

René Redzepi 00:21

Hello Hello. Hello. Are we there? Yes, it's working. Oh my goodness okay. Oh, one second. Let me just figure out why I can hear you. Can you hear me? I can hear you. Yeah Hold on one second. Let me just go in on my I think it's because of the microphone here. System Preferences sound

Jacob Morgan 01:11

Hello Hello. Hello

René Redzepi 01:19

Okay, can you hear me now? Still?

Jacob Morgan 01:20

I can hear you. Yeah. Yeah. I mean, this

René Redzepi 01:27

is almost crazy too crazy. Let me just try to log on.

Jacob Morgan 01:34

Hello, hello, hello.

René Redzepi 01:36

Yeah, now I hear you. But now. So I have this. I can hear you. Now I have this this mic here. Okay. And as soon as I plug these in, I can't hear you.

Jacob Morgan 01:49

Oh, because it probably is using the mic for the output in the input. So if you go to settings in zoom, like where you see the microphone button and the video button, click on the microphone button. And it'll say select your microphone and just make sure that the microphone and the speaker are not the same thing.

René Redzepi 02:10

Okay, hold on one second. Let me just plug it in here okay, here we go. Microphone world speaker. Hello. Hello. Hello. Yes, I hear you. Do you hear me?

Jacob Morgan 02:37

Yes. Yes.

René Redzepi 02:38

Is it sound better? Yes, it is. Okay, because I'm speaking to this special microphone for this special talk.

Jacob Morgan 02:48

Yeah, no, it's it's, uh, you sound much better. Well, thank you. I'm so excited that we're finally getting a chance to chat. Yeah, me too. I spent a lot of time like looking up as much as I could about you. I love food. I've known your stuff for a while and my friend loves food. He buys your your gums, your

fermented products that you have. So I've known your name and the stuff that you've been doing for quite a while contesting. Alright, so let me push record on my little camera here. Do you have any questions that I can actually answer for

René Redzepi 03:22

you? No, I'm all good to go.

Jacob Morgan 03:27

Okay, so I'm going to do a longer introduction. Before this episode actually airs right now I'm just going to say hey, Rene, thanks for joining me, and then we'll just jump right in. Fantastic. So that microphone actually have the same microphone as you to, he can get pretty loud if you get really, really close to it. So I would just give yourself a little bit of space because otherwise it can like just blow out the sound. Got it? Is this good? From here? Yeah. You sound perfect. Beautiful sound perfect. Alright, I'll just jump right in, if that works for you. Yep. All right. Hey, Renee, thank you so much for joining me.

René Redzepi 04:04

Thank you for having me.

Jacob Morgan 04:06

So I have a million questions for you. I've done probably almost 700 interviews now. I've been looking forward to this one, probably more than most of my other ones that I've done. And you're the only chef that I've actually ever had on this show. So I want to give people a little bit of context just on who you are. What you've done, because a lot of people might not be familiar with this whole world of food and world's best and three Michelin stars. So I read that you got involved with cooking completely on accident. So what why don't we start there and how you got involved doing what you're doing? And then we'll talk a little bit about some of the stuff you have going on now.

René Redzepi 04:44

Absolutely. So yeah, cooking to me was a complete accident. I was 15 years old, and I will be 45 Very soon. So it's already 30 years in this industry. And I was finishing ninth grade In Copenhagen, and my teacher came to me and said, Thank you, but we don't need to see you at school again, after you finish the ninth grade. And back, then you could actually be deemed on eligible to continue further education, meaning that you were forced into some sort of trade of sorts. And I got that little tick. On the same day, as she told me, We don't want you back for 10th grade, I also got this little piece of paper where she she had sort of ticked the box where it says, non eligible for further advancement in education's, which means went college and sort of the Danish version of high school was out. And for that reason, I followed at the time, my best friend, his name was Michael. And he always wanted to be a cook. I had never dreamed of cooking in my life. And then starting in cooking school, almost immediately, I got sucked in, in a big way. And I got, and that happened, because actually, because of a competition, the first week of school, they, they had a competition for all of us youngsters. And that really did something to me, like in a big way.

Jacob Morgan 06:21

Interesting. Well, today, so for people who might not be familiar, you won the world's number one restaurant five times. In fact, I think they actually changed the rules because of you and your restaurant that if you win, you can't win any more. Because you were winning so many times. You're on the world's 50 Best of the Best list, three star Michelin restaurant. So why don't we give people a little bit of context around what that means. Because you know, when most people go out to eat, you know, you go to a restaurant that's near you, you know, maybe you go to a special restaurant every now and then. But not everybody is familiar with what goes on and start up inside of a three star Michelin restaurant or being the world's best restaurant. So what? How was that different take us inside of that restaurant? What does that look like?

René Redzepi 07:05

So, I mean, first of all, we will be 20 years old very soon. And this also means that in the past two decades, like the world has changed quite dramatically. Yeah, just from social media arriving to the planet, and the iPhone, and smartphones in general, our trade has also changed dramatically. So we are very different restaurant now than what we were 20 years ago, even 10 years ago. But if you look at how things are today, the restaurant we are a team of approximately 70 People are working daily, and we serve approximately 75 guests daily. And we work hard for morning tonight. In we have four different kitchens, one of them being a prep kitchen, another being a service kitchen service kitchen is where all the last minute prepper preparations happen. Besides that, we have our fermentation lab where we dabble in the world of yeast, mold and bacteria to produce, like the pillars of flavor that we use. Besides that, we have a test kitchen as well. And all of these things are in action daily to produce a menu to the delight of our guests. Besides that, there's a team of some years and waiters and T specialists that all everyday trying to select and brew the best possible besides that we have, you know, a list of purveyors, we have kitchen managers only for supply chains. We have foragers to full time hired out every day sourcing the freshest Berry. And it just goes on and on. We have a full time carpenter to take care of the chairs and the tables. Wow. I mean, we do everything possible that we can think of if if we think it's a good idea for the benefit of our guests, we will do it even though we don't have to. That's the difference, I think is that we we are not happy with let's call it what the lowest common denominator things is okay. Even at a three Michelin star we we want to even go beyond what we think is okay. What we thought was Okay, last year, we have to go beyond that every year.

