

LIFE ON A PLATE

SEASON 4, EPISODE 7: Reggie Yates

SPEAKERS

Reggie Yates, Alison, Yasmin Khan

Yasmin Khan

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Hi, I'm Yasmin Khan and you're listening to Life on a Plate, the podcast from Waitrose.

Throughout the season my co-host, Alison Oakervee and I, are going to be talking to a range of fantastic guests from many walks of life and asking them to share their stories through the food memories, dishes and ingredients that mean the most to them.

Alison

Hi, Yasmin. How are you?

Yasmin

I'm good. Thanks, Alison. How are you?

Alison

I'm alright, thank you. What have you been up to? Have you been eating or doing anything fun?

Yasmin

I have. I am currently up to my eyeballs in baked sweet pastries because it's Thanksgiving today, which is one of my favourite food holidays. And I love a pumpkin pie, a pecan pie, a sweet potato pie. Basically, the kitchen is filled with all these warming spices like nutmeg and ginger and cinnamon and all spice. And I love Thanksgiving. I love the food. But it also feels like it's basically a little warm up for Christmas.

Alison 02:24

I love baking too. But I also really love exploring what's on the shelves this time of year and all the Christmas lines are in branch at the moment. And there's some great Christmas treats that we, as a family, are slowly working our way through.

Yasmin

What have you been eating then?

Alison

We recently discovered the new cherry and almond stollen bites and they're just that perfect slice to have with a cup of tea or after dinner.

Yasmin

I'll tell you what, the Northern Europeans, like the Germans, they just have some of the best, sweet Christmas treats, I think. I love stolen and I really love lebkuchen too, which are these lovely, kind of, ginger bread biscuits. So, I kind of always get myself a pack of those.

Alison

They're lovely. I mean, we've got recipes online for that, but we also sell them as a little selection box too. So you can make them or just buy them.

Yasmin

I did not know that actually. I'm going to add that to my weekly shop.

Alison

Have a treat. So you've got something to nibble on while you're watching telly.

Yasmin

Exactly. It's that time of year isn't it? I have spent a lot of this week curled up in front of the telly which is pretty appropriate for this week's guest actually, because we've got a bit of a TV star joining us today.

Alison

We have, he's a presenter, a writer, a broadcaster – Reggie Yates. Now Reggie is only 38 but he's already been working in the public eye for three decades. So we had so much to talk about.

Yasmin

We certainly did. Now, Reggie Yates began his career as a child actor, appearing in shows like Desmond's and Grange Hill, and he's worked as a presenter, a voice actor, and a DJ on Freck FM pirate radio as well as, of course for many years, Radio One. He's also now a highly respected documentary maker and his work includes a series *Reggie Yates the insider*, which he filmed in places such as a refugee camp in Iraq, a Texan jail, kind of really going into some hard hitting issues.

Alison

Wow, what a body of work.

Yasmin

It really is, isn't it? And it doesn't stop there because he's also a filmmaker with work including last year's film, *Make me Famous*. And his latest project, a full length comedy feature called *Pirates*, which is out at the end of November and celebrates the UK garage music scene at the turn of the millennium.

Alison

He was a wonderful person to interview, really down to earth and very ready to talk about authenticity and finding his own voice.

Yasmin

He really was. I absolutely loved this chat. It's been one of my favourites of the whole season. So here he is, our conversation with Reggie Yates.

Thank you so much for joining us, Reggie on *Life on a Plate*. There's so much to talk to you about today but we're going to try and cover the key exciting things that are going on right now for you, one of which, actually, is your new film your debut as a feature writer for a film. And I tell you what you've actually made my week this week, because I watched the trailer. And then yesterday, I went for a walk. And like, I thought there's got to be a playlist associated with this because I also was a big garage head at the you know, around that time, I'm a couple years older than you. And just even the trailer of the film has so much energy. So why don't you tell us what *Pirates* is all about?

