

**Episode Title:** Guy Fieri and the Flying Mustard Jar

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**Music: Tinfoil Swans Music begins**

**Kat Kinsman (VO):** Welcome to Tinfoil Swans, a podcast from Food & Wine where we're serving up inspiring, touching, hilarious, revealing conversations with some of the biggest names in the food and beverage world and — we hope — giving you plenty to savor even after the episode is over.

I'm your host Kat Kinsman, executive features editor at Food & Wine, and I'm eternally fascinated by how successful, creative people become, well, themselves. What are the moments, influences, missteps, pep talks, and decisions — big and small — that got them where they are today?

In our debut episode, I had the absolute joy of speaking with the one and only chef Guy Fieri. He's become a household name as a restaurateur, cookbook author, host of Diners, Drive-Ins, and Dives (a.k.a. Triple D.), Guy's Grocery Games, Tournament of Champions and more smash-hit shows on the Food Network.

In recent years, he's become almost as well known for his philanthropy, helping raise tens of millions of dollars for first responders and hospitality workers in need. He's such a cultural icon that people dress up like him for Halloween and bar crawls, and he even played himself in the film 80 For Brady.

But before all that, Guy was just a kid with big dreams and a Kool-Aid stand in a small town in California. I was so incredibly happy to get on a call with Guy to talk about how he hustled enough cash to send himself to high school in France. We talked about the thing Emeril Lagasse said that gave him chills, and his adventures as a flambé captain. Welcome to season one, episode one of Tinfoil Swans: Guy Fieri and the Flying Mustard Jar.

**Kat Kinsman:**

Oh my gosh. So you are actually technically my first guest on Tin Foil Swans.

**Guy Fieri:**

Great name, by the way.

**Kat Kinsman:**

Thank you very much. When I was coming up with these questions, I was thinking of this one in particular. And I realized I actually know the public answer about it for you. It's who were you when you were 10, but you're a person who there happens to be a story about who exactly you were when you were 10 and you starting a pretzel. But who was the you that thought to put those parts together?

**Guy Fieri:**

I come from very creative parents. My mom and dad are both just amazing people. They're self-made. My mom was a school teacher. My dad was a veteran, was in submarines for four years. And they came from Columbus, Ohio, where they had me and came to California. And my dad was always an entrepreneur. I mean, he could always do anything. And so they lived in Whittier, California and would travel north and every time they got some vacation time, and they found this little town called Ferndale, where I was raised. And they arrived in Ferndale in an Econoline van with a hyde of leather, 50 pounds of wax and I think \$50. So my parents were just always these people that made things happen. My dad built his own house. So that's just kind of the environment that I was raised in. And there was no such thing as it can't be done. There's no such thing as we can't make something happen. And so whatever I wanted to do, my parents were always really encouraging and really supportive of that. And that's just kinda how it all, that's how it all started. But, I was also a very outwardly kid. I was always involved with people. I mean, this little town didn't have a stoplight. We only had one cop, one car, and I would just roam the streets, ya know, up and down the town, new people all the time. And my parents, it was a funny joke that my, I can't believe I'm gonna tell you this, but I will tell you, the bakery would call and say, "Hey, you know, Guy's been down here. And this is like the fourth tourist that has come in here and bought him a cookie and the ice cream shop would call my parents and say, "Hey, you know, Guy's been in here and he just, he's, this is like the second time somebody's buying him ice cream." And this would go on and on. So my parents put a sign on my back that said, "Please don't feed me. I'm not eating my dinner when I go home. Please don't feed me."

**Kat Kinsman:**

Oh my God (laughs).

**Guy Fieri:**

They pinned it to the back of my shirt.

**Kat Kinsman:**

(laughs)

**Guy Fieri:** and I knew that I had this sign on my back. So I went and scraped it off against the telephone pole. And my mom caught me and the sign was gone. So she silkscreened it on the shirt.

**Kat Kinsman:**

Oh my God.

**Guy Fieri:**

Please don't feed me. And then I turned the shirt inside out. So she silkscreened the other side. It was just that kind of a life.

**Kat Kinsman:**

I'm just trying to imagine also, in my mind, how you got from just being this kid hanging around to convincing people to buy you ice cream. Have you just always had that thing where you've been able to connect?

**Guy Fieri:** I always would talk to people. And this town was known for its tourists. It's such an amazing town. It's an old Victorian village. I was just there yesterday, matter of fact, but it just was that kind of thing. I was always into business. I was always into making money. I was always into something. Like I had a Kool Aid stand before kids had Kool Aid stands. I mean, I was rocking the Kool Aid game until my dad caught me with a purple arm. He says, "Why is your arm purple?" I said, "'Cause I was making Kool Aid." He says, "You can't stir with a Kool Aid with your arm." He says, "Where's your stick?" I said, "My dog took it." He says, "That's it, you're out of Kool Aid business."