Jacob Morgan 09:28

So what is three Michelin stars mean? What is the world's best restaurant mean? The world's best chef. How do they evaluate you and your restaurant on that is just tasty food or what? What goes into being a three Michelin star restaurant?

René Redzepi 09:45

If you hear so huffing and puffing, it's my dog.

Jacob Morgan 09:49

I have two dogs. I totally get it. Hans will

René Redzepi 09:51

be a good girl. Okay, she's right here. So first of all being the best rest What in the world? Hello? Yeah, I love you too, girl, but I'm, I'm busy being the best restaurant in the world. You know, I don't think there's anyone at the restaurant and including myself that actually genuinely believes that we are at the best of all the restaurants in all the landlords. Yeah, but, you know, on the 50 best list there, there's like a panel of I believe it's 1200 people, most of them food professionals, either their cooks, chefs, or food professionals or journalists. And each year they cast a vote, they have five votes. And the one who, I guess is like the Oscars of sorts, the one who gets the most votes wins. And we've been number one, five times we've been number two, number three, number five, number 10. We've been under this list for a long time. But we obviously don't consider ourselves the best restaurant in the world. And now the three Michelin star thing, which is probably the highest accolade you can get as a restaurant because it's the golden standard of restaurant judgment, and it originates from France. And only in the past 20 years, they started kind of leaving French, the French world and stepping into the Grand planet. And getting three stars they're like, you know, as a young cook, 30 years ago, you you're sort of you get told all the time, three stars ultimate goal, nothing can ever it's like the impossible dream to get that basically.

Jacob Morgan 11:39

Yeah. And so they evaluate that on food, just presentation.

René Redzepi 11:44

They come anonymously, probably several times a year. And they've been eating at Noma, probably minimum, twice a year for the past 20 years, anonymously. And sometimes they say they've been three, four times.

Jacob Morgan 12:02

Oh, interesting. So I want to talk about your your career a little bit, because you have a very, very fascinating story. So one of the things that I read is that you used to be a very different type of Chef earlier on in your career, as a sous chef used to be angry, used to scream used to shout. Can you talk a little bit about your earlier days, as a sous chef, what were you really like? And then what caused your transformation?

René Redzepi 12:30

Yeah, well, as a young cook, traveling the world working at the best restaurants, I would always look at all the angry head chefs, and they were all very angry, and the Sushi was even angrier. And it was just the general standard of the trade. You know, that? The very army system. Actually, the system in most kitchens comes from the French army, that our old chef called scruffy, he brought into the into the world of cooking after finished the army, and he became one of the greatest chefs ever. In the last 200 years. He made ESCO fears his name, but I used to tell myself, what are they doing? Can't they see doesn't work, you know, it was his management by fear. And I guess it works. But it doesn't work in the long run. But in the short one, it might be beneficial. But I always used to tell myself this, I will never be like that. And then lo and behold, I find myself opening my own restaurant. I'm 25 years old. I've only worked in kitchens, I have no clue about how to manage anything. And on the very first day in the very first week, with the very first guest that steps through your door, and you realize, oh, this is on me now. I have everything on the line. What if we mess up, and then that's when this thing starts happening to

you where you don't know how to handle yourself. You don't know how to manage yourself. You don't have any tools and you have no confidence either, because you're just starting out, you know, is how people can accept it. And then slowly, but surely you start becoming the thing you'd said you'd never become, which is letting small mistakes that are bound to happen become disasters to you for no apparent reason.

Jacob Morgan 14:22

So what would a small mistake that would happen that would just set you off?

René Redzepi 14:26

Well, I can't. There's too many to mention, but there would be so many things and I would be you know, just be angry and I'd be I'd come home to my wife and I say I don't know what's going on. I don't even know where all this anger comes from. I don't realize I had

Jacob Morgan 14:42

operated properly and you would see it go out and you would just go crazy. Yeah,

René Redzepi 14:46

and it would be What are you doing in the shower to do it again, you know, and probably probably put the kitchen even more into the weeds by just continuously kind of turning back plates as opposed was to try and figure out a system. So that these mistakes that are bound to happen, happen less frequently, because of your excellent leadership and system building behaviors. You know, it's, I didn't have that I didn't have that. And the big change for me was, was been so unhappy with myself actually coming home, and I tried for so long to tell myself, tomorrow, you're not going to do it anymore, you're never going to be upset, you have no reason to be upset by this people are not in your mind, they can possibly see things the way you're seeing it. You gotta allow some space for this sort of wiggle room. And tomorrow, you're just gonna come in and you're just gonna talk calmly and never get upset. And then you get upset. And then you realize, okay, this, this needs a big change, because I'm not making people happy. And um, for sure, myself very, very unhappy. And I was genuinely unhappy. And I just made the decision, either you leave entirely, or you try to change things. Yeah. And, and that's what I did.

Jacob Morgan 16:10

And when you say screaming, you know, a lot of people that the stereotypical screaming chef, everybody thinks of Gordon Ramsay, right? Because his, all of his shows, he's always screaming urine at it. That's terrible. Was it kind of like that? That's yeah,

René Redzepi 16:22

it could definitely be like that.

Jacob Morgan 16:26

Okay, because it's interesting, because I think a lot of leaders and corporations, they struggle with this too. And you know, they do things a certain way command and control lead by fear. And sometimes they to say, You know what, tomorrow, I'm going to show up, I'm going to be a different leader, or I read

a book, I'm going to be different tomorrow. And the same thing, they show up the next day, just like you did, and nothing changes. So what did you do to change? And was there like a pivotal moment where you came home one day, and you're just like, I can't do this anymore? Or was it just kind of a gradual building up to that?

