

The Tim Ferriss Show Transcripts

Episode 110: Richard Betts

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Tim Ferriss: So Richard, what did you have for breakfast?

Richard Betts: I had yogurt with pistachios, some coffee, and water. That was once I got to the airport. And I've had some almonds.

Tim Ferriss: Good man.

Richard Betts: More water.

Tim Ferriss: Hello dachshunds and malinois, Belgian Malinois. If you want to see a flash of a creature go across your screen and take out a criminal, just look for canine, Belgian Malinois on You Tube. This is Tim Ferriss. Welcome to another episode of the Tim Ferriss Show. And every episode, as you may know, it is my job to deconstruct world class performers to try to tease out the habits, the morning routines, the influences, the favorite books, etc., that have made them so exceptionally good at what they do.

And that ranges from the Arnold Schwarzenegger's of the world, literally, to Jon Favreau to stand up comedians, athletes, musicians, chess prodigies, everyone in between. And today, we have a tattooed heretic, Richard Betts. He's known for wine and whiskey. Why is that?

Well, Richard Betts served as the wine director at The Little Nell, very, very famous spot in Aspen from 2000 to 2008. But that's not so interesting compared to the next point, which is Richard passed the Court of Master Sommelier's Master Exam, so becoming a master sommelier, on his very first attempt. And that meant he was only the ninth person in history to do so. And I first met Richard through the investing mastermind [inaudible] himself, Chris Sacca who will no doubt be the most successful venture capitalist of all time if things keep going as we see them moving. And I also had him on the podcast.

And Richard and I hit it off immediately. He can help train your senses for anything, including wine, whiskey, his current obsession of Mezcal and far beyond that. He's also done a ton of

experimentation, gotten a lot of tattoos, almost been shot in Mexico, and developed, along the way, an incredibly uncanny, a lot of adverbs in this intro, to simplify the complex.

So we get along. He's very good at deconstructing and simplifying himself. And in this conversation, we talk about nearly everything imaginable ranging from the value of quitting, I didn't expect this to be such a big part of his story, but from that to tricks of the trade meaning related to tasting wine, the test itself, travel tips because he travels something like 300 plus days a year, and starter wines, all sorts of things. We also, as we were doing the interview, drank a boatload of whisky. I taste, he teaches. And I have pictures on the blog post, or in the blog post, that show you what Richard looks like, what we drank, etc.

So that may be a good visual reference for you. So just go to fourhourworkweek.com/podcast, all spelled out, or just go to fourhourworkweek.com and click on podcast, and you will find Richard. The whiskeys were amazing. And side note, by the way, maybe you didn't know this that it's whiskey, W-H-I-S-K-E-Y when it's from countries that have an E in their name such as America.

But it's whisky, W-H-I-S-K-Y without an E when the country names don't have an E. that's where the origin is of the given whiskey. So Scotland, Japan, that's whisky without an E. Richard taught me that among many, many other things. So last but not least, I must say it because I love it, and I've already given it out as a gift, Richard is the author of a brand new book, *The Essential Scratch and Sniff Guide to Becoming a Whiskey Know-It-All*, which is sitting right in front of me with whiskey stains all over it. It distills, see what I did there, a couple of lifetime's worth of study down to 24 pages. It's super short.

And check it out. At the very least, it gives you a bunch of rules of thumb like the whiskey/whisky trick with the E versus no E so that you can impress your friends and not look like a dumb ass at the bar, which is pretty awesome because less dumb ass and more smart ass always good. So with that said, and without further ado, some of you have given me shit online for saying without further ado and then talking for another two minutes like I'm doing right now.

So without further ado, please enjoy my conversation with Richard Betts. Richard, welcome to the show.

Richard Betts: Thanks, Tim. Good to be here.

Tim Ferriss: Yeah, man. It's been a little while since we hung out.

Richard Betts: It has been.

Tim Ferriss: And let's start at the beginning for those people who don't know you. Why wine? How did you get into wine?

