

Pod of Wales- Carmarthenshire

Cast:

Kiri Pritchard-McLean

Esyllt Sears

Guests:

Maggie

Joyce

David

Anthony

Lisa

Elis James

[Intro Music]

Kiri: Bora da good morning.

Esyllt: Bora da.

Kiri: Welcome everybody to the Pod of Wales. We're waking up this morning in Laugharne where you join us today, we're staying at the beautiful Brown's Hotel.

Esyllt: It's so nice. Imagine just wood panelling, lovely.

Kiri: You've just described a shed.

Esyllt: [Laughs]

Kiri: Yeah so, I would also throw in there rolltop bath and comfortable beds.

Esyllt: [Laughs] I should have started.

Kiri: Yeah so had lovely food here last night. There's a restaurant called Dexter's and I'm always so delighted when someone can cater for you when you're a vegan and still have a lovely dinner.

Esyllt: Yeah.

Kiri: And we're now having breakfast because we've got a massive day ahead haven't we?

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- Esyllt So first of all I don't think we could come to this area without doing something relating to Dylan Thomas.
- Kiri: So we're getting drunk.
- Esyllt: Yeah pretty much [laughs]. We're going to go to his writing shed, I've never been there, I don't know that much about him.
- Kiri: I read from cover to back the hotel guide so I think I'm book smart on him. I think that's more than I've read of Dylan Thomas but don't worry I've seen Under Milk Wood murdered a few times in amateur productions so.
- Esyllt Have you seen Matthew Rhys as Dylan Thomas?
- Kiri: No.
- Esyllt It's a very sexy film.
- Kiri: Oh really?
- Esyllt Yeah [laughs].
- Kiri: OK add that to the reading list.
- Esyllt [Laughs] So we're going to go to his working shed and then oh we're going to go to a gin distillery.
- Kiri: Yes I know this gin.
- Esyllt Oh!
- Kiri: Because if it's Welsh and it's a gin I will be aware of it. Called Jin Talog. Oh my God that looks so good.
- Esyllt Yeah and so then after we've had some gin, we're going to try and make some cawl.
- Kiri: I'm very interested to see how chopping goes.
- Esyllt Yeah I know [laughs].

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- Kiri: After we have a gin tasting.
That's me thank you so much, cheers.
- Esyllt If you're Welsh I think you will have had some version of cawl at some point.
- Kiri: Mm-hmm.
- Esyllt It's like a chunky soup.
- Kiri: Yeah like a broth with veg and meat.
- Esyllt Stew-y usually lamb. If you have a recipe for cawl in your family people are very protective over it.
- Kiri: Yeah every family has one super ingredient, they're like we put a banana skin in ours or whatever. Like what you need is a recently smoked cigarette.
Lovely thank you.
Drop the dogend in it and that really brings out all the flavours.
- Esyllt [Laughs] Yeah.
- Kiri: Really excited to do that because they're making me a vegan one as well.
- Esyllt Well our breakfast has just arrived so I'm going to shut up and eat.
[Interim Music]
- Esyllt I love the beach when it's winter.
- Kiri: It's just stretching out in front of us, and it's covered in frost, this is beautiful. And it's very still and then there's the sort of sea mist rising on the horizon. Oh my gosh this is Wales man. Maggie you're joining us and you're being our guide.

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- Maggie: And this is the writing shed.
- Kiri: Wow.
- Esyllt Oh it's tiny, it looks like it's teetering on the edge of a cliff.
- Kiri: Yeah it's pushed right out isn't it?
- Esyllt You wouldn't get planning permission for that today would you?
- Kiri: Oh.
- Esyllt So I thought there are two massive doors either side but it's opened this tiny little hole in the middle of it, it's gorgeous.
- Kiri: So there's this tiny little wooden shed and then there's a table at the end shoved right up against the window, which is covered in bits of writing and there's a quill and an inkpot.
- Esyllt What I love is there's a bucket beneath the table and it's full of writing [laughs].
- Kiri: Yes.
- Esyllt Bits of paper, and that encapsulates what it is to be a writer I think. There's most of the paper in the bin.
- Kiri: Yeah it's sneaking in through a little door into a shed and then making magic. Lovely.
- Maggie: So we'll take you down now to the boathouse. This is my colleague Joyce.
- Kiri: Hi Joyce.
- Joyce: Good morning.

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Maggie: This is my boss actually [laughs]. Joyce actually remembers the Thomas' living here don't you?

Joyce: Yeah they came to school with us.

Esyllt Oh wow.

Joyce: Yeah.

Kiri: Were you aware then growing up that this sort of big talent was in the town?

Joyce: Not really. We always thought, well he doesn't do a regular job like my father.

Maggie: Barry's family used to describe him as a waster and a scrounger.

