

"America Eats" – Live from the National Archives

June 10, 2011

David Ferriero: Good evening, I'm David Ferriero, the Archivist of the United States, and I cook. [Laughter] Welcome to the William G. McGowan Theater. We're all very excited about the new exhibit, "What's Cooking, Uncle Sam?" What's more enjoyable than combining history and food? And with us, to help launch our America Eats series, is the culinative... the chief culinary advisor for our exhibit, José Andrés. One of his restaurants, Café Atlántico, is just a couple of blocks north of here. On July 4, if you haven't heard, it will be reincarnated as The America Eats Tavern, a pop-up American restaurant that will be a culinary extension of "What's Cooking," the exhibit. We're grateful to Chef Andrés and the Think Food Group for his partnership, which will not only extend the exhibit visitor's experience beyond these walls, but also support the Archives' educational programs through the donation of profits to the Foundation for the National Archives. I'm sure you will enjoy tonight's conversation about food, cooking, science, and history, and I hope you will return to view the exhibit and sample the offerings of the America Eats Tavern.

José is an internationally recognized culinary innovator, passionate advocate for food and hunger issues, and this year's Outstanding Chef named by the James Beard Foundation. As chef/owner of Think Food Group, he is credited with introducing Americans to both avant-garde and traditional Spanish cooking. His Washington restaurants have been long-standing favorites and he has more recently opened restaurants in Los Angeles and Las Vegas. José is host and executive producer of the PBS "Made in Spain" and has written several cookbooks including the companion to the PBS series "Made In Spain," *Spanish Dishes for the American Kitchen*, which he'll be selling in the lobby after the program.

Joining Chef Andrés is Corby Kummer, a senior editor at *The Atlantic* magazine. He writes a regular food column, edits articles on politics and public affairs, and leads *The Atlantic* Food Channel blog. He was a restaurant critic for the *New York Magazine* from '95 to '96 and since '97 has served as restaurant critic for *Boston Magazine*. The *San Francisco Examiner* has called him "a dean among food writers in America." Author of *The Joy of Coffee* and *The Pleasures of Slow Food*, he is also a frequent food commentator on television and radio. He has won five James Beard journalism awards, and less than a year after its launch *The Atlantic* Food Channel was nominated in 2010 for a National Magazine Award as best magazine department on the Internet. So let the conversation begin.

[Applause]

Corby Kummer: And I have to say as a provincial Bostonian, I'm very excited to meet the National Archivist. And that is a real thrill for me. And the real award winner this year is José Andrés, who cleaned up. The prize he got at the James Beard Award wasn't any ordinary prize; it was *the* prize of the year. It's the one that comes at the very end. It's the grand prize; it's the national champion. So he's immortalized forever.

[Applause]

So I got to spend a wonderful afternoon touring the exhibition, which I hope everyone of you has memorized and seen. And if you haven't, you will buy this book, after you buy José's book, after you have José's book signed personally by him this evening.

José Andrés: This one is more interesting.

Corby Kummer: You need to buy this book. It's by Alice Kamp, and she spent two years researching this, much of it in this building in the stacks which she described as "something out of *Inside John Malkovich*" because they're half height stacks. And it's... the fruits of her labor are wonderfully entertaining and enriching to see. And I want to talk a lot about it, and José doesn't. So we'll... we are going to have an interesting conversation. What José has very kindly done, has brought a bunch of slides he's going to get us in the mood for and start showing.

José Andrés: Do we show them, or... I think we should.

Corby Kummer: Well, I think you should too because you brought them and they're beautiful to look at.

José Andrés: But I only like the slides because it's always a great way to start a conversation. But again, I mean, only in America the Archivist, with the role you have, will show up in such an important institution, with an apron...

Corby Kummer: And actually say you cook!

José Andrés: And it's only to show you, really, what's happening in America, more than in any other country in the world. That you have everyone and anyone giving importance to the meaning of food in today's life. So really, to see you with the apron has a very powerful meaning, and I really thank you for it because it is the meaning that food matters at every level. Here we have the most amazing documents that tell us who we are as a nation, and you showing up sends the message that food, from now on, in the 21st century, is going to have to be an important topic.

And I think to start this conversation, Corby really... First, because I don't want to forget, there's many many people that make this exhibition happen. You have a wonderful team here, and you know it. But I want to thank, really, Marvin Pinkert

for putting together all these amazing round tables that you're going to be seeing over the next six months.

Corby Kummer: He runs the show.

José Andrés: And I want to thank you because you know, he asked me "How many do you think we should have of these round tables?" And I told him one every day. And you know that's what happens when you are Latin. And he says, "Why we don't do one every other month." I'm like okay, that's good too.

So, do we have... How, I see it myself, but what do we do for everyone in America to see it? Oh! Alright. You see, it's food for thought, okay? And forget about these lines. Just interrupt me and throw me hardballs.