**Kat Kinsman:**(laughs)

**Guy Fieri:** We're not serving arm-stirred Kool Aid to these tourists. So then I would sell my toys. I'd set up a little stand and sell my toys. people would buy the toys and then take them into my parents' business and say, "Your kid just sold us his Tonka truck. Here's the truck back," but where I really started to get creative was, I went down to the appliance store. I mean, there's only 1,400 people in this town, but this little dairy town had all the amenities that a town needed. So we had an appliance source, Smitheens Galvini. So went down to Smitheens Galvini and got a refrigerator box. And I drugged the refrigerator box down to the town, this little square between my parents' business and, and actually they had two businesses at that time. And I cut a hole in it. I taped a stick underneath it and made a little window. And then I got my crayons and pens and stuff, and I drew candy store on it. And then I borrowed 50 cents from my dad and went over to the candy store and bought all the penny candy with

my 50 cents. And then I set up all the candy on the little shelf and I sat inside of it and sold the candy. And the tourists would come by and they'd give me 50 cents, now granted, this is 1975. You know, maybe, I'm six or seven years old. And I set themselves the candy. I made 20 bucks. And the candy store lady (laughs) which came over and said she wasn't gonna sell any more candy, and she was great. Her name was Trudy. But now, it was how it was. Man, I was just always in the mix. And food was always my thing. I would fake sick to stay home to cook. I found The Joy of Cooking. And I was like, "Wait a second." All the answers are here. Why doesn't everybody make this food?" I was bewildered by this whole thing. So I would just cook. And I remember the first time I cooked, started because of something that happened with my mom. I came around the corner and I said, "Oh my gosh, we're having chicken parmesan," 'cause we didn't eat a lot of meat. We were vegetarian for a long time. And my mom says, "No, Guy, we're having eggplant Parmesan." And I said, "Mom, why can't we just have chicken parmesan like the normal families?"

**Kat Kinsman:** Ooh.

**Guy Fieri:** She said, "Listen, Guy, if you don't like it, then you cook." And I said, "Okay." The next day, I went down to the grocery store, Valley Grocery. And saw John Maselli, the butcher. I said, "I wanna make dinner tonight, but I want meat. Can I get some meat?" So he gives me a couple of rib eyes, I think. And I said, "What do you serve with this?" And he said, "Spaghetti." So I went over and got spaghetti. I was nine, maybe eight. So I got spaghetti and I got spaghetti sauce and I got the steak, and I went home. I didn't have any idea how to do it, I just knew that spaghetti sauce and spaghetti and made it together eventually. So I cooked the spaghetti in the sauce from raw.

**Kat Kinsman:**

I bet that was good. Maybe dry. Little ...

**Guy Fieri:** It worked.

**Kat Kinsman:** (laughs)

**Guy Fieri:** But I cooked the steak. Only thing I knew about steak was that I love soy sauce. So it was butter and soy sauce. I sear the steak butter and soy sauce.

**Kat Kinsman:** Okay, that doesn't sound bad either.

**Guy Fieri:**

My parents come home, my dad comes walking in, my dad's tall, my dad's 6'2, 6'3, with cowboy boots, he was 6'8, but he comes walking and, "What are you do-?" I go, "Hey, hey, hey, hey, hey, hey, mom said I could." He looks at my mom and goes, she was, "Well, I didn't think it was taken for serious."

**Kat Kinsman:**

(laughs) Did they not know where their son was?

**Guy Fieri:**

I said, "Dinner's ready." So they sit down. My dad takes it, cuts in the steak, takes a bite, sets the fork and the knife down and looks over at me and I'm like, "Oh, I'm dead. I'm dead." And he said, "You know what, might be the best steak I've ever had in my life."

**Kat Kinsman:**

Oh.

**Guy Fieri:**

And I went, "What? Hang on a second, rewind. So you're saying if I cook, we get to have meat. If I cook, I don't have to do the dishes. (laughs) This is game on." And from that day forward, I mean, I was cooking all the time. And I had this love affair with food to such a point that that's what got me to France. I was an exchange student. We had exchange students when I was a kid. And I was eating all different types. I mean, I was eating sushi when I was six years old. My parents were into everything. I mean, we ate a just super eclectic menu.

**Guy Fieri:**

How's that for a run-on answer?

**Kat Kinsman:**

It's gorgeous. And it actually takes me exactly where I was hoping we would go with this because I'm wondering, when you're wanting this money and you're wanting this thing, what did you want it for? Did you want it to make your, to make your world big? What did you want the money for?

**Guy Fieri:**

My dad always told me to have money in my pocket. You gotta have money, you gotta be resourceful. My dad was really, I mean, the greatest coach in the world. But the truth of it was, it can open doors, it can make things happen. We weren't a rich family, but we were very rich in experiences. We had horses, we packed into the mountains. We'd go live in the mountains for 10 days with all we could bring is what we could pack on our horses. And you counted on catching fish to have dinner that kind of stuff. But I wanted to pay my own way. Like I paid my way through college. I paid my way to go to

France. I saved my money. I had my pretzel business. I saved all my money. So I'm 14 years old and I've got \$10,000 from selling pretzels at the fair and at the rodeo and all that kind of stuff. So knew that I wanted to be in charge. And that I had to manage it. And that's how I did it, so.

**Kat Kinsman:**

And money is freedom. I mean, money is escape and it's possibility to go and, and do what you wanted to, France. So I grew up on the other side of the Ohio River from you. I grew up in Kentucky. And I had a notion of what was fancy. And French was definitely in there. -What was your notion of what was fancy when you were that age? And did France figure into this?

**Guy Fieri:**

Well my mom was the host mother for the exchange program called EF and you couldn't go into the program unless you had three years of language. Well, in my town, they only taught Spanish. And you couldn't take Spanish until you were a junior or senior. So that was never gonna work. So we always had people coming to our house. I mean, my house was kind of like the soup kitchen. That's the way my house is now. I mean, I have friends that, any given night, somebody's over here for dinner. And my mom's aunt was at mass in DC. And the gentleman next to her was French and they started talking and he said he was going to California to sell corks. And she said, "Well my niece lives there in California, and you're gonna be there during Thanksgiving, you should go to their house for Thanksgiving dinner."

