. As people who eat out usually like six nights a week, this is a whole new world for us.

MBB Yes. And I, too, used to eat out frequently. And it's been quite a transition to having to get used to my own home cooking through all of this. But I'm going to guess that Italian is your favorite cuisine. But I have to ask if you have a top choice.

CM I probably...honestly, it'll be Japanese and then Italian, Japanese, Italian and then Mexican, probably next. I love ATLA. It's one of my favorite restaurants. Danielle is super talented. You know, I miss the taco food trucks from Los Angeles. And I cook a lot. I'd say that's also how I cook at home. Definitely Japanese, Italian, Mexican kind of dominate my flavor profiles.

MBB I'm not sure I could eat that much in a day, but I do love the idea and it allows you to travel in your own city. But one thing that's been highlighted to me is the close connection between restaurants and travel. And I mean, one of the reasons that people go to New York is to eat in certain places. And when you think of home or you think of Japan or L.A., I would imagine that part of the way you experience that culture, whether it's familiar or new, is through the food and through the people who, you know, are making that food and introducing you to their traditions and rituals and culture and neighborhoods and where those restaurants are. And certainly for me, you know, when I think about Paris or I think about Rome, a lot of it has to do with favorite places that are meals that I want to repeat or that I want to try. And without that, you know, you lose a lot of the soul of a place

CM For sure.

MBB Can we talk a little bit about some of the favorite places that you have traveled to? Because I know that you're a big traveler and always have been.

CM Oh, I don't like really traveling anywhere more than once. My goal is to see every corner of the world for some time. I love Japan. We went on our honeymoon 10 years ago. I loved Ethiopia. That was really eye opening. We went to the Ngornogoro crater in Tanzania, which also was just totally spectacular. And then I also actually really love to go to American cities. I actually went to Bentonville, Arkansas last year right before we opened the restaurant. I went to Marfa for a long week. And I think there are so many interesting corners of America, too, that are pretty spectacular. I really want to go to the White Sand Monument in Santa Fe and see the lightning fields. I fly every year. I cannot get through. I've tried every connection I possibly can. No dice. I loved going to Zion and Bryce Canyon. That was spectacular. You know, I, I don't know. I'm constantly looking for something new and strange and different. So, you know, Istanbul also one of my favorite cities. This time is hard. It's strange to think that, you know, that's going to be on hold for a little while. It's pretty heartbreaking. And like I said, for someone like me, that's my air. That's where I get so much inspiration. I, I just love it. I don't care — the friction, the plane delays, whatever. I had a 12 hour delay going to Copenhagen when I was fully seven and a half months pregnant. Probably shouldn't even been flying because I had a friend invite me to Noma. Thank God I said yes to that. But, you know, it was worth it. You know, I didn't spend less time in Copenhagen than on the plane. So I miss those...I miss all that. And now I've got to plot where we're going to go next.

MBB Well, I'll definitely get back in touch with you on White Sand, but do you have a favorite hotel in the world?

CM Ohh...favorite hotel in the world. There's a lot. I will say, the Feltrinelli was definitely up there. Anything Aman is spectacular. Yeah, we loved that. I loved the Amangiri. I thought that was really special. The hotel at the Ngornogoro crater — the &beyond was really...that just was such a unique experience start to finish. I loved that.

MBB But we definitely overlap with some of our favorite properties. Can you identify the trip that gave you the travel itch?

CM All of it. So I'm the youngest of three and I was always studious, but with very poor attendance. And, you know, my parents, I was on the younger end. And so for them, it was sort of like we either take her or, you know, we're not going to really be able to go. And I could test well without attending school. So I got to be the kid that got to go everywhere with them. We did a lot of domestic travel when I was a kid. You know, we drove a lot of places, went to a lot of the national parks. I've been to almost all 50 states. I think that probably started it. And then I think, you know, living abroad and being able to go all over Europe, you know, more easily and for cheaper certainly opened my eyes to wanting to do that. But I think I had it from the womb. I mean, I just...I live to be on a plane and go somewhere else.

MBB And what usually inspires you to go to some place? Is it a restaurant or a food culture that you want to explore? Or is it something else?