I have to congratulate my daughter Carlotta. It is good that already I have a member of my family that born in America. That gives me almost more... the power to say, I'm American too. But probably she was the one that came one day and started talking to me about pawpaws – p-a-w-p-a-w – and I'm like, what you talking about? I'm José Andrés and I don't know pawpaws, what? "Daddy! They are everywhere in Maryland! I can show you where! I can show you on Google Maps!" I'm like... [Laughter] So it's fascinating now when we grow up and we think we know everything, and the eyes of a young girl, of a kid, opens you almost completely into a new world.

And this is a new world of asking everyone here in this room and everyone what American cooking is. Because America with all the immigration has been the country that has received the most quantity of immigrants in the shortest period of time, receiving influence nonstop. And it's very difficult to be yourself, and at the same time to be adopting the new things coming from overseas. So I do believe we are in this amazing moment in the twenty-first century to almost stop for a second – and I don't mean by that stopping immigration; I'm gonna put this, I'm going to put this on the side – I'm talking about stopping, and I do believe it's the moment to ask ourselves who we are. People of America, pawpaw: how it is possible that in America we have every single ingredient around the world, but we cannot find in the shops, supermarkets of America, pawpaw when they are fresh? When it's actually the ultimate American fruit? That's my question. If we want to keep being who we are, and being different to anyone else, and honoring the products of the goodness of the earth, we need to start learning more about the things we already have! And I would love to see in the next hundred years the pawpaw everything around America. So it's funny because the first person wrote about this and mentioned this was a Spanish discoverer, a conquistador, Hernando de Soto. That more or less was 1541 when he documented this amazing fruit.

- Corby Kummer: Is this going to be the theme of the evening, where we find out that everything in the exhibition was actually discovered by a Spaniard?
- José Andrés: Yes. Yeah but, but the fun part is I have it documented, so... [Laughter]
- Amazingly so, in 1806, our great heroes Lewis and Clark, will not have the chance to cross, to go across America if it was not for pawpaws at one point in their trip. They ate pawpaws on the road because it was the only thing they found.
- Corby Kummer: And did your daughter bring you to eat any?
- José Andrés: Yep. We went looking for them – I went on my own for that. And still, the other day we were playing paintball, and I got hit every time because I found pawpaw trees everywhere. So, and I went, “Man, a pawpaw tree, so I have to come back here again in few more months.” So that’s important; that’s only food for thought. I think it’s important to... first and foremost, it’s okay we bring dragon fruit from Mexico or we bring mangos from India, but I do believe we have to start beginning endorsing the things that are already generally American, right? Going back, if people go through the exhibition, right, anyone of you bought ever a Meyer lemon?
- Corby Kummer: Meyer.
- José Andrés: A Meyer lemon? Very much this is in honor of Frank Meyer. That in this exhibition you are going to see the influence of the American, of the government, in how we eat today. Yes, sometimes this has negative connotations. But I can guarantee you more often than not, the government has influenced in a very positive way.
- Corby Kummer: Explorers...
- José Andrés: You’re going to find Frank Meyer, who was an explorer that was sent all around the world, finding fruits and finding seeds. It’s funny, we will send them overseas, but we will forget to even talk about the ones we already have here.
- Corby Kummer: Well, I think they were doing a lot of discovery of American stuff at the same time. It was an age of really trying to improve and increase the number of crops that were grown here.
- José Andrés: So, what I have to point this for?
- Corby Kummer: No, you’re supposed to press one of the clickers to go forward.
- José Andrés: No, I know. The instructions are in English, but I... So is two arrows, I know, is left and right, I mean, I’m pressing right.
- Corby Kummer: ...listening to the clicker instructions.

José Andrés: I'm going to... uhhh... nope. Okay. I can do the entire talk through pawpaws.

Corby Kummer: But he has so many other slides, so who here can help find...

José Andrés: Oh! Thank you! Was not me, you see. New England clam chowder. Who is from Boston here? Who is from Massachusetts? Who is from New England?

Corby Kummer: Look to your left, José.

José Andrés: What do you like... If was one thing you don't like about one of the most genuine American soups, what will be?

Corby Kummer: If there's one thing we don't like?

José Andrés: One thing you will not like. Come on. We can say all the great things.

Corby Kummer: He wants us to say Manhattan clam chowder because it has tomatoes and not cream, is that what you want?

José Andrés: Alright. And that's fine, because the Manhattan Clam Chowder really is from Rhode Island, but that's another story. Which is true, Portuguese influence.

Corby Kummer: New Bedford Portuguese fishermen.

José Andrés: But, take a look for a second, right. It seems very much in the 1600s, Europeans arriving, that was kind of a stew everyone will make with clams, it seems were plentiful. But to me the amazing thing is that you don't find in international cooking a lot of seafood soups or clam soups that incorporate cream or incorporate milk. So almost my first question is: did you ever ask yourself when the cows that provided the milk arrived to America? And what was the pre-clam chowder and the after-clam chowder? More or less it was documented that cows arrived around 1624, and that was a moment that changed what has become the American clam soup, known... is only known around the world with addition of cream or the addition of milk. You're going to say, "But José, every time I eat I have to be thinking about when the cows arrived...?"