Reggie Yates

Well, thank you for putting a big silly smile on my face because the *Pirates* playlist is a ton of UK garage tunes that are essentially Seminole, and I made the playlists after writing the script so in the early stages of production, I shared that playlist with the crew, with the cast, with the production. And everybody was walking around singing Miss Dynamite records. So it really set things up beautifully. So for those of you that don't know, who are listening, *Pirates*, as we said, is out November 26, it is my first film as a writer/director and I'm very excited about it. And it's a film about, well we're essentially calling the world's shortest road movie. It's about three boys, at 18 years old, driving from North London to South London on New Year's Eve 1999 in a yellow Polo 205 attempting to get into the massive UK garage club night *Twice as Nice*. And that's essentially it. It's a comedy drama that's coming of age about friendship, and about love. And the backdrop, given the time period, is UK garage music and all the trappings of that. And the beautiful thing about it is that in a weird way, it's almost like a love letter to London in a time capsule for an era and a subculture that hasn't really been highlighted. So I'm just really excited to share it with a generation of kids that didn't grow up around that music, including my cast, which is hilarious. And there's something really special about being the first person to really shine a light on a subculture that was huge in your formative years.

Yasmin

No, it was really great. And the other part of the trailer that really cracked me up actually was a little joke that you had in about plantain and plantin, which again, it just really reminded me of two friends of mine having this argument like years ago. So for people who don't know what this debate is about, Can you fill us in Reggie?

Reggie Yates

Yeah, well, it kind of depends on where you are from and where you are in the world, really. The debate is ongoing in terms of how to pronounce plantainos, plantain or plantin or whatever else you want to call it. Basically, that sweet banana that so many of us have cooked over the years or grown up around or heard about. It's forever been a debate as to how to actually pronounce it. And particularly as a young kid raised by West African parents in London, you know, we pronounce it plantain. Whereas the massive Caribbean contingent in the city that I'm from referred to it as plantin, and so as somebody who frequents the Caribbean restaurants, it kind of made sense to throw it into the film. And there was

a scene in the movie where our three characters go to a Caribbean takeout and deal with an amalgamation of all of the most difficult Caribbean takeaway practitioners, shall we say, who have made my life difficult over the years. And they then get into an argument about the pronunciation. And it's yeah, it's a bit of like, it's a bit of an in joke, but at the same time, it's just straight up something that should put a smile on your face.

Alison

So you grew up in London, you grew up in North, you then moved South as a teenager. I'm in the South, Yasmin's in the North and so we've always got a little bit of a banter going on. So for me, kind of it's plantin because all the shops around here are Caribbean.

Reggie Yates

Alison, you'll know that this is an incredibly sensitive subject and one that I'm going to tread with caution. As a teenager, I did move and it was a massive culture shock because I mean, back then, more than now, I guess there was a massive, massive difference in the culture of North and South. And I don't claim either, but I know both. And it's weird because, you know, I came to South London in what was quite a formative time at 14 years old. So yeah, I've definitely grown on both sides of the water.

Alison

So you grew up in London, you had Ghanaian parents. What was food like at home? What did you eat growing up?

Reggie Yates

Well, first of all, I still have those Ghanaian parents and, you know, thankfully, they're still with us and they are and have always been people, and I guess it's the case for the entire family, food is a huge part of the culture, you know, not just being West African but being working class. The wins were very small. And by that, I mean, you know, having a clean house, having new clothes, or having a good meal was a huge win. And this isn't me playing my tiny violin. It's the reality, particularly growing up in council estates up and down the country. And that was certainly a huge element of my past. So a good meal was a big deal and food was something that was varied, predominantly West African, you know, I think thinking back a lot of that was due to the reality of it actually being affordable. So we lived as I was growing up in north London and would travel to - we walked because we didn't have a car, so we'd always walk down to Dalston market. And Ridley road had everything, so you'd buy everything from your yams, to your plantains, plantains and you'd buy your meat, your tinned tomatoes, you'd buy all of the stuff that you need to cook from. So it was a lot of rice and stews, and plantains, and yams really, that was what we would eat a lot of because it was affordable, you could cook bulk. So I started to cook from quite a young age because I was taught by Mum and helped by Mum in the kitchen or I would help mum in the kitchen along with my sister by cooking lots of stews on a Sunday night. And we would basically freeze those and then have them over the course of the week with rice.