Richard Betts: I got into wine because of my seventh grade German teacher, Mrs. Pritchard. And she was a total bitch. And I didn't learn anything about German in seventh grade. But I did learn – and sometimes, I'm slow to digest the lesson, but I definitely learned that you've got to do what you love. So I walked into class that day the first day of school, and I was like this lady is intense. And I don't like this subject. And I didn't go. And it didn't matter. And that I did know, at that time, that it just didn't matter. Like if I don't go to this class – the other class I never went to was typing.

Just not doing it. Just not doing it. I had one of those Student Council hall passes that let you screw off like that 20 some years ago. But it felt great at the time. It felt bad at the time. And I didn't understand the larger lesson. But it came back to me over time when I went to school. I went to Occidental and did my undergraduate work there and just struggled.

Tim Ferriss: What did you study undergrad?

Richard Betts: I tried a lot of things. I went with the idea of doing marine biology specifically. And the whole Biology Department was populated by young kids that didn't really have an interest in biology. They had an interest in going to med school. And when you grade on the curve that means that intense things happen like your slides are broken, and it's very cut throat and backstabbing. It's like this is just anathema to everything that I believe in and how I want to live. So I bailed on that. And then, I had this wild hair that I should study econ, and that was just foolish because that was also boring. So I went to poli sci and ended up with a minor in poli sci.

And that was interesting. It's kind of how the world turns, and it was cool. But I need to be outdoors. That's really my compass is being outdoors. I don't think I wore shoes until I was 5. And so I found my way to the geology school. And it's definitely not rocks for jocks there. That's a funny thing that should be dispelled at some point.

Tim Ferriss: Rocks for jocks meaning an easy way for the jocks to pass a science req.

Richard Betts: Exactly.

Tim Ferriss: So the lesson then from the German class was you could opt out of things that you disliked?

Richard Betts: Exactly, totally. I'm just not doing that. And so geology was great. It got me outside again. It got me out to Los Angeles, which was awesome. I love LA. I loved being there then, and I like being there now. But I need to spend time outdoors. And if you're in the middle of Los Angeles as a student, it's kind of hard to do. So geology was the thing. And then, I took a break from it, blew off my senior year. I lived in Italy. All my friends thought I was a nut, but it was great.

Tim Ferriss: Man after my own heart. I was on the five year plan.

Richard Betts: It was great. Came back, finished, and I really wanted to do environmental law. That was really a thing. So I thought if I'm not a marine biologist, I want to work to conserve this stuff. How do we do this? Well, I think one approach could be to speak the language of the scientific community, take that to law school, and then speak the language of the legal community and do your job well. So I went and did a graduate thesis in paleo fluvial morphology, so ancient river system makeup is what that translates to.

Tim Ferriss: What was the second word? Fluvial?

Richard Betts: Fluvial. That's the river part. And it wasn't so much about that topic at hand, it was about digging deep in the scientific method and what it means to be an investigator at that level. And that was great. I did find, through that time, the farther you go with it, smaller the scale at which you investigate. So I spent a lot of time in a small, dark, hot room with a scan electron microscope, and this is during the summer when I'm living in Flagstaff, Arizona, which is beautiful.

I mean, you're right next to the Grand Canyon. It's amazing. I didn't see any of it because you're in the lab. That was happening simultaneously. I was clerking at a small firm there. I clerked for my senator on Capitol Hill, Dennis DeConcini from Arizona. I clerked at Skadden, Arps, which is the world's largest law firm.

Tim Ferriss: Skadden is a big kahuna.

Richard Betts: Totally. That was when I was in LA. And then, when I was in grad school in Flagstaff, I was clerking for a small environmental firm. And I found it didn't matter whether you were doing environmental, or you were doing bankruptcy. It was the same board, monopoly board, making the same motions, pass Park Place every time. You just traded the hat for the shoe or whatever your piece was. It's still the same game. And I found I didn't like the game. And so I was really ripe for this moment. And this is what brought back Mrs. Pritchard in seventh grade, is that, at the end of a very long day with that scan electron microscope, it was about to be thesis defense weekend.