Corby Kummer: And the answer is yes. You do!

José Andrés: And the answer is yes. I love to have a translator before. [Laughter] No, because I have a thick accent and my "yes" is not like his "yes." But I do believe it's very important, because we are in this moment, that... I get very touch when I get friends that come from Europe, those Europeans that are so chauvinistic. I don't know why. And sometimes they will talk about American cooking not in the best way. And I get very touch, because I believe that they... sometimes we are not able to sell who we are. And to me the clam chowder was the first dish ever as a chef, as an immigrant, that I decide to try to reorganize, or re-empower, to bring it to a new

level, so I can have any Frenchman or any Spaniard or any Italian come and say, "Wow, this soup is of a very high level."

Corby Kummer: Did you have a good one that you were try... Did you have a good one that inspired you to say, "I can do this even better?" I mean did you actually like it?

José Andrés: They were good. But to me they were too thick. But you could argue, "But the clam chowder is supposed to be thick!" Well, who says that? And the clams were too overcooked. "Well, the clams are supposed to cook!" No, why wouldn't serve them almost raw, but warm? Right? Who likes raw oysters? People of America, you are my people. So we like raw oysters and raw clams, why we overcook the clams? So we began making the soup using the juice of the clams without overcooking the clams. Already you have a clam chowder that is 10 times better. Why? Because everyone tells me traditional cooking is there not to be changed. I say, great, so I'm a chef, and I have to cook like the guy that invented the dish 300 years ago? I'm not here for that. I'm here to keep moving.

Corby Kummer: And which as you know is unfindable. There's lots of argument over the original chowder, what it tasted like, and what went into it.

José Andrés: Yep. Apples. To me it's very funny, right, because we are in this moment that we are trying to change the school lunch program and feed children, but you know what? It's even like if you give to every child a bike, they don't want to use the bike. They are not going to do any exercise. So you can buy 20 million bikes and that doesn't mean America is going to be any healthier. This is the same, almost, with the school lunch: you can give them the best food to the kids, but if we don't apply education to it, nothing is going to happen. You need kids to ask you for things, not us imposing on kids what they should eat. So why I'm telling you this on the apples? You give an apple to your children and your children tells you, "I don't want it." What do you do? What do you do? "Eat it! Or...!" If you are an immigrant you lose your green card. You know what I'm talking about. So you don't do it. But imagine for a second that you start engaging with your kids. And you are in an orchard, visiting the beautiful apples in Pennsylvania or Maryland or in Virginia.

Corby Kummer: Or Massachusetts.

José Andrés: Massachusetts! And then you tell them, you know that those apple seeds came in 1625 from England? And those apples there are only, only barely three centuries old in America? And you go deeper, and you them, and you see these bee that is going all around? Do you know that those bees had to be imported also, from South America or from Europe, because without those bees, there was no way to make sure that those beautiful flowers will become an amazing apple? Do you see when you are able to tell that story to a kid, all of a sudden, when they see an apple, they see so much more? They see the history of this country, and they

understand the value of an apple in their plate or in their school lunch program.

Corby Kummer: They have to know the Old World to know the meaning of only 300 years, 'cause for most kids in America that's forever and ever ago. But to kids who know Spain, it would be only 300.

José Andrés: So. Those are the conversations, yes? And to me I believe they are very important conversations. Take a look at this one. How many of you know this woman, Amelia Simmons? Do you met her? 1796, even she, much of what is in this book... Corby.

Corby Kummer: Is English.

José Andrés: Came from England. I mean I wish they got a book from Spain, but it came from England. Guys, this is very important. This is the first ever printed book – cookbook – in America. The first ever printed cookbook in America.

Corby Kummer: And I want to tell you she's a hero to food writers because she was one of the first who tried to sue for copyright infringement. And reprinting the book without her permission and copying her recipes. So we all love her.

José Andrés: She won?

Corby Kummer: It's true. You know I don't know if she won; I just know she fought. I'm not sure she won.

José Andrés: So in her book you find some of the first catsups. And I'm very sad today that the only catsup that we know – Heinz, probably, is very happy – is with tomatoes. But right now we've been working in so many other catsups – with oysters, with gooseberries...

Corby Kummer: Mushroom.

José Andrés: ...with mushrooms. Those were the original catsups in America. How we let those catsups disappear? It's so boring! Like I want catsup, no more questions. I would love one day that we'll say, "Catsup." "Oh sir, of the 25 different recipes..."

Corby Kummer: There's a picture of the lunch in 1981, at which members of Congress were served catsup as a vegetable, in the exhibition upstairs. And it's not the most flattering portrait of Ronald Reagan because it was under Reagan's watch. But it was so ridiculed, the idea that catsup could be counted as a vegetable. So it's also up there.