René Redzepi 16:59

Though, I would say it was a gradual building up. But there was one moment just looking in the mirror saying, No, not anymore. Yeah. And then really trying to find the tools to actually make a change, hundreds of hours of therapy, coaching, book reading, experimenting, you know, with, with your, with your team, what works. Sometimes you implement a small change, and you think that's nothing, probably and it might be huge. And slowly, with time, it really started to working and what was the main main thing that really made a huge difference was when I started delegating. And that was the hardest bit for me, because I had to figure out, what is it that that I don't like about my work? And that makes me go there. And so I spent probably a couple of years just trying to figure out what is it that triggers me? And why is it that I don't have the capacities to be in that specific role. And once I started looking for that, then the next step, which was very, very hard as figuring out who then can take that specific role, and start dividing up the team, in sections with section leaders. So for instance, I know now today that the head of the service kitchen, which is the service kitchen is like where the action is, it's in the middle of the night, all orders are in guests are there they have expectations, some have waited for a decade to eat. Every day is like Super Bowl, you know, you can't mess up. There's no There's no you can't have a midseason friendly match every day is like, is the biggest of the big. So what sort of personality can guide the team through the trials and tribulations and the mistakes and somebody bumps into another person and drops a fish on the floor, and you have to redo the whole thing. And that makes all the other orders sort of wait and hold and how do you manage that and, and you know, that so that whole part of it actually figuring out who's good at what and trying to study my team and trying to put people in the right positions was also very difficult. But once I started learning that, amen, it just changed everything in for me personally as well, but also for the spirit and the culture of our team.

Jacob Morgan 19:33

Yeah, a lot of people don't realize, you know, the restaurants like that people. I mean, I've never eaten in Noma, I hope one day I will. But people like you said they wait months years to get into your restaurant. So it's very, very high pressure and like you said, you only serve 75 people a day. And literally everybody who walks into your restaurant has these enormously high expectations of you and your team like everything's gonna be Perfect, everything needs to be amazing. How do you deal with that kind of pressure? Because, you know, inside of the business world, for example, you do have, you know, leaders have high expectations of their team. But it's not as high as in your restaurant, every day, you need to be a high performer, you can't have a bad day or an off day, like every single day, you have to be on. How do you do that?

René Redzepi 20:25

Whoo. It's very, very, very hard. And, you know, the burnout rate in the restaurant industry is high. Because of this pressure every night, and it is not just in fine dining, I mean, go to a busy brunch restaurant and look at the cook, how he's dabbling with 1000 orders over two hours. I mean, sometimes

you forget your own name, believe it or not, you know, because there's just so much pressure on your mind at that point, these points, but very early on, I taught myself, and it doesn't always work. But it works for the most time that the best thing you can do to yourself is come to work with a mindset of being as concentrated as possible. And if you are able to have the discipline, and be there for that, like that, at the end of the day, if there really is something wrong, or somebody doesn't like it, which of course happens again and again. You have that as your protection, you know, you know that you were there and gave it what you did. But besides that, you know, it's hard. I mean, you, you try to speak to people, I think that's another very important thing, particularly leaders, they need more brain space, to think and have time to think. So that they're not just sort of all the time absorbed and problem solving or making decisions, they also need time to probably think. So I do that I actually take my time I hike quite a bit, sometimes for week long hikes. Wow, my phone is only sporadically open. And that's where I can deep think and get through big strategies, big issues. I also am a firm believer in having a mentor for anyone. someone you look up to that you can always call. And

Jacob Morgan 22:31

I've also had one you have a mentor right now.

René Redzepi 22:34

Yeah, I do. I do. It's a very successful person. And I call him up once in a while. And his advice to me was learn, renew, you have to learn and be happy with being second best. That's your longevity plan. Yeah. And so it's very good advice, actually. But sometimes when you also talk to these people that are smarter than you, you also, once in a while I've done that a few times in my life, you have to freefall into their advice, a bench against your better judgment. And this is something that, personally, people call me all the time and I give them advice, but people rarely follow them. You know, they already made their mind, this is what most people do, I think. But once in a while actually follow the advice against my better judgment from from someone smarter than me or more experienced that know exactly what I'm going through. And it's been very, very helpful, very helpful.

Jacob Morgan 23:45

You mentioned earlier that you used to do some experiments with your team. So what are some of the changes that you made? So you know, you showed up to work and you said, I'm not going to be this kind of leader anymore. This old school command and control, I'm going to be different. What were some of the changes that you put into place to change the culture and the environment and the team dynamics?

René Redzepi 24:08

First of all, it was a long change these things that are all systems, they don't change overnight, like that, you know, but let's say a very small change and actually was incredible was to put music into a kitchen. And really talking to me talking about it today seem seems like almost nothing. But having grown up in a very traditional style fine dining. I've worked in kitchens where you weren't allowed to speak to each other, like really, really strict. But you couldn't even speak to each other. You were just work be concentrated. Wow.

Jacob Morgan 24:45

So if you have somebody with the chef come in and be like, Hey, stop. Yeah,

René Redzepi 24:49

yeah, there'll be no talk. Stop talking.