Alison

Nice!

Reggie Yates

And that was very... if you ask any West African kid, if that was a constant in their house, they'll agree, you know, and the myth and the legend of the container was something that plays a big part of my past.

Yasmin

It's funny, right, because within that container thing really made me laugh because within Asian families it's the same. And there's like, again, like it's the same, it's a very like niche joke. But there's always like these jokes about the Vitalite margarine containers, that like if you were Asian in the 80s you basically had like your fridge was full of them, was there any equivalent?

Reggie Yates

Oh yeah, It's the vanilla ice cream tub and it was the most disappointing thing in the world to see a vanilla ice cream tub in the freezer and get excited and open it and find...

Yasmin

...it's a stew.

Reggie Yates

Yeah, find a tomato stew in there. It's just heartbreaking. You know open it and find Kontomire or some spinach stew or something. It's like no, this is what I came here for, I just wanted a scoop of vanilla. But um, yeah, we used to have, those were the containers that would be recycled. And occasionally somebody would spring for an Ikea set of 20 and then you'd be the flashy person and have all of your containers stolen whenever people came around the dinner.

Alison

What about now, do you do much cooking now?

Reggie Yates

Not as much as I'd like, I'm really more busy than I've ever been. And I know that that's an excuse that a lot of young men make but as a single guy who works a lot, you know, you're out all hours, not partying because I haven't got the energy for that but I'm working a hell of a lot. And because of that I'm either eating out or I'll take a dinner meeting just to save myself and kill two birds with one stone. Or you know, I get home and order in or just cook something really simple. So, I went pescatarian a few years ago, I went vegetarian quite a few years ago. And only in May of this year did I come back to fish. And the reason for that was because I was getting bored of cooking the same things. But also because I just wanted the ease of having something quick that I could cook that was nourishing and that wasn't just veg. So fish has suddenly made my life a lot easier by bringing that back into my diet. So you know I can talk about this as it's a food podcast, literally yesterday I whipped up a couple of bits of haddock actually just with a salad and it was just brilliant because it was like okay 25 minute, everything's done.

Alison

And there's not a lot you need ingredient wise but in terms of ingredients you've got fish, is there anything that you always have in your store cupboards as an emergency go-to?

Reggie Yates

Yeah, well it's not a food it's more of a seasoning because I was raised on West African food so I always have all-purpose seasoning in my fridge always.

Yasmin Khan

The Maggi one

Reggie Yates

The magic cubes, yeah, but more the all purpose jar in the package, all purpose Raja that's me, I'm a Raja boy so I have every kind of Raja from your pal garlics to masala to whatever, I have it all in the cupboard. I was raised on flavour, I've got no choice. If it's not seasoned I'm not interested. You know when people just say that salt and pepper is a seasoning I find myself having to keep my mouth closed because there's so much more out there in terms of the realm of how you season a meal or whatever. One of my favourite quick and easy things to cook that I sometimes have in the evening even though that sacrilege is a Shakshuka because it's super easy and so tasty and flavourful. But it's you know, it's good for you.

Yasmin

It really is! I love a good Shakshuka, I just love that combination of like tomatoes and eggs and peppers. But you know Reggie, it isn't sacrilegious at all because you know, when I was in Palestine, you know my photographer would make us the most delicious Shakshuka for dinner. And it's just perfect because it's just so quick and easy to whip up.

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Stepping out of the kitchen, Reggie, one of the things that I find really striking about your work is just how prolific you've been. I mean, I'm pretty much the same age as you and I feel like you've been like a presence on screens and radio, and, you know, short films for pretty much the whole of my life, right? So like, as a kid, as like a child actor, you know, I obviously really remember you from like, Top of the Pops or like Grange Hill as well actually. And then, you know, BBC Radio One, and then like the brilliant pivot you did into documentary making, and then you know, just even the last few years what you've been doing, you know, whether it's kind of new businesses or new food enterprises. So I mean, I just got tired reading all of that out just now. So what is the Reggie Yates secret to creativity and productivity? What is it? What gives you the juice?