José Andrés: The most amazing thing about this book, besides the catsups, is that probably everyone talks about the wonderful breads that sometimes takes days to make the bread that come from Europe, right? Yeah, they're good sometimes. But probably this book if you read like a true historian was the beginning of the quick breads that

really become an American thing. That really baking powder... And this will start showing you America as a country, the most fascinating country where science and scientists and people will come up with new things. They were able to create this kind of amazing CO₂ production that will give you the possibility to make quick breads in a second. That was a genuine American invention. That's the book that first talk about quick breads. But somehow we don't even give any credit to her, specifically for that. To me that's fascinating. We're going to be working on some of the quick breads. Is many of them. But I want almost to honor those quick breads, that was a genuine American invention and this woman was the first to put that.

Corby Kummer: And you look for potash in those recipes.

José Andrés: Correct.

Corby Kummer: Potash.

José Andrés: Nothing's ... you don't want to be talking... using every ingredient that they used to use to... [Laughter] Because we learned that many ingredients they thought were great... they weren't. But anyway, take a look – the oldest public market in America, right? Markets, that I wish we had more in America. Here in Washington we have the farmers markets, that even if they are one day, they are wonderful. But in Capitol Hill, my wife and I, when we used to live closer to downtown, we would go every weekend, every Sunday, to the amazing Eastern Market. Almost should be mandatory that every city should be having one, two, three of those markets. Very much, if you go back to Paris, to Rome, to Madrid, to Barcelona, the heart of the cities were markets, not arenas to watch NBA.

Corby Kummer: And there's about 175 buildings that are protected on the National Architectural Register that were public markets and are not being used. And many cities are trying to revive them, like Eastern Market. But Eastern Market is a rare success story.

José Andrés: Unbelievable.

Corby Kummer: Almost any city you go to, though; it looks like a factory to you, it's not used as a market, but it was a market. There's a whole movement that's trying to reinvigorate them.

José Andrés: So the amazing thing that you know that right now we are talking about food in what used to be the central market of Washington D.C.? We are in the same location that the market – at the end of the 19th century, beginning of the 19th century – we are talking about food in what used to be the old market. And no David, I'm not asking for putting food stalls all around. That would be a good idea

for the future. Even things like macaroni and cheese, right? Me, I've been having a hard time because it will be the dish that my daughters asks me all the time. And if I ask you, do you think macaroni and cheese is an American dish? Come on.

Corby Kummer: What would you say? What would you say?

José Andrés: Why not? Why not? Of sure yes. Or of sure no. But I'm having a hard time, what will be genuine and what not. So we are going back, not to try to learn... You know the only way you know to know when something really is part of the community is when it's printed somewhere. Almost a book is this fascinating thing. It's a document that no one can argue with you, when really began. Everything else, you are guessing, but when you get the book in your hands, it's a very powerful thing, right? But I'm only putting this as an example because it seems that the first macaroni and cheese that we can find printed in America very much was from 1802. And the name of the recipe was "vermicelli prepared like pudding."

Corby Kummer: Which when you think of it, is absolutely right. It's true.

José Andrés: And what's funny because it seems like the first recipe very much was being handed in Philadelphia by a guy called Louis Fresnaye – F-R-E-S-N-A-Y-E – in Philadelphia. And in the original recipe, it seems what he was doing was he was grating something looking like parmesan – way before the Wisconsin industry began, producing huge amounts of cheeses to America – and with little bit of butter. That if you think today is even healthier, to me sometimes, than the macaroni and cheese you get sometimes today that seems there is an overload of cheese on pasta. But anyway food for thought. We all need to go through this process, asking ourselves is this ours, or is not. I can tell you dishes in Spain that no chef will ever tell you this is Spanish cooking, but every single Spanish people eat it every week.

Corby Kummer: Like what?

José Andrés: *Arroz a la cubana*. Cuban rice. Fried egg, rice, banana, tomato sauce, a piece of bacon. We don't consider it Spanish cooking. Every family serves that dish at least twice a week.

Corby Kummer: Is that like a Sunday night supper?

José Andrés: Very much, I would say. Citrus. It's funny because you're going to laugh, but. Can you guess who got citrus in America? Hey! We were a superpower, people. And America beat us in the Spanish-American War in Cuba and then you become a superpower. That's why I move here. So, it's funny because they arrived in 1541 by two explorers: Narváez and de Soto. And the first orange trees came to Florida. The industry of oranges in Florida and then California, they are very much... we are in debt to those guys. That happens that they were from Spain. But it is very funny

because grapefruit will be one of those recipes, those produce, that show up in so many menus. Grapefruit, cut in half, become almost a staple in every hotel for breakfast. Why? Texas become a big place in the 1800s for grapefruits. And one of the things I'm the happiest is that the best recipe I found in the *Joy of Cooking* is on the first edition, in the edition that Irma Rombauer pay herself, out of his own pocket, because no one will publish her book. I have edition, a first edition, signed by her. And she has a cocktail recipe which is shrimp – S-H-R-I-M-P, I have a hard time with that one –

Corby Kummer: That sounded perfect to me.