Esyllt My granddad was a village policeman and he covered a patch where Dylan used to drink. So my granddad didn't like him very much because he obviously caused a lot of issues for him on the weekend. [laughs]

Maggie: After you Joyce. Go careful on these steps. So this is the boathouse, welcome to the boathouse.

Kiri: Wow it's so lovely.

Joyce: This is the front parlour and this is setup very much as it would have been and this is Dylan's father's desk which came over here.

Esyllt The view from that desk, I would get nothing done. I would just be looking out my window and not actually getting any writing done. It's amazing.

Kiri: It's really lovely. It's also exactly what you want from a writer, do you know I mean? That they would sit in an old desk staring out onto a beautiful landscape and then come up with these fantastic stories.

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Esyllt It's why so many people want to be writers, it's that. We never studied any of his work at school. We did the Child's Christmas in Wales I think a week before the Christmas holidays one year. And obviously Wales has a wealth of other authors and poets and playwrights but why do you think Dylan, especially outside of Wales, has become such a big name?

Maggie: I think it's because it's so beautifully written. And I mean you read something like A Child's Christmas and it's just lovely and it just flows. And it's universal. For example Under Milk Wood could be set absolutely anywhere, anywhere there's a small community where you've got neighbours, everybody knows everybody's business, they're all talking over the back fence.

Kiri: Yeah local characters yeah.

Maggie: So it could be in Laugharne or it could be in Devon or could be in Cornwall, I'm going for the Celtic counties now.

Kiri: Although I do have a bone to pick with Dylan Thomas for sort of influencing the behaviour of every lofty, creative boy I dated in my sort of teens and 20s that thought that I'm not going to have a job, I'm just going to drink loads because that's actually what Dylan Thomas did and it means that I'm a great artist. I'm like you're a something artist, yeah.

Joyce: Yeah.

Esyllt Do you think that the mythology of the man as well kind of adds to it?

Maggie: And it was a mythology, it's what Joyce was saying earlier, you know he didn't drink all the time, he couldn't afford it. He'd go and have half a pint and make it last unless there was somebody about who was prepared to

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buy him a pint, hence his reputation as a bit of a scrounger you know.

Esyllt See I'm starting to think now that maybe my granddad was just feeding into that mythology, maybe he wasn't as bad as my granddad said [laughs].

Kiri: But also if you are just sat in the pub, I mean when I started doing comedy, you would go and sit in a coffee shop or a pub because it was warmer than your house and you would make that glass of water or that cup of coffee or that pint or whatever last all day because you could work in there, and people watch, and use their internet. And it would have been similar for him, if he's looking for inspiration and you want to get out of the house. But then it does mean that you are always around when something is kicking off, because you are always in the pub. So maybe he was always present but not always causing it.

This is magic, oh my gosh, this is so lovely.

Esyllt Imagine the parties you could have out here.

Kiri: Oh.

Esyllt Like seriously.

Kiri: Cigarettes everywhere yeah. And a bit of a sing-song.

Maggie: When I was about seven or eight years old the Laugharne Players always used to have a festival every three years and part of that festival always would be a performance of Under Milk Wood. And I can remember at seven or eight years of age going to the performance in a tent in the course field, rickety wooden chairs, the smell of grass and canvas because it was an old canvas tent then. And watching Under Milk Wood and just taking it all in and going 'Yeah this is it'. From there on in.

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Kiri: Love the sound of these local productions of Under Milk Wood, because there must have been a meta level of the local characters and celebrities playing said people on stage.

Maggie: Yes.

Kiri: Like oh of course they're playing that part and of course she's the racy one.

Maggie: I mean we still do performances of Under Milk Wood and Adrian who's our postman plays Willy Nilly postman because he would. Who else could do you it? You know.

Kiri: It would be brutal if he didn't get that casting wouldn't it?

[Laughter]

Esyllt I'd love it though if at the interview to become the postman here, you'd have to agree to be in a play every year.

Kiri: [Laughs]

Joyce: Yes you can only have a job in this village if you agree to.

Kiri: You've got shorts. How's your projection though? Can you speak from the diaphragm?

[Laughter]

Kiri: Thank you [Speaks Welsh].

Esyllt Have a lovely day [Speaks Welsh].

I feel completely inspired.

Kiri: I do yeah, shall we settle down with a guy with a drink problem? Yeah.

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Esyllt Because I didn't know how I would feel about coming here because you've seen photographs and you hear people talking about Dylan Thomas a lot.

Kiri: Yeah.

Esyllt And I've never been here and I'm really glad that we have because now I get a sense of, you can put everything in context somehow about where he came from and why he wrote like he did.

Kiri: We're trying to explain the feelings but until you're stood in that room looking out that window, you can't really experience it because it's just a slice of magic here.

Esyllt Oh yeah I've completely bought into it.

Kiri: Oh yeah.

Esyllt Completely [laughs].

Kiri: We've just seen a house that's up for sale but it's a million pounds so um.