Reggie Yates

That's very kind and I apologise for haunting your entire life. It's a very strange position to be in when, and I'm sure you've interviewed a lot of people that have had long careers. But for me, the thing that people say to me on the street all the time is I grew up with you, which is something that I've grown to love and something that I recognise, the more time goes on how unique that is to have that level of a relationship with your audience. And I'm incredibly thankful for it because, as you've said, I've literally been the same age as a lot of my audiences I've grown up, because my work and my tastes have grown and changed as I've grown and changed. And thankfully, there's been an audience of people that have been on that journey with me. And because of the nature of some of the work that I've done, particularly children's television, the really interesting thing about that was people a decade younger than me, have come on that journey also, because I was talking, that sounds terrible, I was talking down to them as a teenager, talking to children who were sat there in their PJs on Sunday mornings watching me host children's television, linking between cartoons and whatnot. So there's two generations of people that I've grown up with. And then weirdly, by moving into documentaries, I started

to catch their parents as well. And by making documentaries for channels, like BBC One, as opposed to BBC Three, which I've done both of, you suddenly find this new audience. And I found that my parents age started watching me and enjoying my work. So in terms of being prolific, I wouldn't say it's prolific. I think it's just the understandable and expected amount for somebody who just worked hard. But because we're talking about three decades, amalgamated, it feels like a lot more than it probably should be.

Yasmin

I'm going to interject that. I think that is a very generous explanation, because so many people work very hard for three decades, but very few people do the kind of jumps that you've managed to do across different genres. So I think you need to give yourself a bit more credit for that. Because that is very unique.

Reggie Yates

Generally, that's very kind. I think if I'm going to be really transparent about it, I think a lot of it has come from never really wanting to settle and also moving when I feel as though I'm no longer learning. That has been a big thing for me to continue to learn and to continue to push myself. But more importantly, I think as I've got older, the desire to express myself has become more and more important for me. It's grown in its importance. It's grown in its need within me. And the way that I've been able to express myself has been by pivoting as you put it and going from children's television where the expression of self has come in making jokes or trying to be funny. And that was the way that I would find a bit of me in what was a script that was quite rigid. And then in moving into entertaining it was more of a similar thing. But in documentary, there is no script and the beautiful thing I found in factual filmmaking was exactly that; I had to be grounded in the facts of not only the situation, but also who I am, and also who I was becoming on screen. So those pivots and those moments of change have come from me desperately needing to express myself, and doing it through the work through factual filmmaking, where I tackle subject matter, that speaks to my interests, or the things that I care about. And now drama, as a writer, and director, being able to write about the realities of young people growing up with reality television and fame, and suicide being such a huge talking point, particularly for young men, you know, I wrote a drama pertaining to all of those things that made me famous. And now we're talking about representation. And also, you know, what it actually means to be a young man of colour growing up in London, in the inner city, but not speaking to the more commonly used narrative, you know, it's not everybody that is escaping the gang or juggling the knife crime issue, which are all very real things. But for me with *Pirates*, I really wanted to lean into the joy that I experienced, because that is and continues to be a huge part of my life. And I have always lived in and continue to live in London. And yes, there are some sad and difficult things about this city. But there's also so much joy here.

Yasmin

Well, I think that's just so important, isn't it, I think, for all communities of colour, having stories that kind of uplift and tell our narratives from a very, you know, different spate to how like, it's normally presented in like, you know, the media in, you know, mainstream media. And what really struck me from what you just said, but also, I think, just from having seen and watched your journey is it kind of feels that you that you've been really, kind of, also like searching for your voice and wanting to like find spaces where you can be like, *'Look, I don't want to be presenting for other things, I want to be me. You know, Reggie Yates, talking about the issues that matter to me.'* Does that resonate with you? And like, do you feel, you know, the state you're at now, like, have you been able to find your voice?

Reggie Yates

More than you know!