It was a couple of days in advance of this moment. And I walked out, and I was just not feeling it. My thesis was great. I was ready to defend it. And I was supposed to go to law school six weeks later. So I walked out of the lab, I hopped over the fence, and I ran across what is Route 66 there in Flagstaff to a small restaurant/wine store. And I walked in. And I didn't know anything about wine. And I just knew that I drank it daily in Italy and how much that meant to me. And I walked in, and I bought, totally based on sight.

And I was like I kind of recognize that label. And I pull it off the shelf, and I took it home. And I popped the cork, and I poured a glass. And that first smell took me back to a moment that I had lived almost four years earlier when living in Italy. And I remembered a dinner I had specifically at the [inaudible], which is on [inaudible] in Florence. I remember where I sat and where my companion sat and what she ate and what she wore and what I ate and what the waitress did right and wrong that night.

And all of that just came rushing back from one smell. And the next day, I was describing this experience to a friend, a really good friend, my best friend in life, actually, Bobby Stucky, who was getting into food and wine himself. And I said, "Bobby, I don't want to go to law school. And I don't want to do the science any longer. I want to do food and wine." And he's like, "Then, you should." And I was like, "Well, then I will." And so I walked back the firm. I was supposed to be in the legal library at that point on someone's billable hour, which wasn't happening. So I walked back to the firm, and I quit.

I did defend my thesis considering it was that week. But I called law school and said, "Look, I'm not coming," and hopped off the

cliff and got into food and wine. And that was a big moment. Your parents, everyone has expectations for you. And it's like I'm just not doing that. It just doesn't feel good.

Tim Ferriss: Did anyone else in your family have that confidence or compunction – my dog is clawing the bottom of her crate for no discernible reason, for enjoyment really.

Was there anyone else in your family who had that ability to switch gears and to quit not in such a negative connotation but in the sense of changing directions? Did you get that from anywhere else?

Richard Betts: You know, it has to have come from my parents, I think. But they switched gears in, to me, a much more impressive way. They both came from very, very tough places, complete poverty, very rough, particularly in my father's case, very nomadic in my mother's case and her large family.

Tim Ferriss: Where did they grow up?

Richard Betts: My mom all over the eastern seaboard but really settled in Syracuse. And my father in Syracuse. And his dad was a really rough dude. Street brawls, nickels in his fist, drugs, alcohol, all kinds of intense stuff. And so they're the people I'm most proud of.

To come from such intense circumstances like that, be the first of your families ever to go to college, and then make your way out west, and, actually, make your way. They definitely changed relative to what came before them in a different way.

Tim Ferriss: What did your parents do when you were growing up?

Richard Betts: So my mom, educator. And she ran for a long time something called the Teenage Parent Program, which gave kids an opportunity, if you were pregnant, you could stay in school. They had a daycare facility in the school. And this is everything from sixth graders through high school. So 1) you can bring your kids to school, but 2) you actually are in school, and you graduate. And 3) you learn how to take care of your kid at the same time. So she kept so many kids in school, which is huge.

Tim Ferriss: That's huge, yeah.

Richard Betts: She eventually made her way to the University of Arizona, and she did her PhD and ended up as a researcher there at the U of A. My dad, biomedical engineer at the University Hospital there his whole life.

Tim Ferriss: So I can see now where, I'm skipping ahead in my own mind, but I can see how the sort of biomedical engineer, scientist aspect and the educator aspect tie pretty neatly into a lot of what you do now totally. But I'm skipping ahead. I don't want to give away too much of the middle of the movie. So we'll go back to the beginning. So you decide law, thanks but no thanks.

Richard Betts: Yeah.

Tim Ferriss: Food and beverage. Then what? And how old were you at the time?