Jacob Morgan 24:51

Wow. Yeah. You probably have some pretty good stories of like, back in the day,

René Redzepi 24:59

back in the day. I mean, I think for the most part, these, these things are gone. I hope so. But it wasn't at all. Unusual, it was actually very, very common. We also made a very, very conscious decision to have the best possible staff who that we can have. Which also sounds crazy, because you'd think at most restaurants, aren't you eating fantastically? No, the answer to that is no. In most restaurants, people are barely eating, they're probably eating out of a plastic container, some scraps that are quickly put together, and most likely, they don't even sit and have dinner. That's a lot of places. So we made a canteen for our team, we twice a day, there's always two people only for staff meal, we'd well. We did some creative exercises, we did something we call Saturday night projects, where each team member, once a month has to present a project. And they can do whatever they want. And then the team will taste it and talk about the project. And that was actually incredible, because not only did it foster more creative thinking in the team, but it also gave them kind of, let's say, if there was someone that was a little bit robotic in their work, and meaning that if they were handed a recipe, they just follow the recipe blindly. As opposed to also tasting and understanding all the you know, today, the strawberry is a little bit different than yesterday. So I need to adjust the recipe that really the Saturday night projects changed people for the better. And it also allowed me actually to in this new search for people, managers in different roles. It allowed me to see, okay, there's a really specific creative mind in this person, for instance, many years ago is that we're talking about eight years ago, there was a woman, her name is Mehta, and she did a dessert with cabbages. And it sounds completely wrong, even back then even to a group of cooks. And it's, you know, late at night, we just finished service. And she's presenting her cabbage dessert to the entirety. And we're like what's going on, but for some reason, she had coaxed out a dessert. What and it was cabbage. And today, she heads our test kitchen. Oh, so and she was a young woman, she's still young. But she had a test kitchen, she just had a first child. And that to me was like, Okay, your mind is put to put together in a different way. Because what what I'm looking for in some in that role is people who can see opportunities where other people can't. Most people see a head of cabbage, and they just think some some like, peasant food, while other they see 100 different things. And she's one of those people.

Jacob Morgan 28:03

Yeah, and I was reading about that. And I read that. So interestingly enough, most of those Saturday ideas don't actually get into your menu, right? It's not like every Saturday, somebody presents something, and you're like, great, that's gonna go in the menu. So why why do it if it doesn't actually make it into the menu and doesn't get implemented across the restaurant? You know, some people might say, well, what's the point? Isn't that just a fruitless exercise? If you don't make it a part of what you serve?

René Redzepi 28:29

Yeah, I can see why people say that. And I've heard that before. But sometimes the profit of exercise might be the experience itself, it might be a team building exercise, it might be adding to this undefinable mass of energy that that makes for a culture, you know, the little pat on the shoulder for somebody doing well, the confidence that it might build in someone for them two years down the line to actually put something on the menu. It's like it do so many other things, that it's besides the point, to have a dish on the menu that's like, it doesn't even matter. You know, we'll take care of that us from the test kitchen. It's more of the other things actually more important when you're trying to build a team, and you're trying to build confidence and trust.

Jacob Morgan 29:28

I like that. I'm curious. Have you ever had a bad day? At Noma? Because I'm assuming you know, you've been doing this for so long. You must have had some bad days. Can you share a story of like when thing when everything went wrong at Noma and things just, you know, everything fell apart? What happened and how did you and your team deal with it?

René Redzepi 29:51

So there's so many days where to begin. I mean, we had one day where the fire alarm went off twice. And it's a fire alarm where you simply can't be in the building. It's, it's painful. So everybody has to stand outside, it's in the middle of the winter, it's raining, all the food has to be thrown out, you start again. It's a real mess. You know? I've we've also tried when we did one of our pop ups in Mexico. One day, it just started raining out of the blue, and they were an outdoor restaurant, there was a disaster as well. It's been many years since we had actual real sort of service style disasters where we run out of food, or

Jacob Morgan 30:43

does anybody ever say I want to speak to the chef, and you come out there? And they're like, this is terrible. I hate this food. Has that ever happened? Actually,

René Redzepi 30:51

that has never happened? I've never experienced that. I mean, I've heard afterwards, where somebody have told the waiter I didn't enjoy this, you know, it wasn't for me. But I mean, it may have happened early on, but I just can't remember anymore. Because now I think people know us and they come to the restaurant. And they know that we are there an entire team trying to make them happy. It can't be bad. It just can't be you know, it's more about it's not something for you, you might enjoy other things. So that's the most of the criticism we get is that ah, is not for me. I might enjoy more French style cooking, or I want more meat on the menu. For instance, we hear that

Jacob Morgan 31:38

quite often. Well, I went to a couple. So I went to disfrutar, which I think is now number three. I went to Braga which isn't Chile, I went to Atelier Crenn, which is in San Francisco, Attica in Melbourne, which I think is on the list too. And you're right. I mean, sometimes I got like, for example, Atelier Crenn I did not like as much because it was all there was no meat on the menu, there was a lot of it was a lot of seafood style, some new or just no protein of any kind. It wasn't bad, but it wasn't my style. As much as

like disfrutar. When I went to DC return, I thought oh my god, this is like one of the best meals I've had, or brago, which I thought was amazing. And when I was an advocate in Melbourne, even that, like it was weird, because they served ants, you know, green and their emu liver alligator like stuff that you're just not used to eating? Yeah. And so one of the things that I really find fascinating about the food world is that a lot of top chefs like yourself, you're constantly looking at something and saying, Well, that could be an ingredient. And I feel like in the business world, we really struggle with that, right? We don't look at something and say, Hey, there's an opportunity there, we look at something and say, How can I apply the same thing that I've always been doing? You know, and maybe just like put a garnish on it. Can you talk about your, your your thinking process? Because you have a test kitchen, for example. And you're constantly trying to innovate new ideas, how to? How does that mind work? For innovation for creativity? How do you look at something that most people might see as an ant? Or I don't know, cabbage, and transform it into something else?

