Hello! You are listening to Curator on the Go Podcast! Today, I had the pleasure of speaking to Toronto-based private chef and food artist Eyal Liebman.

Eyal is a Private Chef who believes in rocking the boat when it comes to the Toronto food industry: "Food & Art do not exist outside of Politics." To be an artist is to be a responsible human, and to be a responsible human is to be a critical human, which in this case involves sourcing ethically raised produce & establishing connections with and supporting other artists in our like-minded journeys.

Eyal chooses to care about the meal in its entirety. In this way, Eyal’s food crosses a line into critical art – in the ways the ingredients are sourced, why certain dishes are included in a menu at certain dinner tables with certain people, the messages conveyed through beautiful plates ... it all has intentional meaning and storyline. The narrative of every menu Eyal creates never repeats and is best described as consistently inconsistent - there is only one original menu for each event.

Eyal believes that it’s hard to convince people that food can be an art medium beyond the fact of pretty plates and that food is cultural and has so much to do with politics. I am so excited to share our interview with all of you today and want to thank Eyal for being my podcast guest. Enjoy!

**Curator on the Go:** Let’s go back in time and talk about your background. Why have you chosen a career in the field of culinary arts, particularly as a chef?

**Eyal:** I didn’t. It chose me. I believe that the medium chooses the artist. I grew up painting. It wasn’t my medium for sure because I suck at it. Then I became a musician and did that for 13 years. I came to Canada trying to do that but sometimes karma plays its role in guiding you in the right direction. I had to start over. Cooking was always my hobby and my way to express myself outside of my day job. I made cooking my job and never regretted it.

***Curator on the Go:*** When describing your style, you stated on Instagram: “my ‘relevance’ to the food industry is parallel to the relevance of a visual artist to the paint industry. Food is what I paint my ‘picture’ with, I care for quality, tasty, pretty but the message is my drive.” Tell us more about your practice and your focus on conceptuality.

***Eyal:*** Pretty is a bi-product. If you want your art to sell, to be seen and be there – it needs to talk to people, but the drive can’t be “I want to be something pretty.” I want to say something! When I look at people in my field – pleasing is the main drive. When you come to my dinners, I don’t allow my staff to ask “how was this?” because I absolutely don’t care. I am expressing myself – I am not going to change anything for that reason.

***Curator on the Go:*** You also talk a lot about being consistently inconsistent, exploring the discomfort and not chasing the perfection in your practice. What is the most complicated dish you’ve prepared?

***Eyal:*** I am not looking for that. I am looking for what I am saying.

***Curator on the Go:*** What foods do you like to pair together and why?

***Eyal:*** It’s a big question. I try not to have favorites. It’s who I am. It’s how I woke up this morning matters – that’s the being consistently inconsistent.

***Curator on the Go:*** What would you do if you were cooking and realized that you didn’t have all the ingredients you needed to make a dish?

***Eyal:*** That can’t happen! I always have all the ingredients that I need. Even if I don’t have something – it’s the universe sending me a message. It’s the difference of ideology between European art and North American art. NA art centers people, the artist, and in Europe, it centers the creation. For me, if I forgot the mustard – it’s the universe saying the mustard is not needed here today.

**Curator on the Go:** Is there a chef you admire the most? Who and why?

***Eyal:*** I look at Chef Daniel Humm from Eleven Madison Park – he is trying to be expressive. I am trying not to be modest and say that what I am doing is something very unique in the world perspective. I don’t see much of what I do around. I see chefs that are unique and amazing artists, but mostly when you go to food – people are zoned on one side of the practice. Eleven Madison – it’s the freshness and the beauty of the dish. I try to have zero labels.

So, most of my days I am just thinking and I have event days – I have 2-3 of them a week. That starts at 7 am at the market, buying everything and getting to the client around 2 pm. I write a menu a week before the event, but things can change.

***Curator on the Go:*** Is there something that you do to put yourself into a creative state of mind?

***Eyal:*** I wish I can do something to get me out of the creative state of mind.

***Curator on the Go:*** How do you know when the dish work is finished?

***Eyal:*** It tells me! Once you learn how not to center on yourself and to listen to your creation – your creation tells you. I can’t revisit a dish as it’s already in someone’s stomach.

***Curator on the Go:*** Have you had to deal with restaurant critics?

***Eyal:*** Sadly, no as it’s hard to get in the papers. I don’t belong to any sections and they can’t send people to a specific restaurant.

***Curator on the Go:*** What is your favorite wine and tell me about pairing wine and food?

***Eyal:*** Depends on the day and what I am eating. I love white wine, but if I am getting steak – is it really gonna work??? There is a delicate balance that it’s about me as the artist, but it’s not about me – there are the creation and the client. If I am talking about creating and touching my client – I need to also listen to my client. I have the privilege to meet the client.

***Curator on the Go:*** How do you explain the messages to your clients?

***Eyal:*** They get them because they are mostly people that understand art. Food is very cultural. It has a lot to do with colonialism, racism, and politics. The minute you are eating is political.

**Curator on the Go:** One of the hot topics today is the importance of personal branding. Do you believe that creatives need a brand to be successful?

***Eyal:*** I am not trying to hide anything about my life and who I am. I have the privilege of being born as a white male, although I am Jewish, many of my friends don’t have this privilege.

**Curator on the Go:** How do you promote and market your services right now?

***Eyal:*** Word of mouth is the best strategy for any artist. Instagram sadly is important too. Unfortunately, people don’t read captions – so all I get to advertise on Instagram is how pretty is my food. But it’s only one aspect of it and I am not complaining much as some people do read it.

***Curator on the Go:*** You have a well-curated Instagram. Do you pre-plan your posts or share whatever you feel you want to share that day?

***Eyal:*** I can’t pre-plan anything – I am so bad at it. The most consistent I can keep is 24 hours.

**Curator on the Go:** Do you follow trends in food, do any trends excite you?

***Eyal:*** No and Yes. Yes, I look at what other people are doing but do I care about trends? Not really.

**Curator on the Go: Where Do You See Yourself In Five Years? Ten?**

***Eyal:*** It’s a giant question. I barely know where I’ll be tmr. I am where I want to be.

**Curator on the Go:** Where my listeners can find you online?

***Eyal:***

<https://www.instagram.com/chef_somm/>

<https://www.chefsomm.ca/>