Richard Betts: So just finishing grad school in '96. I'm 25. And I always think that I'm somewhat late to the party. People decide I'm into food and wine when they're like 18, 17, 16. And you see these very young people into it today, and that's great. I'm always slow to make my decision. But when it's made, it happens. And so we moved. I had just gotten married to my first wife. At the time, we moved to Missoula, Montana, not known as a bastion of great food or wine, no offense if there are any Montanans out there.

I've eaten very well there very frequently. But if you want to go learn about this stuff, it's probably not the best place to do it. But my first wife had gotten a tenure track job at the University of Montana.

Tim Ferriss: Not unlike the legal profession, in some ways.

Richard Betts: Exactly. Sign up, here it is. Here is your life before you. That's an intense thought. So we moved there. And I worked in all kinds of places. But the first place I worked and cooked was I walked into the Red Lion Motor Inn, which, in 1996 was, for sure, the nicest restaurant in town. And it was a motor inn. You park your car in front of your room, that kind of place. So I walked in. And there is a master chef, which is a real designation. I think it means you can do all kinds of things, including put on a brunch for 3,000 people and carve the hell out of a block of ice and turn it into a swan or something.

But that's a real thing. And I walked in, and his name was Hans. And Hans said, "Oh, you want to learn to cook, huh? Okay, yeah.

Sure. Hold this.” And he puts an egg pan in my hand, a little sauté pan, and I’m holding it. And he slaps a piece of toast in it, and he says, “Flip it.” And I flip it. He says, “Great. You’re the breakfast cook for the whole hotel.” And so we were really working on our super hippie mantra at that time, which meant no car, nothing automated riding bikes, which is great in the summer. And that’s the big bait and switch with Montana is that is that summer is Eden, and winter is the opposite.

So October came, and the sun went away. And then, you’re on your bike at 4:00 a.m. in the snow and bitter cold pedaling in to open up this huge hotel and cook breakfast for everybody. And it was thrilling. It remains one of my favorite jobs ever. It’s a funny point in life when you don’t really have the same stake in things as you do later in life.

So it was great. Like yeah, I’m going to open this thing up, and you have that flat griddle you cook on that’s 20 feet long, and you’re rocking 8 waffle irons. And you’re cooking oven by the sheet pan in the back. And while you’re doing that, you’re stirring oats and getting the whole thing ready to just open up. Then, you open that huge line by yourself. And the orders start flooding in. And I’m a big believer that, in the restaurant business, you either have the synapse or you don’t. And it doesn’t mean you’re a good person or bad person. But it does mean you either shouldn’t be in the business or you shouldn’t be in the business.

Tim Ferriss: And you mean like back of the house for that type of multitasking order, sequencing and all of that, timing.

Richard Betts: Exactly. Yeah. It’s a real thing.

Tim Ferriss: It’s tough.

Richard Betts: Yeah. And some people find it thrilling and do it really well. And some people find it thrilling and don’t do it really well. And some people don’t find it either. But if you have that, and I imagine some of you that are listening do, it’s thrilling. And I loved it.

Tim Ferriss: What is a way that someone who hasn’t worked in that type of circumstance – I’ve worked in restaurants. I worked in restaurants for many summers, but I was never on the line or cooking in the back or anything like that. I was always front of house as a bus boy or whatnot getting abused by patrons. But you can get that, too, in the back of the house. But if someone wanted to try to predict if they would be good in that type of environment, what are

characteristics or experiences or traits? If you had to pick someone, if you had to recruit for the back of the house, but you couldn't test them in the back of the house –

Richard Betts: Right. I would look for someone who, for sure, can handle stress because everyone around you has the possibility of just totally losing it. And if they start freaking out, are you going to freak out with them? And then, the whole ship sinks. So stress management is huge. This seems silly, but you've got to be able to deal with the heat, the physical heat. A year later, I had a different cooking job, and I was [inaudible], which means you work the grill. And standing between the grill and the line, I'd have the little pocket thermometer in my chef's coat pocket.