Esyllt Halfsies?

Kiri: Yeah [laughs]. We're going to go and do some gin tasting now.

Esyllt Oh yes we are.

Kiri: And I think it's only going to be a couple of gins before it's like 'I should call my bank and see. I'm just going to call my bank and see'.

Esyllt [Laughs]

Kiri: Selling all my eggs on the internet to buy a house in Laugharne.

Esyllt It would be worth it.

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[Pod of Wales- Interim Music]

Esyllt This is so beautiful.

David: Bora da [Speaks Welsh 10:07]

Esyllt [Speaks Welsh]

Kiri: It is so nice here.

Esyllt So pretty. We're recording this in December and there's a light dusting of snow, it's beautiful.

Kiri: Yeah and a dove poking it's head out of a barn.

David: Yeah.

Kiri: It's a bit much guys. It's like Richard Curtis has been involved.

[Laughter]

David: We planned it all for you.

Esyllt Thank you we appreciate it.

David: Well let's go inside and warm up shall we?

Kiri: Yeah please.

David: Are you OK with dogs?

Kiri: Yeah I love dogs.

Esyllt Oh God yes.

David: Super friendly.

Esyllt Hello, oh my God!

Kiri: This is magic. So this is the original farmhouse, this would have been the big farm wouldn't it?

David: Yeah this is the biggest farm in the whole area yeah.

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Anthony: Can I take your coats? Tea? Coffee? We've got gin.

[Laughter]

Kiri: We are in a beautiful, beautiful farmhouse kitchen at the beating heart of Jin Talog. Would you like to introduce yourselves?

Anthony: Yeah I'm Anthony, originally from (place 11:10) and I'd like to say that I'm the looks and the brains behind Jin Talog.

Kiri: You can say it because it's a podcast, no one can check.

[Laughter]

David: This is where I have to intervene with some journalistic integrity that you're not.

[Laughs]

I'm David, bora da, it's lovely to have you here. I'm from Cardiff originally and now I've been adopted by the beautiful county of Camarthenshire.

Esyllt So when you moved here did you already know that you were going to start a distillery?

David: Moving to a farm with wonderful farm buildings, it was the obvious thing to do, to produce something.

Anthony: The desire to make and to create was a bucket list thing.

David: Earlier on we had some really great advocates for us who were stockists like Wally's in Cardiff who were just really...

Kiri: That's where I discovered you. I was in there looking for booze for probably a present and he was like 'These guys are Welsh and it's really small batches.' And he said 'It's just two mad guys on a farm making it themselves.'

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[Laughter]

Esyllt But why gin?

Anthony: We were getting tired with the gins that offered a lot but under delivered in the glass. So we said I wonder if we could do better? So we spent some time becoming distillers, we'd launched and you mentioned Wally's. And we got Fire and Ice in Narberth and Taylor's in Camarthen who were really, really loyal stockists of ours. And then we won three stars with the Great Taste awards.

Kiri: [Draws breath]

Anthony: And we're the only Welsh gin ever to win three stars with Great Taste.

David: You're showing off now.

Anthony: I know, I know.

Esyllt What makes your unique then?

Anthony: We are the only gin in the UK that only uses juniper. So our gin only has three ingredients, it's got spring water here on the farm, it's got the spirit of course and it's got a the juniper berries.

David: The raw materials are really important. Everything we do is organic. The results speak for themselves. We just really like gin.

Esyllt I mean you've said that quite a few times now.

David: Maybe a bit too much.

Kiri: [Laughs] Was yelling it topless from one of the upstairs windows earlier. Are we allowed to taste some then?

Esyllt Oh please. Look at these glasses.

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Kiri: Is there anything that isn't aggressively tasteful in your life?

[Laughter]

This is unbelievable, even the biscuits.

David: So maybe try it neat or certainly have a smell.

Kiri: Mm.

David: And then I can give you some tonic.

Esyllt So nice.

Kiri: Oh gosh it's so nice. So that's what juniper smells like.

David: Yeah.

Kiri: You can smell it a little bit but it's strong, but without being overpowering.

David: Because we're a single botanical gin the only thing you can smell and taste in our gin is juniper. On the nose here all of the complexity. It really reminds me of going to Brechfa Forest here in Camarthenshire, that kind of forest floor sort of piney sense.

Kiri: It's piney yeah. I've just tried some neat, I've never had neat gin knowingly before.

[Laughter]

It's nice.

David: I'm going to give you some tonic.

Kiri: This is delicious.

Esyllt There's something very smooth, as soon as you put the tonic in it suddenly feels very different. It feels smooths and...

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Anthony: And notice, no slice.

Esyllt Ah.

Anthony: Because the moment you put a slice of lime or lemon into our gin it changes, because that's what you smell first in the glass and then it changes the flavour profile.

Kiri: Real purists here.

David: Yeah.

Kiri: You must be so proud.