Yes, that definitely resonates with me in a lot of ways. I remember, earlier on in my career, I was constantly being told, '*We don't really understand you, we don't get you, we don't really get what you're trying to say, like where you're coming from.*' And, you know, when somebody who's been working with you for 20 years, says that, you recognise that maybe it's not you, maybe it's them, maybe it's the industry, maybe it's the business, not actually giving you the forum to speak in the way in which you can be transparent. Maybe it's the industry, not giving you the wiggle room to be your true self. And if I'm gonna be honest, I think over time, that allowance of me owning my own narrative has increased. And now it's at the point where I'm not actually asking permission for people to give me the room to be me, it's either you work with me, or you know, you work with somebody else. And you work with me in the most holistic sense, because the lane that I operate in as a writer and director today, or a documentary filmmaker, if you are going to work with me, you're buying into my perspective, and that is the thing that steers a narrative, as opposed to what people might project onto me, which has definitely been the case in the past.

Yasmin

Yeah, no, all power to you. Because I think we receive the fruits of that labour, actually, through the work that you create. It kind of leads me on to the other thing I wanted to talk to you about, actually, because I mean, you've alluded to it a few times in this conversation already, you know, especially I think, in your documentary making, you know, you're a black working class voice in a genre, which, you know, certainly in broadcast and radio is predominantly been dominated by kind of white middle class voices. I wanted to ask, you know, what advice do you have for young people from communities of colour, who are trying to break into genres, where they aren't traditionally represented? And like, what enabled you to kind of have the confidence and go, you know, what, no one's doing this, but they need to, I'm going to do it.

Reggie Yates

I think it starts outside of the workplace. And I think it starts with self and knowing you're who you are, and being proud of where you've come from, and owning that quite early on. I owned my authenticity, to the point where I was very much adamant that I wouldn't do anything that asked me to change who I was to suit somebody else's narrative. And this goes back as early as children's television. You know, I remember being told that I was insane, for saying no to Blue Peter. At nineteen years old, and they called me in and it was like my agent at the time was like, Oh, this is a big meeting. It's really exciting. You're gonna go in and meet the person who runs children's television at the BBC. And you know, they've got a big ask for you. And I went and sat down with this person who sort of lording over the desk. So how do you feel about Blue Peter? And I was like, nah it's not for me. And he was like, what do you mean? I said, well, I never watched it growing up. So yeah, for me, it was always as a kid about finding a role where I could be me and I think for anybody that is trying to get into television, be that in the factual space, or in the dramatic space, the only way that you're going to have a point of difference is by being original. And there is only one you. So if you don't double down on your uniqueness, you just become part of the main age. It's interesting, you know, having spent 10 years on national radio, listening to radio now, and when you hear all of these voices, particularly on commercial radio, they're just interchangeable. And you know, I grew up in the era of Chris Evans, of Edith, and you know, all these different groups, Sarah Cox and all these different voices that had personality. And that's even before I get into pirate radio, and the voices from WAK to Choice to Freek FM, to Y2K, to all of these different stations, that were based on personalities, that were based on individuals from mainstream

radio right the way through to illegal pirate radio. So if you are trying to have a career today, I think the only way to do it is to double down on your uniqueness and individuality. And that is where you might actually get noticed.

Yasmin

Yeah, authenticity is key, isn't it, basically for all of this stuff, and not selling out or compromising? I love that Blue Peter story, because I think there is a, you know, with young creatives, there is sometimes this thought or process of just like, oh, I should just say yes to everything. But if stuff doesn't align with your values, or who you are, I'm a big believer of like, you just say no, and trust that the right thing will come along.

Alison

But that takes quite a lot of confidence and self-assurance to know who you are. And to say no to jobs.

Reggie Yates

It all depends on your perspective, I think. I just wasn't raised to be anything but me. I wouldn't say that, you know, I'm the most confident person in the world. Yes, I am confident otherwise I wouldn't do what I do. But I was never raised to pretend, I was never raised to fit in. I bumped into this teacher the other day, and she told me a story about when I was six. And we did show and tell and I completely had no idea and the minute she started saying I was like oh my god, that must be true, because I remember that item of clothing. So basically, there was a day when we were all asked to bring into class, something that we're really proud of kids were bringing in, you know, their grandad's watch, or a book that their mum gave them or their favourite toy, or whatever. And I came in with this kente waistcoat, and kente cloth is this traditional cloth of Ghana, where I'm from, where my family's from. And my mum got me one sewn as a waistcoat. And I used to always wear it. And because, you know, it's the cloth of royalty, it's the cloth of tradition, it's the cloth of occasion, I came in wearing this and told this story about the importance of this cloth, and then did like a traditional dance. But that's how I was raised. It was like, this is who you are, this is what you should be proud of, this is where you're from. And it was normalised to be really invested in differences. And yeah, for me, it's never been about confidence. It's just been about sense of self.