José Andrés: shrimp and grapefruit, with horseradish and French dressing. And if you are able to get to see that recipe, this to me is the ultimate cocktail, shrimp cocktail, not the one we are used to now with something looking like tomato and something looking like horseradish. So we are going to be serving the dish in America Eats because this is a way to honor a woman that risked everything she had, the few dollars she had, to put into a book what she thought was Southern cooking. And it's a way to honor someone that took the unbelievable step to try to save recipes. For some reason this recipe never made it. But it's there. Is the role of chefs and the role of people to try to bring those recipes from extinction, from extermination? I do believe we all have that role. Every time we have a dish that disappears, much of who we are disappears with that dish. And I do believe it should be our role to make sure that we are able save those dishes that in one moment in history help us become who we are.

Corby Kummer: And it wasn't that long that Irma Rombauer had been able to get grapefruit 'cause the history of the popularization of that is really the history of railroads in America. It's when railroads come in. There's a great photograph upstairs of shoveling ice, loading the reefers, the refrigerated railroad cars. In fact there's a cutaway, there's a huge cutaway of a railroad car, to show what it was like, refrigerated transport. And you had to load it with blocks of ice every couple of hundred miles. There's a great picture of men loading ice in the morning onto a reefer.

José Andrés: Another great book, Corby, 1824, probably the first American, well, kind of Southern cook book even though the *Joy of Cooking* you could argue is the same. Sorry, I'm mixing. This is 1824; Irma Rombauer is 1931. So this was the first American Southern cookbook, and this one is called the *Virginia Housewife*. The *Virginia Housewife*, wrote by a woman called Mary Randolph. We could almost argue that American cooking become what it is today thanks to women that took the time to write these amazing books.

Corby Kummer: Not almost. You can.

- José Andrés: Well. Thanks to women. Like always. Obviously it still is the time that women were very much holding the culinary traditions of her country. This has happened in many, many civilizations, in many countries.
- Corby Kummer: This is a wonderful, readable book and a wonderful edition by Karen Hess that you can still buy that she annotated, and she shows the Spanish influence of it. And there's a restaurant in Boston that's a Southern restaurant. It has two bathrooms; and one is papered with this book and the other is papered with *Mastering the Art of French Cooking* because they consider these the two most influential books in America. It's a great book.
- José Andrés: So through the exhibition you are going to see many of the amazing things that happened in America in part thanks to its presidents, in part thanks to its Congress, its Senate, its people, its explorers. But I do believe America has been a country that over the last years always developed some of the most amazing inventions. This one very much: 1805 by Oliver Evans, which become the first refrigeration, if you want to call it. Thanks to this refrigeration, the world changed forever. But those are important moments that didn't happen anywhere else but in America. It's very funny because he kind of developed this in 1805. You could argue that refrigeration will be the most amazing way to maintain food fresh for long periods of times. It was only four years later that the man in France, Nicolas Appert, discover canning. Canning? So in Europe we discover canning thanks to Napoleon Bonaparte...
- Corby Kummer: It was to feed Napoleon's armies.
- José Andrés: ...thanks to Napoleon Bonaparte, that gave 10,000 francs to anyone that will come up with a way to feed the troops. In America four years before we already kind of discover refrigeration. Canning you could argue is a very ancient method compared to refrigeration, but somehow here we were already four years ahead of what was happening in Europe. And this to me is just food for thought. You know one of my favorite machines that was invented in America? The cotton candy machine.
[Laughter]
- Corby Kummer: Now he's really showing himself to be Spanish. This has really taken off in Spain, the cotton candy machine.
- José Andrés: And between you and me, why? Because people tell me, "cotton candy is junk food, José. Why are you supporting junk food?" Junk food why? And the person who's telling me it's junk food, at the same time he's grabbing sugar and putting sugar on top of your coffee. So is your coffee junk food now? He say, "no." But the cotton candy yes? "Yes."