Anthony: We are, we are it's lovely. It really is, it's lovely. And also the whole of the community has been very supportive.

David: We've had an amazing response from the community. If you think about it, you know two gay people moving to the middle of Wales.

Kiri: What?! Stop the podcast.

[Laughter]

David: We moved here, Anthony is from Camarthenshire, I'm from Cardiff. What we hadn't realised moving back into Wales, we could have lived quite a lonely life here but actually this has opened so many doors. And you know as you're driving down the lanes in Camarthenshire there are so many farm lanes with great people doing fantastic things down them.

Anthony: It is incredible you know the artists, food producers, farms that are diversifying and doing great things. It's all happening all around here and we might not have known about that unless we...

Kiri: But you could happily drink and eat your way around the country and have some of the best food and things in the world.

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Esyllt Yes. OK I'm already thinking we should buy a bus and drive people around in a bus.

Kiri: That sounds like a very classy event, that does yeah.

Esyllt So when you have visitors then, what can they expect? Can they book to come and see you? Can they book and have a gin tasting or?

Anthony: Yes. Please book because otherwise we're not here always. And they can taste our range of gins and some people come for ten minutes, some people stay for two hours.

Esyllt Some amazing glasses have come out, what are they?

David: So we talked about our single botanical gin, it is the classic gin that we make. But of course we do know that people like fruit flavoured gins as well and all the different exotic things. And so people kept asking 'What other kinds of gins do you have?'

Anthony: No people kept asking us, 'Do you do a big?'

Kiri: I was going to say is it a big gin?

[Laughter]

David: How can we broaden the range a little bit without compromising anything that we do. So the conditions were, had to be organic and we would add one other botanical to our single botanical gin that we grew here on the farm.

Anthony: And it had to be a London Dry. London Dry in a nutshell means that the botanical has to be distilled in the still and nothing can be added after distillation apart from water.

Kiri: Oh!

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Esyllt Oh yeah. OK I'm going to try and guess now. So it's something that you grow here that you can add to it.

David: Yes it has to start with standalone and dried distillation process.

Esyllt Fascinating.

Kiri: OK, what would survive? So it's got to be quite strong.

David: This is my favourite of all the gins that we make and it's perfect.

Kiri: I know what that is.

David: What?

Kiri: Is that bay leaf?

David: Correct, well done.

Esyllt Well done.

Kiri: Yeah it smells like my front door, there's not a dish that my partner won't put bay leaf in.

David: Bay leaf is great, love it. Rice pudding, amazing with a bay leaf in it.

Esyllt [Draws breath] Are you kidding? That's really nice.

Kiri: Wow! It's lovely.

Anthony: We make less than a hundred bottles of this every year because we don't buy the bay in, it's what we grow. So once it's gone it's gone.

Esyllt How big a bush is it?

David: Don't ask personal questions.

Esyllt Sorry.

[Laughter]

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- Kiri: Well you can't see it from over here so it's not that big.
[Laughter]
- David: Right the next one. Now this is unmistakable, again grown here.
- Esyllt Oh OK.
- David: You might not get the exact thing but you'll definitely be in the ballpark.
- Esyllt We'll see.
- Kiri: You're taking this so seriously [laughs].
- Esyllt Right.
- Anthony: This is the second one, again twin botanical, juniper and something else.
- Esyllt I want to say orange.
- Anthony: It's citrus. Come on.
- Kiri: Lemongrass?
- Anthony: Very good, lemon verbena.
- Kiri: Oh verbena yeah. Am I amazing guys? I'll tell you what I am, is pissed.
[Laughter]
- Anthony: You have an amazing palette.
- Kiri: Thank you.
- Esyllt I'm absolutely livid because I'm a really keen gardener and I'm so angry that you got both of them right.
- Kiri: Yeah.

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David: Please tell me what patch of Wales you go to where they grow oranges.

Kiri: [Laughs]

Anthony: So I said that we're true botanicals, we grow them here ourselves on the farm. And then we broke a rule didn't we? We brought in the best quality botanical that we could find to make this gin because we just can't grow it here, it's impossible. So let's see what you think?

Kiri: Mm, interesting, you might get your orange mate.

Anthony: You might, you might.

Kiri: Thank you very much. It's peppery.

Anthony: Yeah keep going.

Esyllt I really hate you.

Kiri: It's one of the colours of pepper right?

Anthony: Yeah.

Esyllt Green [laughs]

David: Uh-uh.

[Laughter]

Kiri: I'm going to infer something from why you said, is it because people are asking for a certain, is it pink pepper?

David: Yes.

Anthony: Well done!

David: Well done!

Kiri: Yeah is this a job? Can this be a job? [laughs].

David: So pink peppercorn.