René Redzepi 33:25

Hmm. Well, first of all, flavor. And deliciousness, of course, is paramount. But so surprise, like surprising our guests. And surprising people that eat out a lot surprising your colleagues pushing the envelope having the best idea. That's more important not. You don't want to, you don't want to. It's almost encoded in cooks, you don't want to repeat yourself, you know, you have to challenge yourself to go beyond what you did last year. Yeah, that is just something that's built in you, I think from the get go. And it certainly is built into norm. We're always looking. And we're always trying to train ourselves to see the opportunities other people can't. And for me, the way we deal with it in the Test Kitchen is that I have a strong belief that creativity comes from your past experiences, reading, meeting people, everything in your ability to store those special moments like when something is valuable to your credit to your work that you can see it and take note of it and store it somewhere in that special room. And then further down the line. You might be in the Test Kitchen and you're working with beats and it's winter. And just like that you can you can fuse something from your past with that special moment. And that's when creativity happens. to me. And so for that reason, we try to have time to study with travel, just for the sake of learning something new, which I think is also, I think it's unusual. But our trade doesn't lock because the money is so low anyway, our average profit in the 20 years we've been open has been three. So we are not kind of in it for the money, you know, you're in it. For the experience to be with the team to innovate to make people happy.

Jacob Morgan 35:32

You said average profit is 3% 3%. Okay. Yeah. Interesting.

René Redzepi 35:38

Not counting COVID years, because we've that's been, of course, not well, but yeah, pre COVID, the average has been three. So you know, it's just survival rate. You need to paint the restaurant that will take 8% and half of that away, and so on and so forth. So I think, in that sense, we're also a little more free in a restaurant trade, because we come from a trade, that's tradition, not run for profit, it run for something else it's run for, for like, challenging yourself to be the best.

Jacob Morgan 36:16

Yeah, it's interesting, because one of the things that I read about you is you're a big believer in purpose, right? I mean, it's not even said earlier, you're not the number one chef or the number one restaurant for the sake of being number one, you do it for something deeper for that sense of purpose, the purpose drives you and as a result of that purpose, driving you so much, you have achieved all these accolades. Whereas I think a lot of leaders, sometimes they forget the purpose, and they chase quarterly numbers, you know, we have to grow by 5% Next year, and the whole purpose of like, why the company exists, why the leader is there is completely gone. What do you do for yourself and for your team, to reconnect the work that you guys are doing with with the purpose, and what is the purpose of the restaurant?

René Redzepi 37:01

I mean, in a very simplistic way, the purpose is to create surprise and delight for our guests to show them a place in the world. And to have them experience something that's completely unique to this place, which is normal. So developing our style or taste, our way of presenting things, everything is like is with that in mind, but besides that, we found great purpose in being part of a change in a region. You know, it's been incredible to see the transformation in the past 20 years of not just Copenhagen, but the entire region, as a food destination. Today, you can see ramps and supermarkets, you know, you can find the obscure berries in yogurts. We, you know, it's been a genuine change and to be able to be part of that, and at certain points spearhead that has been incredible. And, you know, and to to the to some of the purposes in the bit two decades, we've been open, you always have this in mind that you're there to show people. No, Ma, you know, you people have to understand their adenoma. But sometimes the purpose also shifts a little bit. So for instance, right now, even though that we're still a part of being this transformational factor for region, to show what what flavors exist in nature, and what can we coax out of fermentations? How can we look at the past to innovate in a fresh way? How can we be ever curious and never lose that about so right now we are in the transformation, a transitional phase, where our focus is very much on our team, trying to figure out how we're going to build the organization that can be the best, best best place of any restaurant organization in the world, meaning workplace conditions, paychecks and so forth. That's the that's one of the purposes main purposes that we are pushing for besides just making guests happy.

Jacob Morgan 39:23

I love that. You one of the other things that I found most fascinating about you in the restaurants you you were pinnacle of success, top of the game, and then you decided to close the restaurant. And I forgot what year was this? This is like 2008 11 or something. But anyway, you weren't you see you were at the top you're getting all these awards. Number one chef number one restaurant and then you're like, we're closing. And I think you moved everybody was a to Mexico for a little while to Japan first. Oh, Japan first. Why? Why did you do that? Because most leaders would say Okay, Renee, that is nuts. You're getting all these awards, you're making so much money, everyone is recognizing you. Why in the world would you decide to close the restaurant after you're like, number one?

René Redzepi 40:13

Actually, we did it after we had been number one three times. But I had already made the decision to close the restaurant. Because, you know, success is this incredible thing. But it's also very, very limiting. And you find yourself being pushed into a corner. And it might be a corner with a wonderful

couch on it. So you sit really well, and it's nice, and you try to get out of that couch. And I just thought to myself, I'm not even 40 at that time. And I don't want to be in this couch right now. How can we? How can we break out of that, obviously, always knowing that now we are being determined by our success, we will be kind of pigeon holed a little bit. But how can we break free from that and rethink again, what we're doing. And so making that decision, we actually planned it for almost three years before we made the move. And as we were planning this move, I had a moment of fear. And the fear was, what if we do all this and we close the restaurant, we move to a new place and try to divide the season, the year into new seasons. And we just stick to the same recipes and the same dishes? What if we can see fresh opportunity. And for that reason, we start doing these pop ups that we did, where we took the entire team, from dishwasher to CEO with our children, first to Japan, and we spent three months in Japan. Then we went to Australia, and spent six months in Australia altogether. And then we went to Mexico where we spent four months in Mexico. And the rule was that we'd go to each place and we'd set up a restaurant, temporary restaurant with the entire team. Around 100 people each time with spouses and children. We take care of everything. Schools, apartments, transportation, medical flights, we took care of everything. And it's the worst financial decision. You can it's the worst financial decision you can make.

Jacob Morgan 42:33

I was gonna say, Yeah, that's a ton of you know, 3% that Yeah, that's probably Yeah.

