



Food and Drink Voices from the Conference Floor (FOTE16): The Restaurateur, the Culinary Blogger and the Irish-Speaking, Fish-Loving Food Writer

Transcript of Episode #48 of *The Artisan Food & Drink Business Show*

Catherine Moran: Hello, and welcome to episode 48 of *The Artisan Food & Drink Business Show*, the show where artisan producers tell their brand story and share the secrets of their success. I'm your host, Catherine Moran.

In today's episode we're going to hear more food and drink voices from Food on the Edge 2016, an international chef's symposium about the future of food that was held in Galway in October.

The last episode of the show featured John Liston, who I spoke to at Food on the Edge, and who is one of the ten organic dairy farmer owners of The Little Milk Co. Check out episode 47, *John Liston, The Little Milk Co: Being a Brilliant Little Cheese Business*, to hear my conversation with John.

Today's episode features Gill Carroll, Galway-based restaurateur from 37 West Café and also 56 Central, Cathal McBride, Galway-based culinary blogger who writes the blog *A Glass of Red Wine*, and Máirín Uí Chomáin, Galway-based, globe-trotting, Gaelic-speaking, award-winning, food media star.

As we stood outside in the sun in the Artisan Food Village at Food on the Edge, near the banks of the river Corrib, sipping Prosecco, I asked Gill, Cathal and Máirín for their thoughts on the conference.

They took away key concepts from Italian chef Massimo Bottura and restaurateur Douglas McMaster, both lauded speakers at the conference. Massimo's restaurant in Modena was recently ranked number 1 in *The World's 50 best Restaurant Awards 2016*. And Douglas owns Silo, an innovative restaurant in Brighton that strives to achieve zero waste.

Before we hear our three speakers, let me say this. I was blown away by Máirín's achievements in the food media world. She's the former Chairperson of the Irish Food Writers' Guild. She's an award-winning author. She's presented TV and radio programmes, often in the Irish language. And she's still going strong after decades of honing her craft. Máirín, I hope our paths will cross soon again.

Let's now hear from Gill Carroll, Cathal McBride and Máirín Uí Chomáin.

Catherine Moran: We're standing outside in absolutely magnificent weather for October, the *end* of October in Galway, at Food on the Edge. I've got 3 *amazing* people in front of me, who are going to have a little chat and tell us what they thought about Food on the Edge.

First up we've got restaurateur, entrepreneur, from Galway, Gill Carroll. How are you, Gill?

Gill Carroll: I'm great, thank you. Delighted to see you, again, after our event, Athrú [an inaugural conference about empowering women in the culinary arts held in Galway in July 2016], this summer.

Catherine Moran: Absolutely. We seem to meeting now, at food events... food and drink events, which is a good thing. What do you think of Food on

the Edge?

Gill Carroll: I thought it was amazing. Apparently, I got the last ticket. I was a bit late to the party.

Massimo [Bottura, chef-patron of Osteria Francescana, a restaurant based in Modena in Italy and ranked #1 in The World's 50 Best Restaurants 2016 in the S Pellegrino World's 50 Best Restaurants list] really stole the show for me because of the way he talks about the “contribution”, which is something I'm really big into, and the way he describes how you have to shine your light out to people, if you have a light to shine and get people on board to... what was the terminology he used? He said a specific word... that if you're in a position to be able to help other people, you have to help them.

The “*spotlight*”. Yeah. If you've got a spotlight, direct your spotlight onto other projects — and not calling them charity projects, call them cultural projects — was phenomenal for me because it's something I'm really passionate about. I suppose it's now spurred me on to go and do the things that I said I was going to do. Go Massimo.

Catherine Moran: Cathal, how are you?

Cathal McBride: I'm wonderful. Thank you, Catherine.

Catherine Moran: Tell us what you thought about Food on the Edge.

Cathal McBride: First of all, I'm delighted to be here. I didn't think I'd be able to make it. I missed it last year. So, I'm on the second of the two-day event.

Yeah. Really, really interesting. Really diverse talks. I suppose, yesterday, what I found really interesting was Douglas McMaster, who owns the restaurant down in Brighton, Silo. I'm not a chef, but I thought the whole concept of — not necessarily zero waste — but about bringing that concept into our lives. He spoke about waste as a lack of the imagination. I thought that was, like I said, a really interesting concept that all of us could bring into our own lives, whether it's in industry or whether it's at home. That stuck

out for me.

Massimo, as well, this morning, as Gill spoke about. I suppose, using our spotlight. Whether we're someone like Massimo, who has 3 Michelin stars, or whether it's people like us who are local. We're all privileged enough that we can attend events like this. It doesn't mean that we can't, in our own small way, approach change in the same way.