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- Esyllt There's something Christmas-y about it.
- David: Yeah.
- Esyllt Like really subtle, like that lovely juice that you get in the mince pie, but it's really muted.
- Kiri: Yes!
- Anthony: Mince pie juice though, I've never heard of that before.
- Esyllt I'm trying to redeem myself here, I'm trying to think with my tongue [laughs].
- Kiri: [Laughs] Your tongue's an idiot.
[Laughter]
- Esyllt This is phenomenal.
- Anthony: And you asked us earlier if there was only the two of us but in fact there are 14 of us because our sheep are part of the team.
- Kiri: What have you got?
- Anthony: Balwens.
- Kiri: Oh lovely.
- David: Which are natives of Carmarthenshire originally.
- Kiri: Yeah, yeah.
- Anthony: And we use their fleece as packaging.
- Esyllt Oh wow, fantastic.
- Anthony: So because we're organic and sustainable and no single use plastic, when we set up we were looking for how we would send the gin by post. So we had a lot of black wool staring at us. We use a process called (suent?) which is to ferment the wool. So in the summer...

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Esyllt Oh my God I bet that stinks.

Anthony: It does.

David: It does, it really stinks.

Anthony: We ferment the wool for a couple of weeks, the bacteria in the wool eats the lanolin, we rinse it and dry it and card it and it's good to go.

Esyllt Oh wow.

David: And it's like a sourdough starter. So the water you've used originally you keep, and you put another fleece in it and just gets stronger and stronger and stronger.

Esyllt: Oh!

Kiri: You should start selling the stuff that's leftover, if you really want to get drunk this is what we clean the fleeces in.

[Laughter]

Esyllt Whenever I've received something through the post that's been packaged with lamb's wool, I then use it to line my roof, like I use it to insulate my roof.

Anthony: Really?

Esyllt Seriously I love free wood and I love free wool.

Anthony: (Cardi?)

Kiri: Yes! My dad's a (Cardi?) and that's why we bond over our love of picking up...

Esyllt Free wood.

Kiri: Yes and any kind of packaging that can get the wood burner going.

David: Yeah actually we better check those trees on the lane.

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[Laughter]

Kiri: There won't be a twig in sight.

Esyllt Imagine if I had packed my (hansole?)

Kiri: This has been so delightful, and I'm not saying that because I'm clearly drunk.

[Laughter]

Can you tell I'm really concentrating on how to enunciate at the moment? Like I say your passion has shone through and now we've got to go and sober up with cooking. Where are we going now?

Esyllt We're going to a cookery school, The Shed Cookery School.

Kiri: The Shed yeah.

Esyllt And we're going to cook some soup. No not soup!

Kiri: Cowl.

Esyllt Cowl, I was brought up on cowl. Oh God, maybe we should...

Anthony: You're going to make a mess of it.

Esyllt Yay!

Anthony: The Shed is great, Lisa does great things and she's a fantastic supporter of local food here in Camarthenshire and her recipe books are a go-to for us at this time of year.

Kiri: Oh great.

Esyllt Well I've got both of my grandmother's voices in my head so let's go and see how she butchers a cowl.

[Laughter]

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Kiri: I'm so drunk I was like, we're butchering a cow?

[Laughter]

I'll do it, I'll do it, I'm a vegan but I'll do it.

[Interim Music]

Esyllt (Vourness?) is a really long-running comedy night and they really prioritise booking Welsh acts as well.

Kiri: Yeah. It is you know quite a key venue for comedy and attracts big names.

Esyllt They've got (unclear 22:26) has moved to Camarthen now as well. And they've keen to showcase more comedy.

Kiri: Anna Thomas is from (place?) as well.

Esyllt Is she?

Kiri: Yeah.

Esyllt Oh I didn't know that. Like an insane amount of comedians come from this area, Camarthenshire.

Kiri: Yeah.

[Interim Music]

Esyllt We have just walked into the most beautiful space. It's very Christmas-y because we're very lucky to be here for Christmas. And we're in (place?) to have a cookery lesson with the lovely Lisa, hello Lisa.

Lisa: Hello [speaks Welsh]

Esyllt [Speaks Welsh]

Kiri: [Speaks Welsh] This is the best looking former cowshed I've ever been in.

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Lisa: [Laughs]

Kiri: And I've been in a few Lisa, I don't want to brag. This is gorgeous. So it's a big lovely high ceiling with the original wood beams, two sort of mezzanine levels at either end. It's a real hub isn't it?

Esyllt It's lovely and you've got all products and stuff out and it's like the dream pantry. It's like a whole house of a pantry.

Lisa: Well it's funny you should say that because I started the business in the house which isn't too far away and then I modelled this on, it works in the kitchen.

Kiri: Oh OK.

Lisa: So let's recreate the kitchen down here.

Esyllt This feels like you're in someone's house.

Lisa: Yeah.

Kiri: Do you have all ages coming and using this space then?