René Redzepi 42:38

Well, the again, the profit is the experience itself. And so we did that, to see if we could could we travel to Japan and and cook with new weird ingredients, or at least to us where that we'd never seen before? Could we do something fresh? Could we, you know, challenge ourselves. And it really worked. So it was a huge kind of training camp to come back to normal 2.0 where we decided to have three season menu, where in the summer when everything is green, and the plant kingdom is sort of king, queen and everything. We'd focus only on vegetables and be a vegetarian restaurant. And then when the leaves fall from the trees, we'd focus on the forest, game meats, mushrooms, wild fruits, and when everything started to freeze over with focus on the ocean, because that's when the high season is pristine seafood. And and that really works for us that seasonality. There's a car alarm right now, can you hear it?

Jacob Morgan 43:51

Yeah, that's fine. Okay. I'm fascinated and that success can be limiting. Because I wish that that was a lesson a lot of leaders in the business world would learn. Because success like you said Can pigeonhole you and it makes you kind of repeat the same things that you've always done. And I think it kind of it can close down the innovative the creative side of your brain and make you just try to do the same thing. And then you forget that the world around you is changing and that everything is changing, and you're still doing the same thing. And then all of a sudden you go from you know, peak of the game and you start dropping and dropping and dropping and you can't understand why and it's because you sometimes you need to take that pause. So I love that you did that.

René Redzepi 44:35

Hey, I just want to say one major change that we made here in this transition phase that we're in is that just when the pandemic started, I also decided that as much energy and and dedication and care as we put into making the next plate of food and sourcing the ingredients and so on so forth. We need to develop a team that has the same energy and spirit, but from our financial side, which we had never really focused on. And that's a different new approach to us that we have to learn, and to see if we can learn to also become an organization that financially also can be here in 2030 years from now, you know?

Jacob Morgan 45:24

Yeah, no, I like that approach. So the last part of the podcast, I want to focus on just some specific action items that I think people can apply in their life, at work and at home. And so the first kind of action item question I have for you is around how do you keep from ego taking over? leaders struggle with this all the time, right? The more you grow in your company, the more money you make, the bigger the title you get, the more ego you have, you would think that in your case, being number one in everything, you would have this massive, massive ego of I'm number one, we're the best. Yet you say you don't view yourself as number one, you don't view your restaurant is number one, how did you keep your ego in check, as you achieved, you know, something that arguably no other restaurant Norther chef has been able to achieve in the entire world.

René Redzepi 46:17

I mean, I do think I have ego, anyone who's in a position of mine would lie to themselves, you say they're egoless. But I, it's funny, because very early on. I actually, when all the success started happening, I decided to see it as a bank loan, their attention is not me to keep it's not mine to keep, you know, it's, you have to give it all back at one point. And I had seen some of my older colleagues being so attached to it, that they start making these the dumbest mistakes, because they were attached to this thing that's not yours anyway, just passes on to the next person. And so I made that decision very, very early on. For some reason, I was able to see from some of my past colleagues have done well, that once their cycle is over, they, they stick to it, and they, you know, you're the beginners and they start talking shit about other restaurants, even publicly, and so on and so forth. You know. And then another thing that also occurred to me back then, is that you don't need to work for legacy, because nobody will remember you anyway, unless you are like a candy. Nobody's going to remember you anyways. So it doesn't matter and you shouldn't work for, for legacy. I really don't think so. And those two things, I think, just made me shrug my shoulders once in a while where it was like, okay,

Jacob Morgan 48:03

kind of removed ego from you. What about on your team? Because, you know, you probably have some amazing subtle yeas, you know, some amazing people who are number one in their industry as well. How do you make sure that other people's ego doesn't take over as well? I mean, do you guys talk about that as a team?

René Redzepi 48:22

Yeah. And of course it does happen. And it's hard that one? Because, yeah, I mean, that part of it is actually a little more hard than I expected. Sometimes when you have a team member that might become a person of note. Because they have a special role. And because of that special role, they get

media attention, and because media attention, they kind of see an opportunity. And that's that's we've not dealt with that in the best way. No, we haven't. But that's for sure. An issue. Yeah.

Jacob Morgan 49:01

Yeah. No, I would imagine it's tough because you get so much spotlight on you. And, you know, the other thing that I think a lot of organizations struggle with, I don't know if you struggle with this, but when when you have high performers on your team, and people who are doing well, other people always want to take them from you. And I'm sure you've had to deal with this and struggle with this in the past. Why do you think people stay with you? Why do the people stay at your restaurant, even though everybody else wants to pull them away? Is it the purpose?

René Redzepi 49:32

I think you're right. People get headhunted constantly. I'm proud to say that. From a restaurant organization standpoint, people are kind of staying half a lifetime. You know, we have people that stay 10 years in a restaurant. That's like half a lifetime. Yeah. And we have plenty of those. We even have people who's been 20 years. When we go into that next year and 15 and 17, and so on and so forth. And I think, yes, I mean, the purpose, but also the urge to change for creativity for to move. There's no, it's not robot is not like factory style work where even a new job isn't necessarily the same cycle as the last cycle where some of my friends that might be in management, or in management consulting, you know? And it seems like they're doing the same thing over and over again, just for a new company each time, and it's sort of the same setup. And I think in that sense, because, you know, we travel and we shake things up, and it's just people, we're exploring the world and life together.

Jacob Morgan 50:51

Yeah. I like that approach. I wanted to talk about your test kitchen, because I think organizations, you know, leaders, even they need kind of their own version of a test kitchen. So talk a little bit about what goes on in your test kitchen. And I'm trying to see how we can turn this into an action item for leaders out there who can maybe mentally think of some of the work that they do as a test kitchen to experiment to test innovate, you know, how do you deal with failure in the Test Kitchen. So talk us through a little bit about what, what goes on in there?