**Kat Kinsman:**

Wow.

**Guy Fieri:**

So that happened. This guy, Pierre Lacheau, shows up (laughs), comes to our house for dinner, this French guy, where I'm, and I'm sitting next to him and I'm like, "Hey, what's France like?" So he starts telling me and we started explaining like where foods come from and this whole thing. And so I keep in touch with him. And I hit him up, I said, "Hey, listen, I'd like to come to France. I'd like to go to school in France." And I was maybe 13. And I made a deal to my parents. I said, "Can I take conversational French at the junior college," when I was a sophomore. And my dad says, "If you can take the class and you could pass the B or better, you can go to France." So I took the junior college course at lunchtime while I was in high school and pass it with a B or better. Only reason I pass is because all the girls in the class thought it was cute that this little high school kid was there. And they helped me study and go through it. When I got done with the class, I got a B or better. I couldn't speak a word of French. I understood the concept of the language, but I didn't have a very good vocabulary. And I said that I wanted to go and my parents put me on the plane and I flew to France, bawled my eyes out. I was scared to death. Just turned 16, just had my driver's license, but you can't drive in France till you're 18. So I fly over, Pierre picks me up.-He has a buddy that runs a high school. And the guy was a big

pro-American, they fought with the Americans in the war. And there, I'm dropped off in a boarding house and go to high school and I can barely have a conversation with anybody in French. I bought a translation book at the airport of like a hundred most common phrases, and I carried that around and just fake it till I make it and went to high school and (laughs) and figured out how to speak French.

**Kat Kinsman:**

Oh my goodness. At that point, did you know that you were gonna be making your living in food? Is that something where you saw that and could imagine it? Or was that later?

**Guy Fieri:**

No, no, I didn't .. It did happen when I was in France. I did write to my dad and say, "I'm gonna be a chef. I'm gonna own restaurants." I said ... 'Cause I was eating food that was just blowing my mind. And it's not that I was eating French food like we think we know French food. French food there, they were organic before organic was organic. That's just what it was. You went to the farmers market, you bought your food every day for what you were going to cook. And I'm eating things like ... I got this ... There's no way this is the same steak we have in the United States. But I remember having chicken feet soup. And I'm sitting there eating the chicken feet soup and I'm like, "This is the greatest thing in the world (laughs)." Yea, I'm writing telling them the stuff that I'm eating and they're just losing their mind. Because school lunch, to have goat tongue for school lunch or lamb's tongue for school lunch was a normal thing. The best meals I had were school lunch. I was so excited. There was two meal periods, I'd eat one meal period and I come back and eat again. But you're feeding 1,500 kids at a time. The greatest food fight I've ever seen in my entire life happened in that. Oh my god.

**Kat Kinsman:**

Did you start this (laughs)?

**Guy Fieri:**

Right. So it's Mardi Gras.

**Kat Kinsman:**

Okay.

**Guy Fieri:**

And everybody's dressed up. And the vice principal of the school is a really mean guy. I mean, big dude. Just mean. I wouldn't like him. Well, he comes in and starts yelling at people about something and something and someone dings him in the back of the head with a piece of bread. And he flips out. And then he turns and he goes after it and tried to find out who did it. And then somebody else b- beans him. And all of a sudden, people just started laying into this guy. I mean, dunking the bread in water

and thump rifle it at him, just whap. Oh, he goes ballistic. Well, the next thing I know is it goes into full-on war. Tables are getting knocked over. People are commandeering the bread, soaking it in the water standing up holding up the hotel pans and rifling the bread at each other. People are throwing handfuls of green beans. I mean, it was just out of control. You think of 1,500 kids going full-on food fight. It was the coolest food fight I've ever seen in my whole life. And (laughs), I mean, it just destroyed. I don't think we got to eat in the dining hall for a week.

**Kat Kinsman:**

You're just like living animal house there.

**Guy Fieri:**

... My life has been animal house. Okay. It's the craziest stories, the things that I've lived through and what has gone on it has been, honestly, when it comes out in a book one day, I think I'm gonna write the book, publish it, and not release it until I'm dead 'cause I just think that there's too much stuff that's gone down that I don't wanna be around when people read it.

**Kat Kinsman:**

(laughs) Cannot be held accountable for it 'cause I was actually gonna ask if you're gonna do a memoir, and I just assume you will because I think the world could use this. And you're in this amazing thing. That's gonna be a hard crash landing once you come back to the States.

**Guy Fieri:** When I came back, it was the day that school, high school started, my senior year. I'm sitting at the dinner table with my dad. And he goes, "Yeah, you're not going back, are you?" I said, "I don't think so." He goes, "All right, well, go get a job. So ... And go to school, you gotta go to college." I said, "Okay." So I drove up to the college, I was only 17. And I drove up to the college. Well, I'd taken the class, I had taken the French class. So, when I signed up for the school, they didn't ask any questions. I just signed up. Then I went in ...

**Kat Kinsman:**

(laughs)

**Guy Fieri:**

... (laughs) I went into town, to the big town, Eureka is our biggest town. And I went and started putting in applications at restaurants. And I had sent applications from France, the two restaurants that I wanted to work at. And I remember going in there and they're like, "You're the crazy kid that sent us the application from France. We didn't understand anything you're talking about." Went in and I get a job at the Red Lion Motor Inn. And I'm a busboy. And I ... But they have a flambé captain program. And I



wanna be a flambé captain really bad. So I steal borrow the stuff and take it home and practice being a flambé captain.