Yasmin

Going back to your kind of documentary work, which I think of all the things that I've enjoyed you doing is probably, you know, what I've obviously watched the most in the last decade. And I think, you know, it's probably an understatement to say you put yourself in some pretty, you know, daring and challenging situations, right? Whether it's like, meeting like the KKK, or I was just talking about that Russia episode with a mate last night, or, you know, the US prison or kind of going to refugee camps in Iraq. I mean, the list is kind of endless. I'm someone that does that kind of work on a much smaller scale. And so I was kind of curious, in terms of, you know, how affecting you find some of these processes and some of the interviews. And are there any kind of particular stories that stand out in your long realm of documentary making that you feel, yeah, that was one of the most moving experiences?

Reggie Yates

There have been so many moments that will stay with me for the rest of my life. And I think one of the best and most impactful moments came from recognising that I was attacking my documentaries in the wrong way because I made over 14, but they're not all great. They're not all good to be honest with you. Some of them are rubbish. And I think that that's really important in terms of the growth of it all. And to

begin with, I was definitely being led, I was definitely being guided and being sort of put in situations that, quote unquote experienced producers thought was best. But my work in that field got a lot better the minute that I started producing and that I started to steer the narrative more not because I know everything and not because I'm a genius. But because the film's became more authentic when the journey was owned by me, I think the audience could feel that, they could feel that what I've just watched wasn't planned, what I've just seen, is authentic. What I've just seen is him reacting in a very real way. And to answer your question, I made a documentary about a millionaire preacher. That's what we called it anyway, this guy in South Africa, who was essentially getting rich off of his congregation who were poor, black people. And I was disgusted by this guy before I'd even met him. I've made all of these judgments as to who he was and why he was doing this. And halfway through the film, he decided he didn't want to be involved anymore, and he pulled out. And the only reason that we finished the film, and the only reason that he got back on board was because my director, the guy called Sam Wilkinson, he pulled me to one side, he said, mate, it's not about you. This is about the story that we're trying to tell. And you are our vessel for this. And that sounds really grandiose. And I promise, it's not me trying to make out that I'm way more important than I actually am. But he was so right. It was only when I recognised that I have to put myself through these things to tell this story in the most authentic way, that I realised that I can't be getting personally offended. I can't be taking this stuff on as though it's a knock on my character. I need to get to the whys as to why this person is saying these horrible things to me, why this person is treating me in such a horrible way. The minute I get to the why, we get to some truth that will make this film excel. And that, for me, was a real lightbulb moment and it changed the way that I was making those documentaries.

Alison

I'd love to know a bit about another project, you've been working on *Blue Skies*. It's a company I know because we sell their products in some of our Waitrose shops. And I've written producer stories about them. But you've just become their creative director. Tell us about what that'll involve.

Reggie Yates

So yeah, *Blue Skies* are based in Ghana, the country that my mother and father were born in, and they produced fruit for decades now. It goes from farm to shelf within I think it's 24 to 48 hours, it's super quick because of that process. And because there's literally a customs officer on site at the factory, a community has literally been changed by the emergence of this business. And *Blue Skies* employs over 3000 people in a tiny area in Ghana. And as a result, the area has changed dramatically because of that. So I've now come on board off the back of *Blue Skies* creating from a product that they've had surplus for years. And that's coconuts, they've created a coconut-based dairy-free ice cream

Alison

Which is delicious, and comes in four different flavours?

Reggie Yates

It does come in a ton of flavours. And I'm not entirely sure what's out versus what I have in my freezer, because I'm fighting for samples on a regular basis. And there are some delicious flavours.