- Corby Kummer: You know there's a poster upstairs of all the different food groups in the 1940s with butter as its own food group. Really? It's true, you can go up and look at it. There should have been a food group for cotton candy.
- José Andrés: Yeah. But it's the one that is the big round? The big circle?
- Corby Kummer: Yeah.
- José Andrés: But the best group is the number eight group: and then anything else. [Laughter] Which is fascinating. Like, if you don't know what you're eating, don't worry, it's good too.
- Corby Kummer: You can see the influence of industry. They didn't want to offend anybody when they wrote that.
- José Andrés: So the cotton candy to me is fascinating. It use the most amazing form of caramelization ever invented by man. And if I show you what we do with cotton candy now, you will be fascinated. If you get a big quantity of cotton candy and you put it between two papers and you get a rolling pin and you roll over, you have a beautiful paper of sugar. That then you can do an envelope, that then you can get two slices of white truffles and put it inside.
- Corby Kummer: Do you do that?
- José Andrés: And I bring you the – this is a dish from [unintelligible] – and I bring you the envelope, and you get this beautiful envelope of cotton candy.
- Corby Kummer: But you've brought back a memory of Bazaar, which is your Los Angeles restaurant...
- José Andrés: Cotton candy foie gras.
- Corby Kummer: ...and you've got some fascinating cotton candy stuff there.
- José Andrés: So the inventions to me are fascinating. Take a look at this. Half hour ago to one hour ago, I was eating Brunswick stew. How many of you had Brunswick stew? Wow.
- Corby Kummer: That's pretty impressive.
- José Andrés: Hey. It was an invention from Virginia. We're an hour away.
- Corby Kummer: Sorry. Okay, that's really impressive.
- José Andrés: You think everything was invented in Boston?

- Corby Kummer: Everything was invented in Boston, except Brunswick stew.
- José Andrés: So, it's funny because I'm discovering that I've been asking a lot of people and is more people that have bad memories of Brunswick stew than good memories. And I don't know if you agree but that's my experience. I ask, "Oh, and you had a great time?" "No, it was the only thing available." I love that because to me it's a challenge. That's the history of America, and that means that there we have to be bringing a Brunswick stew up to a new level.
- Corby Kummer: But you were just talking about Nicolas Appert, so you were saying you found a decent Brunswick stew. And what was it in?
- José Andrés: Hold on. Was ... I don't remember the brand. This was made in big quantities; this was ... you can buy the can. It was okay, because I was expecting a lot worse. But to me it's very fascinating when you start talking about the history of the Brunswick stew, and we found many dates that seems was ... of the creation, but the date everyone more or less agrees was on 1828, was really in Brunswick County, in Virginia. And very much, politics were involved in the making of the Brunswick stew. Today the recipes I find – we find – will be with chicken, mainly, maybe some people with beef. But the original recipes will be more with squirrels.
- Corby Kummer: Okay, so it tastes like chicken, right?
- José Andrés: Like rabbit.
- Corby Kummer: And what are you going to use?
- José Andrés: Well, I mean the first thing was telling all my people: is any squirrel farm out there?
- Corby Kummer: It wouldn't be legal for him to serve otherwise.
- José Andrés: I'm not going to lie to you, but I felt very strange asking for that. I feel almost guilty, because I like squirrels. No, when they're in the trees I mean. But the truth is that it's very fascinating to see when you read, right, that today many of us will say "Oof!" But not too long ago that was the way our ancestors, the people that made this country what it is today, is the way they were eating it, right. And to me it's great to have this association with Mr. Andrew Jackson, our president, in a political rally, and that was being served and still is a tradition, being served today. So at the same time we talk about the Brunswick stew, to me it's even more fascinating the story of the burgoo. Burgoo? Anyone ate burgoo? One? Two?
- Corby Kummer: And what's it supposed to have?
- José Andrés: Can you spell it? Can you spell it for me?

Corby Kummer: B-U-R-G-O-O.

José Andrés: How many of you had burgoo? How many of you are from Kentucky? Do you make burgoo, madam?

Audience Member: No, I only had it at the Keeneland racetrack.

José Andrés: The Keeneland? What? Hold on.

Corby Kummer: And what's... and what's... and – Keeneland racetrack – and what's the meat they use?

Audience Member: [Inaudible]

Corby Kummer: Because they're supposed to use possum.

Audience: No.

José Andrés: That was one of them.

Corby Kummer: Oh, yeah.

José Andrés: But many people will disagree with you.

Corby Kummer: But I went to a lecture at the Southern Food Ways Alliance in which we heard that possum was a – now it's just thought of as roadkill and very low class – it was an aristocratic food in the South.

José Andrés: Huh.

Corby Kummer: In the early 1800s. I can find you that paper.

José Andrés: The information we have that this was a chef called Gus Jaubert, a Frenchman. I mean they are good people too. [Laughter]

Corby Kummer: Big of you.

José Andrés: They came after us, but... And he was serving that dish to General John Hunt Morgan, and it seems that the name burgoo came because this Frenchman had a very difficult accent. Like a mix of Jacques Pépin and myself 20 years ago. [Laughter]

Corby Kummer: That's some accent.

José Andrés: So it seems that the original recipe of this gentleman, of this French chef, was with blackbirds. Where it seemed were fairly available, they were easily hunt, and the stew – the burgoo – what it seems was the recipe he was serving to the general,

were with blackbirds. But for that we don't have a printed recipe. Is this kind of things that they pass, people... person to person.