**Kat Kinsman:**

Okay. So could you explain what flambé captain is here? Do I need to salute you while I say flambé captain?

**Guy Fieri:**

It's the tuxedo.

**Kat Kinsman:**

Okay.

**Guy Fieri:**

It's the rolling cart. I was making crepe Suzette, Steak Diane, scampi prawns, Caesar salad, spinach salad, cherries jubilee, bananas foster, you name it, I made it. All tableside. And so I, I wanted to be a flambé captain, was only 17. So I flambé captain, going to junior college, hadn't even graduated high school, didn't take the SATs, just kind of going with the flow. Then my dad called me and said, "Hey, there's a really cool program down in Las Vegas," a hospitality program 'cause he knew I wanted to open my own restaurants. And he said, "Why don't you go down? You really need to have business sense behind this industry that you wanna be in." So I went down to UNLV and had enough credits to transfer as a junior club. They still didn't know I didn't have a high school diploma. And, uh, that I didn't (laughs) graduate high school. And I went down to UNLV and got my degree in hospitality. And that was it.

**Music: Theme Music Fades In**

**Kat Kinsman: We'll Be with more from Guy after the break**

**(AD BREAK)**

**Kat Kinsman: Welcome back to Tinfoil Swans. Today, I'm chatting with Guy Fieri**

**Music: Theme Music Fades Out**

**Kat Kinsman:**

I mean, at this point (laughs) you're just going with it. But do you have, in your head, a picture of like what you want this thing to be like or, I'm a person who I don't tend to sort of think that far ahead with

things. I'm happy with things as they come. But do you, did you have a benchmark of like, "Here's who I wanna become?" Was there somebody out in the world knew that I wanna be like them? Or did you always just picture doing your own thing?

**Guy Fieri:**

No, I didn't have any, I wanted to be in charge. I wanted to own my own stuff. So now when I was graduating college and my parents were there. And I said to my dad, "I think I'm gonna go to culinary school." And he goes, "Why?" I said, "I don't know. It seemed like something to do." And he's like, "You already cook." Why don't you go out in the industry, see what's going on out there and find out if you don't know enough about cooking that maybe you need to go to culinary school." I'm like, "Okay." He said, "I think you need to know how to run a restaurant and how to handle restaurants on all aspects. Why don't you go figure that out?" So that's what I did. So I took off and went to work for Stouffer's in Long Beach at their flagship restaurant. I worked every job I could. ~~Um~~ Anything I didn't know, I learned. So I just did all these things. I worked in the kitchen. I would cover all the kitchen chefs. And so I was getting this huge influx of things. Well, the assistant general manager of the restaurant hated me. I mean, bad. I was a thorn in her side 'cause I was out of control. ~~Um~~, and so she went to a headhunter and put my name out with the headhunter that I was looking for a job. And a company called me and offered me a job or to come apply for a job. And I went to 'em and I became a general manager. That's one of the things, you know, I was gonna make a general manager at the Stouffer restaurant. And I was young, I was 22 years old.

**Kat Kinsman:**

Yeah.

**Guy Fieri:**

So I go and this job as a GM. And I'm training and developing and changing the whole MO of how this thing's going. And this, this guy named Robert Kissinger, who's still really a good friend of mine, He said, "Where did you learn to do all this?" I said, "I, I don't know, just" ... Then he goes, "You will take over some more restaurants. So whatever have you need?" So I was 22 years old. I was district manager of eight restaurants just kicking ass. -And then my business partner, he ran half the restaurants, I ran the other half the restaurants. And we talk to each other after the end of these meetings and say, "We're running this company. Why don't ... We could do our own company." So we took off and built the restaurant in a box and basically did all the recipe prep and all the menu writing, in the garage, this guy's house on a camp stove, and made 64 variations of roasted garlic soup. My wife, still to this day, will not taste roasted garlic soup. And that was it.

**Kat Kinsman:**

At any point, do you have ... I mean, I'm a person plagued by anxiety and doubt constantly every morning, every ... Or do you have that in your head? Was there ever a moment you were thinking like, "What am I doing? Maybe I can't do this?" What do you attribute that to?

**Guy Fieri:**

I've never been a half-full person. I'm very optimistic. I like to look at the positive sides of things .it's kind of like this whole career, like the things that are going on. When I got to television and people say like, "How do you handle criticism? How do you handle ..." yeah, I don't know.vlf it came from you, Kat, if you call me and said, "Hey, you know, what's your restaurant guy, and that, this and this, and this, we're not good or this sucks, we're not ..." I'd take it to heart and I would definitely do something about it. You know, sometimes people's motives to give criticism aren't genuine. And so I, so I'd take it from who's it coming from. You know, who's the messenger? And that's just always kind of been my thing. Yeah. Do I have feelings? Absolutely. Do I get my feelings hurt? Yeah, without question. Do I have trepidations? Yeah, yeah. But, not that it rules me. I have to be the master, I have to be the commander of my, of my ship. And that's just kind of the way my parents raised me. Like I said, a lot of critical thinking, a lot of discussions, a lot of open table discussions of sitting down and going through stuff.

**Kat Kinsman:**

But I think we all, you know, we all crave validation. We all crave all these things. And I distinctly remember the first time we met, you told me about Emeril Lagasse. There was ..correct me if I'm getting the story incorrect, but you had been in front of a crowd and you basically got a benediction from Emeril Lagasse. What do those kind of moments mean to you? And can you walk us through that and what it meant to you?