CM It's usually a mix. I think it sort of depends. I try and do sort of one nature focus trip, one domestic city for a long weekend and then one probably food related travel every year, if I can. So the sort of larger bucket list — seeing sort of the natural wonders in the world. My husband and I usually do with my parents. The four of us probably travel on a big trip once a year together, which is pretty special and lucky that we all get along so well. So we went to the Galapagos actually right before...we came back the first week of March, right when all this came down, which, you know, again, we...I sort of thought I'd just come off of maternity leave and I thought, you know, it's not very responsible to do this, but we got to do it. Bucket list item. I've wanted to go to the Galapagos since I was in the eighth grade. And again, I look back and you're always going to be regretful, right, of the things you don't say yes to. So I'd say that's sort of how I think about it. And then I'm totally the friend that will say yes to pretty much any trip. So Bentonville was a dear friend of mine in San Francisco, and one in Seattle, we went to Marfa together. Actually, that was pretty amazing. So she...a dear friend of mine in San Francisco's friends of all ages, different types of jobs, different industries, they live all across the country. And she sent an email blind copying all of us. And she said, I'm organizing a trip with the Jug Foundation to Marfa. Everything will be taken care of. You just have to get yourself to El Paso at noon on a Friday. You know, let me know if you're in. The catch is you cannot know who's coming. You know, you got to sign up for being with a bunch of strangers for four days. And, you know, if you're in, great, we'll see you in El Paso. So I literally showed up in the middle of El Paso, Texas, having no clue, you know, I only knew her. I don't know any of her friends. And, you know, we all spent a three hour drive into Marfa. And it was really one of the greatest experiences of my whole life. And so a lot of us have kept in touch and now do. We did the Bentonville trip together. Someone sort of said, look, I just really want to see Crystal Bridges; who is in? And we just picked a random weekend. We were supposed to go to Detroit this summer, which will be on hold, but sort of happens that way. I think, I think people who live for wanderlust tend to find one another, right?

MBB Yeah. You know, I'm a big proponent of taking a chance on meeting like minded seekers when we travel because so often having a shared wanderlust or love for discovery can really be a foundation for a great friendship that you would never have forged otherwise. And often it's on trips that we're both of you are out of your comfort zone and in explorers mode. So, Camilla, what would you say is the greatest gift of travel or what has been the greatest lessons of travel for you?

CM I think the greatest gift of travel is probably twofold. I always say, you know, in the restaurant, my mom always said perfect is boring. And I agree with her. And I think particularly in restaurants, in business, it's

actually the friction that is the beauty of it. Like people in...I always laugh with Westbourne people and say, well, why isn't there a sign for this? And why do I have to wait in line here? And, you know, it's unclear where I order and why don't you do this. And I said, God forbid you have to talk to another human being. I mean, the friction is why we and that actually is what makes it human and lovely. Yeah. I could put a sign for everything in the restaurant and I could have a big arrow that maps out everything you should do. But like, is that living? If I'm puppeteering you the entire time you're there? I mean, that's not wonderful. That might be easier, but to me, it's vacant of what makes those experiences rich. I think it's the same with travel. Like the delay and, you know, things not going right and trying to figure out, you know, where you're going to eat and how you're going to make the day work and, you know, dealing with travel delays and all of that is actually what makes for spontaneity, and I think is part of the beauty and helps you be more resilient, I think, as a human, that things go less than perfect, which where we're living right now. You know, what that does to you. And I think on the other side, it's the visual, the cultural, the people, the food, the inspiration of — everything can be different and it can still be wonderful. And I think it helps me personally realize that there's no one way to do anything. There's no right or wrong way to live. There's no one way to be happy. And being able to see how much the rest of the world lives in such different ways. But it's still beautiful and lovely and fulfilling. I think just helps you in your own daily life, not be so tied to one thing and to start to listen — you know, when you travel, you get to try something new on. Right? You know, you get to see what it's like waking up at a different hour, being with wildlife all day. I mean, all those things help you also hone in, I think, back in your daily journey, in your daily routine, challenging yourself to do it differently and find some sense of peace within that.

MBB There's no wrong way to be happy. That's a sentiment that I truly love. And I took away from my conversation with Camilla. Her thoughts on there not being a right or a wrong way to live, that there's no one ideal way to do anything. This is something I know would also deeply resonate with my next guest on the next episode. I will be speaking with a travel writer and author, Sofia Roberts. Now, you may recognize her byline, as we say in journalism, speak from such glossy titles as Departures, The Financial Times and Condé Nast Traveler. And the work that Sophie's done for these publications is wonderful. But to listen to Sophie is to realize that there are travel writers who do what they do for a living. And then there are others — those devout travelers, humans who've always felt pulled to answer the call of the world and who process this thing that they are drawn to in words. And in Sophie's case, they are beautiful and powerful words. Sophie's take on her journey as a writer and artist, an explorer and a mother is incredibly moving because she's so deeply authentic and true to who she is. Tune in to hear about her adventures in the least explored corners of Africa and the Arctic to find out which countries she's most eager to revisit and which ones she would not return to, as well as for her advice on traveling as a woman alone, and to hear how she found herself in the wilds of Mongolia, listening to a piano sonata by Bach coming out of a yurt. And how this inspired her new book, *The Lost Pianos of Siberia*.

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