René Redzepi 51:24

Yeah, everything goes on in there, there are no limits. There's simply no limits, you can do whatever you want, you can freak out. To my best knowledge is that, of course, you need to have a goal. And we have that three times a year, because we have this great big change of the menu that we are working towards. But besides that, you might also have a theme for the entire year, where the goal is just to explore that theme, with no objective in mind. So this is typically me that sets out the standards, I might say, we will be exploring for the next three months. Japanese temple vegan cuisine, wow. And, by the way, we're also going to Japan for 10 days, to sleep in three temples when they want to cook for us. And it's not because we're doing a Japanese temple vegan cuisine, but it's just something else. Pre pandemic, we were supposed to hike in southern Turkey for three weeks, the entire test kitchen walking from village to village, because I wanted to explore the cuisine of the Levant. And I genuinely really believe in the power of this is that sometimes when you have this task at hand, you're like, Okay, he delivered this to the test couldn't solve it, and often is hard to solve. Whereas if you have this thing

where people just exploring, and suddenly there's also things to solve, it comes easier. Yeah. And it's more free thinking in a way, if that makes any sense. No, I think that's very, very important. That is not all, hey, here's a test kitchen, you have three months to solve the next menu or the next, I don't know product in your product range. And, but at the same time, there also needs to be this space where you're just experimenting for the sake of experimenting. And something's going to come out of it. And something might not come out of it. But you know, that what is the phrase you try 100 times and succeed once? And you can, you know, you can fail forever, by not trying at all. So yeah, that that that standard has really worked for us. I think that's very, very important. And when I talk to some of my friends that are in these managerial positions that are trying to focus on innovation, sometimes this always so focused on just the product, the product, the product, as opposed to just doing something that might seem completely off. If

Jacob Morgan 54:13

you ever worked with any of those types of organizations, or do any of your friends in management come to you and say hey, Renee, what advice do you have for how we can be more innovative and transform? What do you tell your your friends or companies out there who might ask you these things?

René Redzepi 54:27

People have asked me many times I've actually never done it. I've been asked to do day sessions where I talk about how I see things and how we propel our team and challenge our team and also keep specifically the test kitchen ready to handle failure. And also to enjoy success at the same time, which can be very hard. And so but I've never actually done it in in full. I've never done that. But I do just haven't had the time.

Jacob Morgan 55:01

Yeah. When you give advice to people, what do you? What do you tell them? When they come to you and say, hey, well, what would you do? How could How do you think we can create a team of innovation and creativity? And, you know, how can I keep being a better leader? How do you?

René Redzepi 55:17

Yeah. I mean, if that's hard to say, you know, it's because it's when people ask me, there's always these specific things that they're, they're in doubt of, or they want a little bit of advice on. If you seems like you don't, I'm certainly not any, any. I'm not like at all a management. I've messed up so much in my life, but in this in, in the sort of creative side, and how to build a team that really works as a elite unit. And understanding who are those people in setting up systems so you can find these creative masterminds that I think I've been actually quite good at. And I personally believe it's going to take much, much more than people think it's not just hiring one or two people. It's a big organizational change in general, but it can be done for anyone, and then allow it time and then ideas are going to start producing so much. And when, when you have so many ideas coming out, and it feels almost too good to be true. That's when you have to change it up again.

Jacob Morgan 56:36

Well, it seems like part of it is leaders need to give themselves time and space, which everybody always says I don't have time. I'm so busy. You know, I don't have time to be curious. Because you

mentioned curiosity is a big, you know, an important thing for you. But for a lot of leaders, they just say, you know, I don't have time to be curious, I have you know, I'm working nine to five, I have these goals, I have these deadlines, but then they can say to you, yeah, you know, you have arguably more pressure, more goals, more deadlines. And somehow you have found a way to take space, for innovation and for creativity.

René Redzepi 57:09

But I learned Yeah, I learned that the only way to participate in fulfilling those expectations is by doing that, if I don't do it, that's it, you know, it's you're gonna burn out 100% You're gonna burn out and and, you know, you see it often in people and they have all they come into a work and have all these ideas and and suddenly, lo and behold, the ideas run out, and can you replenish them, I genuinely believe you can. Actually, we have a formula in the test schedule, we call it one idea out 10 ideas in so which means that for every every great idea we have, we need to find 10 ideas somewhere something that inspires us tenfold so that we kind of replenish our, our bank of knowledge and experiences to all the time see fresh opportunity, and you just simply need to do that.

Jacob Morgan 58:12

Do you have any regular practices that you have personally implemented for yourself to be a better leader? The journaling? You mentioned hiking meditation like obviously you transformed from being this kind of screaming command and control chef to one who is really really focusing on on people and then your guests. How do you keep that up each day? Any any regular practices or rituals that you do?

René Redzepi 58:37

Yeah, I actually, I'm very disciplined in that I do three weekly workouts of an hour and a half the tough and I never it doesn't even matter what it is only something very, very dramatic. I never book anything when I do it. I meditate first thing every morning 30 minutes. I've done that for many many years I hardly drink alcohol actually, that's also a big one when you want to allow yourself to be in a good space and sleep well. And that can be enough actually just those things but that's for a lot of people that can be hard to to plunk in I believe in the many even my some of my friends and even some of our regulars that are business leaders you know they even they need a coach you know of sorts even though they're they need somebody to kind of guide them and put us a little bit more structure a different type of structure into their work day. And I guess in in your world, it's isn't it also the norm that CEOs they kind of burn out and they change Most companies every five to 10 years new one in fresh anything

Jacob Morgan 1:00:04

less. Yeah, I think that's every few years. But you know, burnout is I think a lot of people struggle with burnout. How did you deal with? I mean, did you ever get burned out? And do you have any? Oh, for people out there? Who? I'm sure? Are you kidding me? What do you what do you do when you get burned out? Because a lot of people, they get burnout, and then that's it. It's like, they can't do it anymore? What advice or suggestions do you have for people who are kind of like, I can't do this anymore?