**Guy Fieri:**

So it was at the South Beach Food and Wine Festival and Emeril was being recognized. And it was my first year of being at the festival. And Emeril was one of the only names that I really knew. And what I was so impressed with is how Emeril elevated the world of food. And I call him to ... Still to this day, I call him the Elvis of food. I mean, he really was the one. And, ~~um~~, we're at the Food and Wine Festival. And, and on Saturday night, someone is always, a, a chef is recognized, ~~um~~, by the festival and it's their dinner. It's their honoree dinner. So I'm there, I'm sitting at the table, Emeril's up there giving a speech. And he's thanking all the chefs that have cooked for him. And he's talking and he starts talking about the future of the food network and the industry. And there's somebody that you all should really be paying attention to and watch out because this person is really somebody that I'm gonna tell you. You don't have any clue. Went da, da, da, da, da. I'm like, "Who is this?"

**Kat Kinsman:**

(laughs)

**Guy Fieri:**

And I'm just kinda tuned out for a second trying to figure out who it is. And someone taps me and goes, "Hey, hey, he's talking to you." I said, "What? He was talking to you." I said, "Who?" He goes, "Emeril." And I look and he goes, "Guy, come up here. I want you to stand with us." I mean, I couldn't even put it together. I mean, it still gives me goosebumps like nobody's ... I'm just like, "What?" So I get up and I'm walking up there. And I'm looking around. I don't even know half the people on the stage. I don't even know who these chefs are. I'm standing up on the edge of the stage by myself. They're all lined up. And I'm like five feet away from everybody and I'm just standing there. And they ... Everybody speaks and Emeril comes by and shakes everybody's hand and shakes my hand. And then the night's over. And I'm walking off the stage. And John Tisch, the owner of the Loews comes up and goes, "Hey, chef, you just got anointed." That's, that was big. I am just like ... I don't even know what to say. And, and that was that (laughs).

**Kat Kinsman:**

My throat's ... Um, (laughs) You choked me up right here 'cause-

**Guy Fieri:**

And then to be ..how many years later was it, 15, 16 years later, I'm the one up there getting the award, getting the honoree. It was very, it was really special. But I still to this day can't be thankful enough of everybody that paved the way before I got there. Emeril and Bobby and Rachel, and Alton, and all of these chefs that made such an amazing impact and, and develop the network. I, I really attribute the network to being probably the single biggest entity in righting the ship of the world getting its head on straight about what food is. We live this year, this '80s and '90s of just this processed over manipulated, just garbage. And look at the restaurant trends that were going on. And these folks came in and started educating people on how foods to be made and what food is and so forth.

**Kat Kinsman:**

Yeah, i- it's, it's been this huge driving force. And I worry sometimes, though, that anytime ... This happens with bands, this happens with food, this happens with everything or some-, once something becomes more accessible to more people, there is a segment of the population that somehow wants to ding it, that they feel somehow above it, that they feel something. And, and taste is used as this like horrifying cudgel. And I'm, I'm sure you have some feelings about this.

**Guy Fieri:**

I say to people all the time. It's like, We'll just use the, the elephant in the room with the pineapple on pizza.

**Kat Kinsman:**

Mm-hmm.

**Guy Fieri:**

I've been to Naples. I've got wood fired ovens. I've worked with some of the greatest pizza chefs in the world. I don't care what you put on a pizza. I don't take an attitude. It's even truffle oil. I'm not a truffle oil fan. I think truffle oil is so overly used. It can be used in moderation and it serves a place. You tell me you don't like a truffle oil French fry. Okay. Do I like real truffles? Absolutely. Do I think that you should be throwing truffle oil on everything that you do? If that's what you wanna do. But I don't have an attitude about it that it makes me dislike you. Do what you wanna do. I don't ... As long as you don't hurt yourself, not hurt yourself, not hurt anybody else, you can do what you wanna do.

**Kat Kinsman:**

I really feel like people, snobbery comes out of insecurity. And people are so scared to death that someone new is gonna judge them on what they like or who they think they are. And the happiest people I know are the people who just do the things that they want. I have a mantra of like, if it tastes good, it is good. Like so long as it's not hurting anybody else, then what is that.

**Guy Fieri:** That's the truth of it. And I think that, I don't think there's any rules. I think that's one of the things we've laughed about in my family or my dad and I have laughed at least about not going to culinary school. Do I wish I'd gone? Absolutely. There's a lot of things that I wish I learned how to do better. I wish I knew how to bake. I don't like baking. I like bread.

**Kat Kinsman:**

Would you ... If you, if you're better at it, would you maybe like it better.

**Guy Fieri:**

I don't know. I'm not a measurement person. It's tough to be a baker if you're not into measuring.

**Kat Kinsman:**

Right.

**Guy Fieri:**

I'm into feel, I'm into touch and so like when I make pizza dough, a lot of it, you can't just go by that you can't go by measurement. You have to really be aware of your conditions and your environment and your f-, moisture and your humidity and da, da, da. So I don't know. But anyhow. There's things that I ... But I love learning about food. I read cookbooks like they're novels.

**Kat Kinsman:**

Same.

**Guy Fieri:** Because there's so much message inside of them. And there's so much education about where the foods come from or why foods interact the way they do together.

**Kat Kinsman:**

I think people cheat themselves out of pleasure because they're afraid of what might happen. If we could talk about one moment, I've been very curious about this. The first time you came to the Food & Wine Classic in Aspen, what did you think you were gonna find there? Uh, and how did you feel about coming to there?