Lisa: Yes originally. My youngest went to school and I started the classes for her sort of age. Then they became teenagers, so I had I teens class automatically. The younger siblings of the first classes started coming, so we had the little younger ones which we now Little Pumpkins. And then the parents used to come along saying 'Oh, how do you make that then?' and 'Is that how brussels sprouts grow?' And then 'Oh we need classes' so we started adult classes so now we do the full range.

Esyllt Wow.

Lisa: So I say if you can sit up, I can teach you how to cook.

Esyllt And do you do a mix of Welsh and English classes?

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Lisa: I tend to just accept whoever wants to come and then I speak whichever language they prefer, bilingual.

Esyllt So it's not dedicated?

Lisa: No, no.

Kiri: It's great because that's how language exists right? Is you chop and change whoever you're chatting to and even if you're all together we just speak.

Esyllt Was that planned deliberate?

Kiri: Um yes. So what are we going to be making today?

Lisa: We're going to be making some traditional Welsh ham cowl and [Speaks Welsh]. Ham.

Esyllt I was convinced it's going to be lamb, it's definitely going to be lamb. In the countryside in Wales and Welsh speaking Wales, you will have been brought up on cowl. Like I remember my mum used to make cowl in a pressure cooker.

Lisa: Yeah.

Esyllt I remember like the smell and the taste of it.

Kiri: Shhhhhhh.

Esyllt Yeah that noise [laughs] I can't unhear it. And the whole house would smell of cowl, we'd go to school the next day stinking of cowl.

Kiri: So I'll be doing barley cowl.

Lisa: You'll be making barley cowl. I don't know whether it is a thing quite honestly but I remember my grandfather, my grandfather was the cook and he'd be bowling his cowl, both grandparents made cowl actually but my grandfather I remember, just after putting the meat in and the vegetables in, he'd always throw in two handfuls

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of barley. And I never really thought about it and then when I was eating the cowl we'd have little chewy nuggets at the bottom.

Kiri: Mm.

Esyllt Mm.

Lisa: Oh boy did I like those.

Kiri: Yeah.

Lisa: And I think now, and especially when the kids were little, I used to do all sorts of things, I used to put pasta in believe it or not.

Kiri: [Laughs]

Lisa: Anything to fill them up you know. Because they'd always leave the potato behind so I thought, well they like pasta.

Kiri: Sneak it in.

Lisa: So I don't know what you call pasta cowl but anyway.

[Laughter]

Kiri: But yeah the barley works really well. So you're going to be making exactly the same but with barley, vegetable stock, you'll be using chicken stock and ham.

Esyllt Great.

Kiri: Great, so nice. I love the thought of pasta cowl [laughs]. It's like you know when you get fusion restaurants. Italian Welsh. I can't wait.

Esyllt No I'm really excited about this. Let's do it, let's chop some veg.

Lisa: Let's go.

Kiri: So what do we do? There's loads of gorgeous veg here.

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Lisa: So basically cowl, root vegetables. So swede, carrots, parsnips, some say you should start with the harder vegetables first. So carrots obviously take quite a long time to boil. Um much less time to boil a parsnip until it's cooked. Swede takes forever, so if you put the swede in first, you can add the onion, you can add the leek. But then you'd add the potato and the parsnip last. What I tend to do, because who has got time to be hanging around looking at a pot deciding which minute you put your parsnips in? I change the size of the cut. So I cut the hard things small, because they cook faster. And then I cook the parsnips big.

Kiri: Science.

Lisa: Yeah the advantage of that as far as my kids go, they know which bits to leave behind.

Kiri: [Laughter] So is it just the case of basically chopping it up?

Lisa: Yeah let's peel and chop. But whilst you do that, so there's two ways again, I've got just a small kilo for cowl, we can make it the slow way and boil the whole piece, it will take about 45 minutes, you've got the stock and you've got a whole piece of ham for making it into a meal tonight let's say. Or if you know you're just going to use it for cowl, you can chop it up into cubes, raw, and then add it in with the vegetables and it will cook in 20 minutes.

Esyllt Oh wow.

Lisa: Again it's all to do with the size of the piece you know. So I suggest this afternoon because I'm hungry, we chop this up into small pieces, we bung it in with the vegetables and we have cowl in 20 minutes.

Esyllt And you save a bit on electricity as well...

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Lisa: Yeah exactly.

Esyllt ...by not cooking stuff twice yeah.

Lisa: Yeah definitely, definitely. But you haven't got the piece then to carve, that's the only disadvantage.

Esyllt No, no.

Kiri: I'm starving.

Lisa: Let's do it, let's do it.

Esyllt So this is quite a quick meal then?

Lisa: Yeah I think so. And economical to make and to cook actually because it's not going to take too long to make. It's using all of the cheap vegetables you can find in the supermarket, there's nothing fancy.

Esyllt As a child the reason I loved having cowl was because you would have really nice bread, butter and cheese with it. And I was in it for all the carbs.