Alison

When I asked earlier, if there was anything always in your kitchen, it really is, *Blue Skies* ice cream is always in your freezer.

Reggie Yates

It is, it is. And I think the reason why, you know, this has made sense for me to come on board since a company that has existed as one thing and is now going into a new direction is the opportunity to have a voice for the product that feels authentic, that feels original is a huge part as to why it was a draw for me. Because I think the way in which you present a product can ultimately decide whether the product lives or dies. And in the early stages of *Blue Skies* before I came on board, the way in which it was presented didn't really match what I envisaged for it, the minute I was made aware of it. And we're just starting to see come through now some of the things that we've built around the product and how we want to present it to the world

Alison

Because you've actually gone and visited the town quite a few times and the schools that have grown up around the factory, haven't you?

Reggie Yates

Yes. So as we've said a million times, Ghana is a huge part of my upbringing, culturally, because that is where my parents were born. And I've been going back to Ghana since I was four years old. So that was a huge draw for me, that this, you know, business exists in Ghana and also employs people in Ghana. And also as a massive, massive draw in terms of my involvement *Blue Skies* have invested in over 120 community projects, one of which was a school and we actually visited one of those schools that has been paid for by *Blue Skies*. And it was just mind blowing that you know, people buying these fruit products and buying this dairy-free ice cream has essentially allowed an area to educate its young. And that has been a very important part of why I think that this product not only needs to be in people's fridges, but also you know, is making some real positive change. And, you know, one of the best things about it is that these farmers are being paid properly. And you know, a fair scoop for farmers is the messaging. That's what it is, you know, when you go to one of these farms, and you talk directly to these farmers who have been there for years, and they talk about the fact that they're able to look after their families because they're doing something that they love. It's just really amazing.

Alison

I think that brings us nicely onto Kitchen Grill. Tea or coffee?

Reggie Yates

Tea all day, I used to be a milk and two sugar boy. And then I realised like after eight cups a day or like basically drinking several cups, several cans of cola. So I took sugar out of my tea and got used to that. And then I recognised just how much dairy probably isn't something that I should be consuming off the back of brilliant conversation, and then switch to herbal and yeah, peppermint tea is my thing.

Alison

So no caffeine?

Reggie Yates

Well, I don't really have masses of caffeine in my diet, but I do drink coffee very occasionally. And it's the thing that launches me into a day when I need it so I try and only have the best kind of coffee when I can.

Alison

How about porridge or cereal?

Reggie Yates

Oh, cereal all day. Good Lord. I don't eat porridge. And the reason is hilarious. Actually, the reason I don't eat porridge is quite film related. So I grew up on Eddie Murphy movies. And, you name an Eddie Murphy movie I've seen it eight times and probably know all the words. And particularly that run that he had from 83 to about 89. Those movies like *Trading Places*, *Coming to America*, all of those movies I've seen over and over again, *Beverly Hills Cop*, etc. And there's a movie that often gets forgotten called *The Golden Child*, which is a film about this young, sort of, pure being that has these incredible magical powers. This kid gets kidnapped. Eddie Murphy is the chosen one who is selected to save this kid. And the entire time that this kid is in a cage by his kidnappers, they're trying to damage his purity by feeding him porridge that has blood in it. So that has forever put me off porridge. Rice pudding, porridge, anything that looks like that. I remember *The Golden Child*, I can't touch it!

Alison

Mash or chips?

Reggie Yates

Come on. That's a silly question, chips all day! How can you not love chips? I remember I was making a documentary in Kenya about a slum called Kibera. And I was living there and working there for about a week. And about four or five days in I was just so close to being broken. And it was a Sunday. And I just heard this crazy noise coming from the shack and I walked in and there was about 300- 400 people, nah, that's an exaggeration, maybe 150 people around a tiny TV watching the Manchester Derby and everyone was wearing football shirts. And I was like, are you kidding me? And there was a woman outside on the street frying potatoes, she was making chips.

Alison

Oh! I can smell them now.