**Guy Fieri:**

Well, I really appreciated the invite and that's due to you. Thank you very much. And my ... And our good friend, Rocco Dispirito.

**Kat Kinsman:**

Oh, love that man.

**Guy Fieri:**

I didn't know what I was gonna find. I never even been to Aspen. But, I saw Dumb and Dumber. So that was awesome. And I didn't know that the festival was going to embrace me the way it did. You know, I'm up there, I got told a bunch of rules. I'm really not good with rules. And I made the joke, when I was standing up there, I said, "Well, folks, hope you've enjoyed your demo today." Well, you know, Kat, you were there, 'cause it's probably gonna be the last time that I'm here 'cause I'm not supposed to be given drinks out and I'm not supposed to be setting things on fire. And I'm not supposed to da, da, da. And that's when Hunter came up and invited me to come back to the festival. I ... By the way, if you remember the story ...

**Kat Kinsman:** Oh, I was there.

**Guy Fieri:**

... I had no idea who that was. I had no idea who that was. I just thought it was some really nice guy that came up and said ... Although I'd met him just prior to that, but I didn't put it together. You know, I didn't put that whole thing together, but it's been , you know, I like to think about myself , I like to be involved in situations of bridging things.

**Kat Kinsman:**

Yes. Same.

**Guy Fieri:**

And I've been probably one of the biggest advocates about it. I've told so many people about it. I mean, I'm coming to see you in the middle of my family vacation. I'm coming to the festival. So I'm gonna be on my family vacation in Montana. And I'm renting a plane to fly to because my planes, I was gonna be on my family vacation so I let my pilot's take the time off. So I'm running a plane to fly to come do my demo and run and fly back 'cause I said I would. You've invited me. I don't wanna, I don't wanna be disrespectful of the invite. And so, I'm coming to do it. But that's how, that's how important of an amendment is.

**Kat Kinsman:**

I'm floored and, and touched by that. I'm really incredibly grateful. Sorry, I'm choked up now. What would 10-year-old Guy, as he's putting together that pretzel stands, I think if he could say a sentence like I gave my pilots a time off and I'm renting a plane. And so what, what ... Would he just be sitting there with stars in his eyes? What would you tell this kid?

**Guy Fieri:** Honestly, it's never, ever changed the whole thing. I'm still 10. We can all do anything we wanna do. We can all make the world a better place. Pivot the paradigm, just take a little bit different perspective and just recognize your power. Okay. You ... We can all make an improvement. We can make it financially. We can make it spiritually, emotionally, physically, whenever someone says, "Well, if I don't have any money to donate," or "If I don't have any free time to donate," I said, "Then you know what, go to your social media, go to your Facebook, go to your whatever medium you use, and post positive things to people about them saying what they do."

**Kat Kinsman:**

It's everything.

**Guy Fieri:**

Post positive reviews if you're going to a restaurant. Don't just talk about it, post it, you know, be involved. And that's so surprising for people sometimes. But once people start to really realize they can make a difference and they can change the paradigm, they can change perspective, it's just, it's like a light bulb going off in their head. And I just don't think that we teach enough of that about this critical thinking and about the ability that we have to manifest things into a different direction through our own power. And don't complain about it, do something about it. You know, be involved.

So when the pandemic hit, I got a phone call that restaurants were gonna get closed in California. All these restaurants, my restaurants, I have 95 res- ... Yeah. But I'm not even thinking about me. I'm thinking about all these mom-and-pop restaurants that had just loaded up on their groceries that are gonna be closed this weekend and all the people that are gonna be without jobs, and bills, and so forth. And I'm like, "We gotta do something." So I got my team on the phone the next morning and I said, "Okay, um, take my black card and go around to the restaurants, all the mom-and-pop restaurants in town, and go buy \$50,000 in gift certificates. Okay, what are we gonna do with gift certificates?" I said, "Well, we're gonna frontload ... You know, these restaurants will eventually open again. So now we have gift certificates. So we'll give them to homeless people that, you know, are not gonna be able to get them. So we'll give them, we'll give these gift certificates. Okay, great." So by the time I get done working out, I call my team, my team says, "Hey, we can't just do your town. What, what about California?" I said, "Now, you're right, California." So how much credit limit do we have on the, on the (laughs) American Express black card? Million dollars. I said, "Hey, take it easy, take it easy." I said, "50,000." So I said, "Okay, let's start ... Let's figure out a way to get a bunch of gift certificates going." Okay. I told my dad about it. My dad says, "Guy," he says, "You go all over the country. You can't just pick California to support." So I get everybody on the phone. I said, "Okay, here's game plan. Got my attorney on the phone that does my restaurant deals. A guy named Riley Largesen. I said, "Riley, you know all the big companies that have direct impact from the restaurant industry, right? Cargill, Uber Eats, Pepsi, Coca-Cola, blah, blah, blah, blah. Yeah." I said, "Can you get me the email or the cellphone number of all of the presidents of these companies?" He says, "Yeah. Why?" I said, "'Cause I'm gonna send 'em a message that I need some money from them to the restaurant industry." And everybody's like, "What?" I said, "Yeah, I'm gonna send" ... So I made 43 different messages. I went and wrote information down about Amazon, sent one to Jeff Bezos, sent one to Pepsi. Sent one ... And I made these messages and I filmed them and said, "Hey, this is Guy Fieri, our industry is getting shut down. We have, you know, 2 million restaurant employees that are gonna need help. And I wanna raise some money. I'm raising a hundred million dollars. I need you to give me some money. Okay. Here's my cell number, call me." Okay. Everybody thought I certifiably lost my mind. Okay. My wife is I didn't run over here in the kitchen. All Sunday night, I did. I made these things. And they send them to Riley. And I said, "Send them to these people." So the next day we're shutting down the house, going to our ranch. It's , you know what, everybody's got a shelter in place. And I'm driving along, going up to my ranch and my manager calls me. Reid, he's the CEO of my company. He goes, "What did you do last night?"