Catherine Moran: I love his use of the phrase; he used the phrase "circular thinking", which was wonderful.

Cathal McBride: Yes. Douglas, yesterday. Yeah. Yeah. Thinking in circles as opposed to thinking linearly. It's only small things. Even in his restaurant, instead of using paper menus, projecting the menus. It's not necessarily about major things, but all those small things put together can make major change. It's the same with anything like this. Looking towards the future. Looking towards change. It all starts with small baby steps. It's about small little things and each of us contributing in our own small way.

Catherine Moran: Our other wonderful person here is Máirín. Máirín, how are you?

Máirín Uí Chomáin: I'm very well, thank you. I'm delighted to be here. This is my second year here. I think I was born with the love of food in my heart before I came out of the womb at all. I love it.

Catherine Moran: Have you got a background in food?

Máirín Uí Chomáin: I have a background in food. I trained as a teacher of Home Economics. I was teaching for 5 years. I was in the training college for teachers. Then I got married. I went over to Cornell University and I worked with food over there for 2 years.

Catherine Moran: *Wow!*

Máirín Uí Chomáin: Yeah. I'm in the International Federation of Home Economists. I've been to India and Japan and Tokyo to food conferences and kitchens. And I've had lovely experiences. In my old age, I'm still dreaming of all the lovely places I have to go to yet for food.

Catherine Moran: Plenty more to do.

You're a writer, as well?

Máirín Uí Chomáin: Yeah. I'm a native speaker. Very rare around Galway [joking].

Catherine Moran: Tell us what your name in Gaelic is.

Máirín Uí Chomáin: Máirín Uí Chomáin. Like "come on". Máirín Uí Chomáin, okay.

I moved to Dublin, of course, after my training college. I lived in Dublin in a posh area called Foxrock. Do you know, nobody would speak Irish? My kids were all Irish speakers. They went to an all-Irish school. People looked at us as if we were different or something. Even in training college, I had a problem with that, too. Connemara, do you know what do they do back there? [Jokingly.]

Anyway, to make a dream come true, I started writing children's cookbooks. My second children's cookbook, I got the *Bisto Book of the Year Award* for my children's cookbook. So, BBC got in touch with me. I worked with BBC for a year or two, on and off. Got into RTE [the Irish national public service broadcasting company]. They gave me a studio and I would yap away about foodie things in Irish.

I was teaching all my life, then retired. Came down to Galway. Before that, after my book award for my children's book, somebody invited me to an interview in RTE. Two days after I had a phone call from RTE and I was on to do a cookery programme.

Catherine Moran: Absolutely fantastic. Sounds like you were ahead of your time, really?

Máirín Uí Chomáin: I'm a dreamer of dreams and all young people should dream. I just say things off the cuff. I really thought, "You know, why not say it?" I used to watch television and say, "I could do that." Then, do you know, it just happened for me. I believe in destiny. I believe in "what's for you won't pass you by", but you have to open your heart. And I met the nicest people in the whole world, including the two, at our interview, now, today. I mean, that Gill Carroll, she

lightens my heart every time I see her.

Catherine Moran: She lightens everyone's heart!

Máirín Uí Chomáin: Yeah.

Then I wrote... I had my own TV programme, *Cuisine Le Máirín*, and I had a second programme, *Encore Cuisine Le Máirín*. Because I have a daughter who lives in Paris. I said, "Well, "encore" is easiest, either English or Irish and everybody understands it." And from there, then, I went on. We moved onto Galway. I decided I'd write a book about oysters. Never done in Ireland or many places. Anyway, didn't I get Book of the Year? I was the award winner for my book. I had to go to Sweden and get my award for my oyster book.

Catherine Moran: Wonderful. It's like going over to get the Nobel Prize!

Máirín Uí Chomáin: It was as good to me as the Nobel Prize and to go to Sweden all on my own, do you know, and not knowing anybody? But I met loads of friends and *gorgeous* chefs. We swapped books. I could go to Bali. I could go anywhere. Do you know they invited me everywhere? Unfortunately, I wasn't allowed to go [laughs].

Anyways, the Mussel Festival started back in Renvyle, Connemara. They phoned me and said, "We'd like you to come and start our festival for us." I'm the ambassador for the Mussel Festival in Connemara. I've written a book on mussels. So that's my second book.