Kiri: The accoutrements, yeah, yeah. Are you two aggressively trying to stop me being a vegan?

[Laughter]

Everything you're describing sounds absolutely incredible.

Esyllt Oh yeah but barley is great as well, isn't it?

Kiri: Oh come on mate.

Lisa: [Laughs] Now what I've got in a glass here is little mini potatoes, so I'm just going to pop those in.

Kiri: Oh!

Lisa: Oh does that hurt?

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Esyllt I see that and I think oh God I'm not going to know when that's ready. Like I'm going to have to keep like...

Lisa: They're so small they'll be fine, don't panic. Don't panic.

Esyllt Do you have people come here and ask you to teach them to cook specific things, do you get requests?

Lisa: Yes more recently I've learned to cook Sri Lankan hoppers.

Kiri: Oh my gosh hoppers are amazing, I went to Sri Lanka on holiday.

Esyllt What are they?

Kiri: Hoppers are amazing. Pancake-y type thing.

Lisa: It's like a pancake, it's a slightly fermented pancake. So I'm still learning, I'd never heard of Sri Lankan hoppers before that.

Esyllt I'm sure it's great.

Kiri: There's an amazing dish called (kartu?) and we'd have double dinners.

[Laughter]

We'd walk along there, we'd go and have one there, because they were like two quid. We'd have one there, we'd have a mango daiquiri and then we'd go to the next one and go 'Oh should we have dinner darling?'

[Laughter]

And do like the whole charade in front of them and have another one and then get another mango daquiri on the way back and that was basically our holiday. I went up a dress size in nine days [laughs].

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Esyllt You're talking about somewhere you went on holiday and you remember that food and it's not just about the food it's the whole experience of it. And I think especially this journey we're both going on around Wales, it's really nice to be able to taste what every area has to offer because I will never book a holiday unless I know there's good food wherever I'm going. But I think to cook it as well, it gives you a different appreciation for where you've gone on holiday. And I think Welsh food does get a bad reputation.

Kiri: It's so strange isn't it, that Wales is known for its produce but not its food.

Esyllt Yeah.

Kiri: The lamb is famous and just the land and yet you would like oh Welsh cuisine. And it's a shame because there are amazing things. Like when you give someone who has never had a Welsh cake before it's like they're having a religious experience.

[Laughter]

We should have a bit more confidence in our food as well as our produce.

Lisa: Yeah.

Esyllt How shall I chop this onion? Are you doing big chunks?

Lisa: I'd do big chunks. That's it, big chunks but obviously you want it to be, we don't eat cawl with a knife and fork so I always say mouth sized pieces. I'm going to pop the kettle on to get some hot water. And there's some potatoes there which you can just put in or you can cut them in half if you like.

Esyllt No that's all right [laughs].

Lisa: I won't be offended.

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- Esyllt I'm going to take a risk.
- Kiri: [Speaks Welsh] What do you call them?
- Lisa: Oh (Glasateer?) they're just from Pembroke, they're Pembrokeshire, they're Welsh potatoes.
- Kiri: Oh amazing.
- Esyllt They sell them in loads of supermarkets.
- Lisa: Gosh I love, I cannot make cawl without crunching through a cube of swede.
- Esyllt I've never done that.
- Kiri: Raw? Can I try some.
- Lisa: Mm, it's so good. It is a taste yes, just get a little bit of sweetness, almost how do you describe it?
- Kiri: That's great.
- Lisa: It's good isn't it?
- Kiri: Yeah.
- Esyllt It's got a fresh taste to it. Like it doesn't taste...
- Lisa: [Laughs]
- Esyllt Don't do that.
- Kiri: Oh yeah the Welsh brush their teeth with a parsnip or a swede.
- Lisa: Oh God, that's how those rumours start isn't it?
- Kiri: Yeah exactly.
- Lisa: A vegetable stock or a chicken stock. And then just add that in.
- Kiri: Where should it come up to basically?

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- Lisa: Over the top, everything covered, OK. And then you pop them into the boil and you have to wait 20 minutes for this to boil. OK do you want to bring them through? We can top them up in here. I'll boil another kettle for them.
- Esyllt This is the kind of thing that you could just chop it and leave it. The whole thing is it sort of takes care of itself right?
- Lisa: Yes. I must say your barley cowl looks really pretty actually.
- Kiri: It does. I've got to get a picture.
- Lisa: I'm just wondering whether I should add a handful of barley into mine as well.
- Kiri: I didn't realise how rich in produce Carmarthen is. Have you heard of the larder trails that they have because this is on the mid-county one.
- Lisa: We're on the mid-county one.
- Kiri: Yes.
- Lisa: Along with a lot of other independently owned, I think that's the important thing to stress, businesses that are promoting food in Camarthenshire so some of them are recommended for lunch, some for breakfast with a cookery school and a café in Camarthen. And they just recommend places that really produce good quality local food, all locally sourced food.
- Kiri: Yeah and Jin Talog is on there as well.
- Esyllt Yeah.
- Kiri: So it's like we've done a sort of pub crawl of everything that's on there.