**Kat Kinsman:**

(laughs)

**Guy Fieri:**

I go, "What do you mean?" He goes, "You sent out videos to people shaking (laughs) them down for money." I said, " Yeah, kinda." 'Cause I said to 'em in the video, "Hey, you know what, you've been



getting a lot off the restaurant industry your entire career, your whole company has time to step up. Okay. Be one of the people that I get to tell everybody showed up to support the industry that I love so much and that you've made so much money off of. Don't be the person that's not." He goes, "Well, I got Pepsi on the phone. And they wanna give you a million dollars."

**Kat Kinsman:**

(laughs)

**Guy Fieri:**

I said, "What?" So I am completely shell shocked that this is going on. I talked to Pepsi. By the time I made it in an hour and drove over to the ranch, we had 3.8 million. Uber Eats jumped in. All kinds of people started jumping in. And that went on and then I was getting up every morning. I was getting up every morning and doing the news in, in New York. So 4:00 in the morning. And doing the news and pitching this idea. And we raised over \$25 million.

**Kat Kinsman:**

You were one of our Food & Wine Game Changers, I believe, in 2020-2021, something like that. Time is a flat circle at this point, but.

**Guy Fieri:**

Wel, I'll tell you what, it wasn't the money.

**Kat (00:53:42):**

Yeah.

**Guy Fieri:**

It was the recognition to the industry that one of yours is protecting you or is here for you to give you a hug. That's what I called it. I just called it a big hug. And when people would come up to me and say, "I got the \$500" ... We gave out 44,000 grants, there were \$500 grants, 44,000 people got a \$500 grant, never had to pay it back. When they come up and say to me, "I got the money," they weren't saying the money. They came up and said ... You know, they came up and they got the hug. They got the recognition that their industry loves them and their industry is gonna protect them. And it was probably, Kat, out of everything I've ever done in my career, ever done in my life, the ... And everybody told me I was crazy and I couldn't do it. That probably was the most defining moment in my career, in my life, you know, in terms of besides being a dad and all these other things, because all I had to do was just believe that I couldn't do it and it wasn't gonna happen or I could believe that I was gonna pull it off and it was gonna happen. And we changed things.

**Kat Kinsman:**

Yeah, you did.

**Guy Fieri:**

You know. We did ... So.

**Kat Kinsman:**

Okay. What is ... And you can interpret this any way that you want. What is a Tin Foil Swan moment to you?

**Guy Fieri:**

There's a restaurant in Rhode Island that my wife took me to when we were first married called Twin Oaks. And it's a country club-ish type restaurant, high leatherback boots. And everybody goes there. This is a well-known place. Still there. So we come in with her parents. Her dad was my favorite human in the world. Besides my father, her dad was my dad. I mean, just the neatest guy. We, unfortunately, lost him. But we go there. We come in and the waiter comes over. I think he was smoking a cigarette. Tie half undone and he comes over and he goes, "You guys want something to drink?" This is the nicest restaurant. I mean, this is a nice restaurant. This is a nice country club-ish type. You know what I mean? You want something to drink? I said, "Yeah, Jack and Coke." He said, "All right. Calamamama? Calamama, Calamama?"

**Kat Kinsman:**

(laughs)

**Guy Fieri:**

W- W- What just happened?" And the guy comes back and he swings down four banana boat dishes, of this calamari in a pepperoncini white wine sauce. And this is like the signature item for the ... I go, "Hey, hey, hey, hey, hey. What was this? What are, what are you doing?" You know, I'm paying the bill. I'm like ... He goes, "Calamar." I said, "Slow down for a second. Take the cigarette out of your mouth. What is this?" He says, "It's calamari alla mamma."

**Kat Kinsman:**

(laughs)

**Guy Fieri:**

So he walks away. I eat all four dishes.

**Kat Kinsman:**

(laughs)

**Guy Fieri:**

I eat them all. It was unbelievable. It was the best calamari I've ever had in my life. I'm like, "Oh my God, this is incredible." So, that's one of them. it was just this complete fish out of water, had no idea where I was. And, and ... But I have the greatest restaurants ... I'll tell you my Hall of Fame restaurant story.

**Kat Kinsman:**

Bring it.

**Guy Fieri:**

I'm a flambé captain.

**Kat Kinsman:**

(laughs)

**Guy Fieri:**

And I'm cooking at this table and everybody would come to the Red Lion in Eureka. This was the fine-dining restaurant in, in the, in the town. So I've got this couple that's sitting at the table and she's got a Marge Simpson hairdo.