I'm really a fish woman, totally, or a sea woman, anyway. I'm born under the sign of Pisces. My last book was about salmon. I always thought of my dad. He wasn't my favourite person, my mum was. I said, "I dedicate this book to my dad. He was a great fisherman." He would talk salmon out the water. I got a book published called "Celebrating Irish Salmon" and it's beautiful, by Artisan House in Connemara.

Catherine Moran: This is a very recent publication?

Máirín Uí Chomáin: Very recent. Yeah. Yeah.

Catherine Moran: What are your thoughts on the question of organic salmon, using organic salmon? Because wild Irish salmon is in terribly short supply, isn't it? The big thing now is organic.

Máirín Uí Chomáin: I mean, I was reared on wild salmon, out of the river. Do you know, I knew nothing about all this? I'm in Slow Food, as well. I grew up in the era before all of that ever started.

If you want salmon, you want salmon. I don't argue with anybody. If you cannot get the wild salmon or you can't afford it, do you know? Try and get the best you can. I'm not critical of anybody, as long as they eat fish. That has to be good.

Catherine Moran: That's very true.

To go back to Cathal, I meant to ask you what you do.

Cathal McBride: My background, Catherine, is actually in education. I'm a secondary school teacher. A little like Máirín, here. I suppose my passion has always been food and cooking. I'm a self-taught amateur cook and have been entertaining family and friends for sixteen/seventeen years. Just a little over a year ago, I decided to finally put something into practice. I started a blog, called A Glass of Red Wine. That's mostly my own recipes, but there's a little bit of... I'm sort of a wine enthusiast. I wouldn't call myself an expert at all, but I'm an enthusiast. I have, I suppose, many reviews on wine. I also have cocktail recipes and *some* reviews of restaurants around Galway.

In between the teaching, it's trying to find the time to devote to that. A lot of opportunities, I suppose, have come up through the blog in the past year. It's been good. It's been pretty successful so far.

Catherine Moran: Do you ever think you'd make it a full-time career?

Cathal McBride: Yeah. I suppose... I love writing and I love food. I suppose, the teaching pays the bills at the minute. I thought when I was leaving school that I might like to try being a chef. I worked in the kitchen for a little while, throughout college. I worked front of house, as

well. While I enjoyed that, I just saw the intensity of it. We're talking things about that in Food in the Edge, whether it needs to be that intense. Maybe things *are* changing, but for me, it just seemed like too an intense anti-social career for me. Then I just happened into the teaching. I suppose a real passion can't stay hidden forever. So it came to the fore. As I said, I really enjoy food. I really enjoy writing about food. If I can forge a career in that way, perhaps. I'm enjoying the teaching, so it's a matter of going with it at the minute and seeing where it goes.

Catherine Moran: Absolutely.

Let's wrap up here. Why doesn't everyone give their website, or Twitter, or both, so people can find out a little bit more about you?

What about you, Gill?

Gill Carroll: It's 56central.com and you can follow me at @56central.

Catherine Moran: Fantastic. Cathal?

Cathal McBride: I'm glassofredwine.com, that's my blog. I'm similar on Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram.

Catherine Moran: Máirín?

Máirín Uí Chomáin: I'm not on any of those-

Catherine Moran: Like social media things.

Gill Carroll: Call up to Máirín at her house [laughing]!

Catherine Moran: Don't give us your address, now [laughing]! Just give us your web address.

Máirín Uí Chomáin: You're very welcome. I have my card and you know, Máirín Uí Chomáin.

Catherine Moran: You're www.irishcuisine.ie.

Máirín Uí Chomáin: Yes. Yes. Yes.

Catherine Moran: “Irish Cuisine” that's a great website.

Máirín Uí Chomáin: Isn't it?

Catherine Moran: Yes. Thank you all very much for having a word. Thank you.

Catherine Moran: I hope you enjoyed hearing Gill's, Cathal's and Máirín's thoughts on the conference and the future of food.

You can find Gill on Twitter as @56central, and her website is www.56central.com.

Cathal is on Twitter as @GlassOfRedWine and his website is www.aglassofredwine.com.

Máirín's website is www.irishcuisine.ie.

All links mentioned in the show are available at my website, which is myartisanbusiness.com. And you can download a free transcript of my conversation with Gill, Cathal and Máirín there.

To get updates on when I publish new episodes of the show, subscribe to my email list and I'll let you know when new episodes are live. So that's all at myartisanbusiness.com.

You can find me on Twitter as @FoodDrinkShow, so please get in touch if you have any comments or questions or suggestions.

Until next time, I'm Catherine Moran, happy cooking, happy brewing, happy fermenting, happy writing and blogging, and thank you for listening.

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