Which this tells me, you know the story of why we are calling it America Eats, the restaurant? The Works Progress Administration – right? – created during the Depression to make sure that every single... What we call WPA, Works Progress Administration, that become at some point in time Works Projects Administration – they changed the meaning of the “P” – they hire many of the great writers of America and the great artists of America, correct? One of my favorite American writers, Mr. John Steinbeck. One of the first books I read was *The Bell*, which I fell in love with that man. *The Grapes of Wrath* was written, paid by the Works Progress Administration. So one of his best novels was written, supported by the American government. Any Republican here will be unhappy, I know. I hear you.

But I'm saying this because we think the WPA, the Works Progress Administration, was created what is called America Eats. And America Eats was a soup program of WPA where it sent hundreds and hundreds of writers every corner of America to document what America was eating during the '30s, during 1930s. And if you're interested, I recommend you to buy the book of... the book that was published that was all these documents like – they are in the Library of the Congress, there's many boxes – and a book was published with some of the best pieces. I always forget the name. *The Home for a Younger... Home for a Younger Land?* Of our friend Kurlansky?

Corby Kummer: Oh, Mark Kurlansky?

José Andrés: Mark Kurlansky. He published *Home for... Foods of a Younger Land*. Thank you. *Foods of a Younger Land*, of Mark Kurlansky, which is pieces of those essays of writers that only told us what America was eating in the '30s.

Corby Kummer: And also the New York and Chicago WPA guidebooks are wonderful, and they have notes about food that was eaten in restaurants. And speaking of food in restaurants in Washington, we have to open this to Q&A! You've just been too interesting. So...

José Andrés: We take questions?

Corby Kummer: We take questions. You said you wanted questions.

José Andrés: We're in Washington. We don't take questions! [Laughter and applause]

Corby Kummer: I think you're in Washington and you pretend you're answering the questions –

José Andrés: You Boston liberals!

- Corby Kummer: --and you say whatever you want. If anyone wants...
- José Andrés: Congress is around the corner!
- Corby Kummer: If anyone wants to ask questions you have to line up at the mic so that this can be recorded. But I want you to talk a little about the menu at America Eats. And I just had a jambalaya, so I've got to tell you that I had a dish that was... you know it's going to live in my memory because it had Carolina rice, it was grown here, it wasn't overcooked which came as a complete shock to me because that doesn't seem authentic. But I will also say, to be fair to Mary Randolph and the *Virginia Housewife* – oh good, we have this up right now – she calls for undercooking everything, including asparagus. She says you should be hauled to prison if you overcook asparagus. It's a very sophisticated cookbook. But José was saying that the big difference in his jambalaya is going to be not only subtlety and authenticity of spicing but good ingredients and...
- José Andrés: We're going to cook it per order.
- Corby Kummer: Not the day before.
- José Andrés: Correct. So here I have a photo of jambalaya. There's many theories of jambalaya, obviously, but the one we're going to be trying just to do is honoring the flavors of the South, the flavors and the influences that the South had. Obviously many people participated, many different people: was French influence; was Spanish influence; obviously Afro-American influence. This is probably one of those genuine dishes where the melting pot show up better than any other dish in America. So to me I become fascinated with jambalaya because obviously in Spain we have a love for rice dishes and for paella. And to me to see always, since the first time I came to America as a sailor – I landed in Pensacola, and I had time to be going north and south and east and west, and then many times I went back – jambalaya is the dish I was most fascinated by, because was like, man, these people are like me!
- Corby Kummer: And was the rice always overcooked?
- José Andrés: Different than the way we would cook it in Spain today.
- Corby Kummer: How diplomatic. It was different.
- José Andrés: I would say different. But nonetheless that's a dish that to me tells me how fascinating America is when you see the melting pot that it has become. But that's why I told you at the beginning, the melting pot that America has become is a blessing, but at the same time creates so much fog that when you ask yourself, okay, what American cooking is? You are like, well, the other day I had a great guacamole. [Laughter] Well.