**Kat Kinsman:**

(laughs)

**Guy Fieri:**

And her husband is sitting at the 12:00 position, she's at 3:00 position, not even sitting together, and they're celebrating their 20, 35th wedding anniversary. Okay. She's so excited. She hadn't been out in a long time, ranch family. The dude sitting there, he's got these gnarled up old fingers. He's got his tweed jacket on. He's had about six scotch and sodas. And she's having White Zinfandel. Ooh, she's having White Zinfandel, you know. And so I'm coming over to the table to cook. "What are you doing now? Oh, I'm putting the butter in the pan. Ooh, Frank, butter, he's putting butter in the pan." So this goes on. I'm ... "What, what now?" I said, "Well, these are the mushrooms for the steak, ma'am." The dude hasn't said a word to me. Okay, he's not ... I mean, he's "scotch and soda." Yeah. She's there. She's just excited as can be. Well, in the presentation of being a flambé captain, there's certain things we do. Throw the pepper grinder behind the back, the bottle, but one is to open the Dijon mustard with one hand. Take out the spoon, dollop it in and put the lid back on the mustard and set it down. There's all

these little points of flair. Okay. So that li- ... It never really gets tight back on there, but it's, the lid's back on.

**Kat Kinsman:**

Oh God.

**Guy Fieri:**

But when you dress your cart that evening for service, you have a certain length that you hang the tablecloth down around the cart. It gets clipped in with a ring and there's a protocol. Well, I never like to see the wheels on my cart so I would always hang my curtain, my tablecloth a little bit longer, which would always cause problems because sometimes the wheel would catch the curtain or catch the tablecloth. So I cooked the whole dinner, serve it to the lady. The guy ever says thank you, screw you, nothing. She's so happy she's got, she's having her Steak Diane and he's having another scotch and soda. And I go to move the cart, no tip, by the way, doesn't tip me anything. I go to move the cart and the curtain, the tablecloth is, got caught in the wheel.

**Guy Fieri:**

Oh God.

**Guy Fieri:**

So I don't do what you're supposed to do like mature people would and release it. I just think I'll yank it a little bit harder. I yank it. It sucks the tablecloth into the wheel, shifts all the ingredients on top of the cart to the right. And the mustard falls off the cart. The mustard falls off the cart and lands on its edge. The lid pops off. A globule of mustard flies through the air and center punches Marge right in the forehead. Whap. So much so that when it made it splatter, there was a silhouette of her on the booth.

**Kat Kinsman:**

Oh God.

**Guy Fieri:**

I look at her. She looks at me. I look at him. And all of a sudden, it comes tumbling down her hair.

**Kat Kinsman:**

Oh.

**Guy Fieri:**

Goop!

**Kat Kinsman:**

(laughs)

**Guy Fieri:**

I look at him, he turns bright red, falls over in the booth (laughs).

**Kat Kinsman:**

(laughs)

**Guy Fieri:**

And tips me 40 bucks. Said it's the best anniversary he's ever had.

**Kat Kinsman:**

(laughs) Oh my God.

**Guy Fieri:**

You know, just when something hits the right way, the wrong way just blew. It went flying through the air. And I was like, "No." And she didn't ... You know, well, what had happened ... I'm sorry. What had happened is she was taking a sip of the wine. That's why she didn't know that it hit her. She was taking a sip of the wine and it clipped the bottom of the glass and that's what made it splatter.

**Kat Kinsman:**

(laughs)

**Guy Fieri:**

But it splattered so heavy that it got all into her hair. And she didn't know what had happened 'cause it hadn't hit her forehead, it'd hit her hair. She didn't know what happened, but she could see my look and she could see her husband.

**Kat Kinsman:**

Whoever is listening to this podcast, who was an animator, I need you from the depths of my soul to create a short film of this.

**Guy Fieri:**

Oh.

**Kat Kinsman:**

(laughs)

**Guy Fieri:**

Hey, I set the dining room on fire with my flambé cap. I mean, I did some stuff as a flambé captain that just should not have been done that, you know, just crazy. There's a whole book just about flambé captaining and, the bad behavior.

**Kat Kinsman:**

Thank you for that. Thank you for all of this. Do you have anything that you wish that I had asked you or that people would ask you in general?

**Guy Fieri:**

No, I, I, I really, I really appreciate this. And I appreciate being on the show. You know how much I admire you and adore you.

**Kat Kinsman:**

It's so mutual.

**Guy Fieri:**

so when you asked me to do this, of course, I jumped at the chance, and the fact that I get to be the first.

**Kat Kinsman:**

Yes.

**Guy Fieri:**

Even better.

**Kat Kinsman:**

You're my pancake (laughs).

**Guy Fieri:**

you're gonna, you're gonna do great with this. You have such a, wonderful perspective on the world, and the world n- needs more of you.

**Kat Kinsman:**

Oh, thank you.

**Guy Fieri:**

And the fact that you're taking this and walking people through this and giving us a chance to see the other side of chefs, I think, is really gonna be awesome and very successful. The whimsical name is a perfect example of who you are. So, no, I don't ... There's nothing that you haven't asked me. I just wanna be invited back ...

**Kat Kinsman:**

Oh, yeah (laughs).

**Guy Fieri:**

... um, and, and te-, and tell more stories and have more laughs and ...

**Kat Kinsman:**

Always.

**Music: Tinfoil Swans Music begins**

Thanks for listening to my conversation with Guy Fieri. Be sure to follow Tinfoil Swans on Apple Podcasts, Spotify, or wherever you listen. And we'd love your feedback. If you could rate this podcast and leave us a review, we'd really appreciate it. You can also find us online at [foodandwine.com/tinfoilswans](https://foodandwine.com/tinfoilswans). Thanks to our production team, Lottie Leymarie, Dominique Arciero, Michael Klasek, Amelia Schwartz, Ashley Day, Sean Flynn, and Hunter Lewis. Next week, our guest will be Mashama Bailey.