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- Lisa: Well that's exactly what it is, it's a crawl of all the places worth going to.
- Esyllt You could book on a daytrip that follows through a county or a town. And you could just dip in and out of different things. So basically the larder trail, I'm going to buy a bus and I'm going to ride people around the trails.
- Kiri: Love it. And everyone will think you've had a breakdown.
- Esyllt [Laughs]
- Kiri: But I will book the first ticket on it.
- Esyllt Thank you. Thank you.
- Kiri: One nice thing is that Camarthenshire is very famous for pumping out iconic comedians.
- Esyllt Too many.
- Kiri: Too many are quite irritating. [Speaks Welsh] are doing our best [Speaks Welsh] but we can't hold a candle to Camarthenshire. Of course Elis James being one of those very passionate son of the county.
- Esyllt Yeah and he's annoying decided to stick his nose in and he has suggested some places that we should go if we ever get some more time spent here. So we should probably hear what he has to recommend.
- Elis: Hello Kiri. Hello Elyllt. I'm very pleased that you're going to Camarthen my old neck of the woods. Hmm? Where can you go? Well Camarthen obviously as Wales' best town has got an awful lot to offer. So why don't you go to the Plume of Feathers which when I was growing up I was convinced or everyone thought in town it was the smallest pub in Wales. Apparently there's a smaller pub in Caernarfon called Bar Bach. But the reason I would prefer the Plume is that it's got the match ball from when (place) beat New Zealand in 1972 and so basically that's

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the Plume of Feather's 1 Bar Bach 0. You could drink in the Boar's Head which is Carmarthen's oldest pub, where Dylan Thomas once got so drunk that he fell and broke his arm, didn't realise he'd broken it until he went to the Lyric Cinema which is now a theatre and watched a film and halfway through the film realised his arm was pointing in the wrong direction. Great, great humour. It's all been quite pub heavy this, isn't it? So what about the tip? Mum insists that the tip in (place) is a great day out, so why don't you go to the tip. But you're just going to have a great time. Mainly because Camarthen is not a place it's more of a sort of state of mind.

Kiri: I genuinely thought it would be a better recommendation than nearly the smallest pub in Wales.

Esyllt [Laughs]

Kiri: Some more pubs and the tip.

Esyllt But I genuinely love a day out at the tip.

Kiri: Yeah but I'm not sure that's why people are listening [laughs].

Esyllt No. And also I haven't brought all my junk with me so it would be a wasted trip generally.

Kiri: [Laughs] Also what would happen in my family history is we would come back with more than we went with.

Esyllt [Laughs]

Lisa: Right so the cowl is ready.

Kiri: Mm.

Lisa: Would you like a little bowl full of it? Or would you want to take it home?

Kiri: I'd absolutely love a little bowl.

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- Esyllt I would like to eat some please.
- Lisa: Oh parsley, I've got parsley. This is from the garden earlier and so it has been frozen overnight. It's been snowed on today.
- Kiri: So very fresh. Thank you.
- Esyllt That ham is so juicy.
- Kiri: All right mate.
- Lisa: [Laughs] That's sweet and lovely. How's the barley?
- Kiri: I'm going in for my first barley spoonful. It's yummy. It's like chewy. It's almost like what's that little pasta that's?
- Lisa: (unclear 35:56)
- Kiri: Yeah it reminds me of that.
- Esyllt Oh I love that.
- Kiri: This is yummy. It's so funny that our producer Jo has said 'Can you finish because we've all just become silent and we're just eating'.
- Esyllt I don't want to say anything.
- Kiri: Lisa thank you so much for this, this is really delicious.
- Esyllt It's been great, it feels like you're with a friend cooking and it's great.
- Lisa: It's been a pleasure, I've enjoyed. And I'm glad I've made my own pan of cawl because that way I can tuck in as well.
- Esyllt [Laughs] Oh yeah because I wasn't going to share.
- Kiri: Thank you so much for looking after us and feeding us. It's been the best parts of cooking and it's chatting and

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learning things but in such a relaxed environment and then eating, mm my favourite so thank you.

Esyllt Yeah diolch yn fawr.

Lisa: Croeso.

Kiri: Well this has been the Camarthenshire episode of Pod Of Wales with me, Kiri Pritchard-McLean.

Esyllt And me, Esyllt Sears.

Kiri: Thank you so much to everyone all around the county who has given us so much help in putting this episode together.

Esyllt It's been really lovely. And I think I'm just about sobered up.

Kiri: [Laughs] Speak for yourself.

Esyllt Pod of Wales is a Little Wander Production in association with Visit Wales.

[Outro Music]

[End of Podcast]

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