René Redzepi 1:00:33

Well, I've had a few times in my career where I thought, Okay, I can't do this anymore. But turns out I can, if I step back and think and, you know, open up and talk about it. That's is the key to start with is open up and talk about it and stop being. So let's say mature about it, you know, that you can handle it, and nobody should know that you're struggling, be vulnerable. Yeah, absolutely. 100%. And, you know, different therapies can help strong friendships, opening up to your wife, which can be hard know that from myself, and friends, you know, just stay in it, stating it out there that you kind of need help to get through this period, and then start to figure out step by step, what is it that makes you go there? You know, what are the problems, and then eliminate them? And if you can't, then it's a new job, you know, or something else. And luckily, for me, you know, I run my own business. So if there's anything for me that we were felt, okay, this isn't working for me anymore. I can, I can actually eliminate them. It's up to me to try to do that. And I have done many things over the years.

Jacob Morgan 1:02:00

Yeah. Maybe one or two more questions. I know, we're almost at a time. But you mentioned vulnerability and being vulnerable? Is that an important part of how you lead? And do you have any stories or examples you can share of how you're vulnerable with your team? I mean, do you talk about failures, mistakes, your family struggles that you're going through,

René Redzepi 1:02:18

I think it would be my close management team, they know me, not as well as my wife, but almost, and I probably know them as well. You know, we go through life with we're in it together. You know, a lot of these people I've worked with, for so long, and I've seen them have kids, I've seen some of them get divorced, and remarry, and so on and so forth. There is a strong professional code between us. But we also allow ourselves to know each other and understand that at certain point, okay, I'm in this situation right now. I need my space to handle this. And, and that works.

Jacob Morgan 1:03:02

Yeah, having a communication that seems like is pretty important. Yeah, yeah. Well, before we wrap up, and I asked you where people go, can go to learn more about you any, any last parting words of wisdom or advice or any, any action items that you think all the current and aspiring leaders out there need to take in order to be better at what they do?

René Redzepi 1:03:27

Maybe the last one, be more vulnerable. Open up more, that will. Oh, if you do that, you open up yourself more, you open up for your creativity, you open up for your mind. It's can be very hard, because most leaders, big time leaders, they have all sorts of things in the baggage, you know, there's, there's something that drives them a chip on the shoulder. Something you know, and so,

Jacob Morgan 1:03:57

what if you're getting up to trouble and you can't do it? Yeah. Say that again? Sorry. Instead, what if people are scared to be vulnerable? They're like, Oh, you know, I don't want my team to think that I'm a weak I don't want them to think that I'm incompetent. Or, you know, I don't want to, like how do you how do you get past that?

René Redzepi 1:04:13

Yeah, that's funny, because I had a conversation last week with one of my team members, and he was asking me this, as well. And, you know, he comes from tough background, and he's not afraid of anything, but he's so afraid of this. Like he's genuinely afraid, like a little child to you know, because he was asking me, how did you do it? Well, as I just took the step one, and I asked him so what do you want to talk about it? He just couldn't start it. And so I can see that that's something but taking that long road of of doing that can be incredibly beneficial. That's what I think. And I think it's, oh, it would just make everything so much better. Yeah, I agree. All these men in their positions just open up a little bit more.

Jacob Morgan 1:05:05

That's what my next book is about. That's coming out the next year vulnerability and leadership. So it's a it's a perfect way to end. Where can people go to learn more about you your restaurant? When is your next available reservation? Is it like, two years out? No,

René Redzepi 1:05:23

actually, we haven't opened up gaming for season, which is coming up in October, we'll be opening opening that in like, I forget, but I think he's like in two weeks. So kind of end of April, the end of August, maybe beginning of September. And for a window of like, five, six hours, people have an opportunity to book until the end of the year and then then it's booked out.

Jacob Morgan 1:05:48

That's crazy. Five say it's like a you literally, it's like the Superbowl or going to see, you know, a famous musical act where the tickets sell out for the whole year within just a few hours. Yeah. Well, where can people go to learn more about you and your restaurant any any links that you want to point people to? Maybe we'll get the we'll get into sell out in like 30 minutes this time?

René Redzepi 1:06:11

Oh, man. Maybe go to I don't know my Instagram. That's a good one. Normals in Instagram.

Jacob Morgan 1:06:23

What's the website of your? Your restaurant?

René Redzepi 1:06:26

And noma.dk? DK for Denmark? No. Manga. That's a good place. You're right. Go to that.

Jacob Morgan 1:06:31

Yeah. And I saw the restaurant Instagram. You guys have some other like transformation that you're planning for? 2023?

René Redzepi 1:06:38

Yes. Can't talk about that now.

Jacob Morgan 1:06:41

Man. Well, if you ever decide to do a pop up in California, you let me know. I will most definitely. Well, thank you so much for taking time out of your day. This has been amazing. I learned a lot. I really appreciate it. So thank you.

René Redzepi 1:06:56

Thank you so much. Be well. Yeah,

Jacob Morgan 1:06:59

thank you. Alright, one sec. Let me push stock record. All right. I'm guessing you have service right now?

René Redzepi 1:07:04

No, actually, it's Monday. So we're closed. Oh, you're

Jacob Morgan 1:07:08

closed on Monday? Yes. Oh, man. So you get to relax. And

René Redzepi 1:07:12

this Monday, we're closed this Monday. We're close.

Jacob Morgan 1:07:15

Well, if I ever have plans to speak out near your part of the world, I'll definitely let you know. And I'll make sure to book a reservation. If I know I'm going to be in Europe somewhere.

René Redzepi 1:07:25

Yeah, you just text us. We'll figure it out. All right. Well, thank

Jacob Morgan 1:07:28

you. I really, really appreciate your time. You have some wonderful insights and just ideas and congratulations on all the amazing things that you've done. It's really it's really inspiring. Thank you, man. Thank you. Take care. All right. Bye bye. Right