Reggie Yates

And I bought this bag of chips from this lady. She put it in a plastic bag and I sat down with these guys in their Manchester United shirts and their Man City shirts and had chips and watched the football in this slum in Kenya and it was the best bag of chips I've ever had. And chips, just for me, just remind me of being a kid and like, that was one of the first things I was allowed to cook even though it's *the* most dangerous thing. And yeah, I got it right like because I'm such a connoisseur of a good chip and knew straight out the gate how to make a good chip without getting it wrong.

Alison

Do you have sauce with it? Or do you just have it neat?

Reggie Yates

Oh it depends how I'm feeling. You know, sometimes I'm just a salt and vinegar boy, sometimes need to mix it up and add some dipping sauce. But yeah, a good ketchup never hurts.

Alison

I think I know the answer to this, fried or poached?

Reggie Yates

fried I'm yeah, I'm disgusting. So yeah, I love fried.

Alison

It tastes so much nicer too if we're all honest. So parsley or coriander?

Reggie Yates

Coriander, man. Give me some explosive flavour all day, every day.

Alison

Chocolate or crisps?

Reggie Yates

Ooh, that's a tough one! I love chocolate but you can do so much with crisps. I'm going to say 50/50 I'm going to be a loser and save both. Because they are actually amazing together. If you have crisps and chocolate at the same time, your mind will be blown. Particularly if you go for like an executive crisp like a nice Kettle Chips balsamic vinegar and salt crisp with some chocolate.

Yasmin

So are you like literally having a bite of each?

Reggie Yates

Yeah, bit of both! A McCoy with a bit of Galaxy chocolate. And if you really want to step it up and be really middle class go Green & Blacks and a nice Kettle Chips.

Alison

We'll have to give that a go. Fruit or veg?

Reggie Yates

Ah that's difficult, I make a good roasted veg and I think if you have the right mix of veg like you throw in some parsnips and stuff it can be quite sweet. So I think roasted veg, maybe tips it for me over fruit.

Alison

Okay. Spicy or mild?

Reggie Yates

Spicy. Come on, nobody likes mild, mild people are rubbish!

Alison

Sofa supper or a meal out?

Reggie Yates

Meal out. Don't get me wrong, I'm quite, as I get older, I'm becoming much more of a homebody and my circle of friends is smaller than it's ever been and I love that! There was something really nice about going for dinner, you know, a sense of occasion of getting dressed up and meeting friends for something to eat. Or, you know, the variation of what going for dinner can look like, in a city like London is amazing. Because you can do everything from something quite cheap and cheerful and it's fun and

it's easy, right the way through to something super super bougie. So I love getting together with friends and going out for a meal.

Alison

And the final question, recipe or freestyle?

Reggie Yates

Oh, freestyle is great. So there's this Ghanian word that isn't really a word that my mother used to use all the time called *Pottaboom Shergun*, which is Twi, which means put it in a pot, pour it in the pot, and Mum used to sometimes, like at the end of the week when the cupboard was bare, I'd go, oh what are we having for dinner and she'd go *Pottaboom Shergun* I'm basically cooking what I've got in the cupboard. So if there's nothing in the pot, pour in a pot, so feel free to use that one when the cupboard's empty.

Alison

But they're often the best meals. You can never recreate them again, but they're always, or they usually are delicious. That's the Kitchen Grill. Thank you!

Yasmin

That's the Kitchen Grill and you have left us feeling hungry for so much stuff at the end of this episode, Reggie. Thank you so much for joining us on Life on a Plate. It's been a real pleasure talking to you. And I can't wait to see *Pirates* and have a scoop of that ice cream.

Reggie Yates

Thank you so much and genuinely I'm not saying this just because it's the nice thing to say but you guys are fantastic. I've really enjoying talking to you this morning so thank you for being so lovely.

Yasmin

You've been listening to Life on a Plate from Waitrose with me, Yasmin Khan. Thank you to my co-host, Alison Oakervee. And our guest, Reggie Yates. If you've enjoyed this conversation, you can find more like it by subscribing to Life on a Plate wherever you get your podcasts. And to learn more about the series, go visit waitrose.com/podcast