- Corby Kummer: Do you want to tell the story about the 10 chefs?
- José Andrés: No. [Laughter] No. But the truth is that... I'm gonna give you an example. In Spain today, we have a dish which is a stew, right? Let's say, in Madrid. Cocido madrileño. It's a beautiful stew that has different parts of pork, right?
- Corby Kummer: Was it a Madrid dish? What did you say?
- José Andrés: Yeah. Chickpeas and potatoes and cabbage. And it's funny because this is a dish that had some Jewish influence, some Arab influence – even with the pork, believe me – and what's happened is that we had a lot of immigration over the last 10 years, over the last 25 years, right? And one day in my TV show I said, 50 years from now, the traditional cocido Madrid-style will be with yucca and garnished with mango. And next day everyone was sending letters, writing to the editor of the TV station: "You have to fire this chef, he's a revolutionary." And we always forget that the melting pot precisely means that. That we like it or we don't, cooking is about time. It's like the delta. You have the river bringing down, always the best of the upper river, creating an amazing delta which is the most fertile soil anywhere in the world.
- Corby Kummer: But like a real chef, he... José is going to make sure that it tastes good to him, to José. And there he was tasting the jambalaya at Café Atlántico getting ready for the America Eats Tavern – I think it's going to be called – and there was a cook standing by the table, we were all talking merrily, she had her eyes like a bird hovering just at José, looking for every bite he was taking because you're going to play with it and you're going to refine it and you're going to change it because you want everything to taste in a way that you think is good. And that is also part of what makes American cuisine.
- José Andrés: Take a look at that photo. You remember we were talking about the shrimp with grapefruit? Irma Rombauer? That's it. So...
- Corby Kummer: And I don't think Irma Rombauer made it look like that. [Laughter] Now 1931, it was a day before glitzy food photography, but still.
- José Andrés: But you will be fascinated. I didn't... we didn't change anything. It's exactly as the way the recipe is printed. Believe me I cannot tell you the same about the other recipes.
- Corby Kummer: That's not the attitude you're taking...
- José Andrés: Especially the presidential recipes. Some of them are tough. With all due respect to the president, was more the person that wrote the recipe that was wrong on the quantities. But this why I'm very, very proud. Because this to me is one of the ideas that I want to share with you in the direction we want to be going. If I have any,

ahem, they think they are the best of the world Europeans, with their ways, and I show them that dish, and I show them the first edition, and I show them the book, and I tell them about when the oranges and the grapefruits came to America, and what's the story behind, and how the grapefruits came to Texas, and I explain the meaning of Irma Rombauer in a particular moment in history, and I show them that dish, they cannot take American cooking not seriously any more. We start loving every single recipe from the past and refining them and bringing them forward and elevating their status, then no one is going to argue with me that American cooking is not here to be compared to the best cooking and the best countries in the world. Period.

Corby Kummer: So this means that you're going to be there every night at every table explaining this. But actually, and I'm going to...

José Andrés: I will.

Corby Kummer: I want to wrap up 'cause people want to meet you and have you sign their book. But...

José Andrés: You have to take a train or plane?

Corby Kummer: I have to take a plane. Yes, yes.

José Andrés: People of Boston never sleep away from their land. [Laughter]

Corby Kummer: We lose our citizenship. But you're vision of American food is a lot like the vision you've taken at your other restaurants in Washington, which is to go with sourcing, first of all. You're very carefully sourcing your food. And the respect that you have for our food is so much greater than the respect a lot of us have for our food. So the excitement is going to be able to rediscover Irma Rombauer, have jambalaya made through his eyes and tasted and run through José's palate, which I think is going to be an extraordinary experience. And you said something wonderful at the beginning, which is: the country has been a history of immigrants trying to hold on to their experience while adjusting to their new country. And I think you've done that in a brilliant and innovative way that is also very much honoring the tradition of America and how America eats. So I celebrate that and invite you all to celebrate it at the America Eats Tavern upstairs at Uncle Sam and by of course buying José's book and having him sign it.

José Andrés: No, don't, don't. Don't.

Corby Kummer: Just come and talk to José and read this book. It's a wonderfully entertaining and informative book.

- José Andrés: And the recipe book of the exhibition is going to be coming very soon fresh out of the print house and I can tell you they've done an amazing job putting together many of the great recipes of the presidents and many other the people. So the recipe book that comes with the exhibition, it's unbelievable.
- Corby Kummer: This is new news. I'm very excited to hear that.
- José Andrés: Yeah, brand new; it's coming soon, yeah.
- Corby Kummer: Okay, so we've all got many things to look forward to, but I'm looking forward to the America Eats Tavern opening July 4 right up the street.
- José Andrés: So guys, thank you for coming tonight. I hope you will keep supporting not only the exhibition and not only the other round tables that are going to be happening in this theater, in the weeks and months to come. We hope to see more of you here. But I want you to take... I want you to go home with the idea that food is important, that if the National Archives is dedicating six months and their beautiful space to talk about the meaning of food through government, through history, I believe we are in this amazing moment in the 21st century where we, all together, we have to, we have to start seeing the power of food in who we are, at every single level and that what we are doing in America Eats is not my restaurant, is not the restaurant of my people. It's a restaurant that I'm inviting everyone to collaborate with recipes, with ideas, with memories, with old books, with first editions, with the stories that you have, that maybe we don't know. I'm almost telling everyone this restaurant is not my restaurant. This is almost a six-month tribute that I want to do to the country that gave me home for the last 20 years of my life. And the only little thing I can do to kind of pay back everything America has given me is almost to tell. I only want to help to put the history of America through the lens of my brain with the help of everyone and elevate the meaning of American cooking because it is the right thing to do today, for the new generations that are going to be coming behind, and to gain even the respectability that I believe we don't have overseas when we talk about American cooking, once and for all. American cooking is here to stay, and it's going to be here to take over the 21st century. And I thank you very much for...
- Corby Kummer: José is teaching us to be American. Thank you for the lessons in citizenship.
- [Applause]