And it would read 130 degrees all night long. And it was a real thing. It's really, really warm in some of these places. So you've got to deal with the heat. You have to deal with the stress, the pressure, and keep cool. And you have to be able to multitask. If you're like a myopic thinker, it's not for you. But if you can say I'm doing this, I'm doing this, and meanwhile, you have all of these little timers going off in your head, it probably means you don't sleep well all of the time. I'm that guy. I woke up three times last night just thinking about stuff. And it doesn't bother me. It just is. So those would be the three things.

Tim Ferriss: So you're in Montana biking through October snow to open up the line. What did you like about that? What excited you about that?

Richard Betts: The pace, for sure. You know what was really important to me, Tim, is that it was on the job learning. And so before I actually got that first job, we got to Montana, and I was like I guess I'm going to figure this out.

Or am I going to take time off and then go to culinary school? And I was like I've done a lot of school. And I'm kind of done with that.

Tim Ferriss: A lot of prep.

Richard Betts: A ton of prep. Let's do something. And so I went and talked to a chef. And I said, "Hey, man, this is what I'm thinking about. I'm either going to ask you for a job," or this was after I was already working at the Red Lion Inn, "I'm either going to ask you for a job or I'm thinking about culinary school." And he's like, "Here's the deal. You can come here today, and you can ask me for a job, and I'll say, yeah, great. Here are the potatoes. Get peeling. Or you can

go to culinary school, spend two more years of your life preparing, spending \$30,000.00 or \$40,000.00 a year in bills to be there, then, you can come to me and ask me for a job, and I'll say yeah, sure.

Here's a big pot of potatoes. Get peeling." Same thing. I was like, okay, I'm pretty good at math. I got this. Where are the potatoes? Let's do it. So it was that simple.

Tim Ferriss: No, it makes perfect sense. And when then did the nectar of the Gods, when did the wine enter the picture?

Richard Betts: Yeah, so while in the kitchen, I was always reading about wine. I knew that I wanted to do both, cook and work as a sommelier. I thought working in the back of the house made the most sense to start. I do like that self reliance of really learning how to feed yourself and feed others and make your table warm and interesting. That matters to me. So I started there. But all the while, read, read, read, taste, taste, taste. And I had an early mentor who said beg, borrow, steal, but taste, taste, taste. And that's the everything. If you don't have a context, and we'll talk more about that later, but if you don't have a context, you don't have any framework within which to hold anything together, even to accumulate knowledge. You've got to have a context.

Tim Ferriss: Context meaning like having letters of the alphabet to spell words, having descriptors that you can only acquire through developing a database of different flavors.

Richard Betts: Exactly that. Yeah. I mean, it was actually no different than geology.

You only know what sandstone is because it relates to mudstone, and it's more coarse grain. And you know that mudstone is only mudstone because it's more coarse grain than siltstone. And so on and so forth, not to geek out. But it's just how things relate to each other. So I was taste, taste, tasting. We left Montana about 11 months later almost to the day. So we moved there, bought a house, an old house, remodeled it. The sun went away, as I said, and I'm a solar powered kid growing up in the southwest. So that house was sold before the sun came out in May.

And we moved to Tucson where I worked for the second chef I cooked for and really loved, Alan Zeiman, who if you didn't use a rubber spatula to get the gloss, the intense beef protein that you worked on two days to reduce down from beef bones, if you didn't use a rubber spatula to get that out of the pan, he would dock your

paycheck and make you make soap. It was a real learning experience. You made everything. Nothing came in a box. So while I worked for him, that's where I had this [inaudible] position where you're on the grill, and it was 130 degrees all night.

It was also where the waiters had to walk by. And they knew that I was really into wine. So then, they'd start asking questions like, "Richard, you know the wine list. What should I pair with this, what should I pair with that?" So I became the sort of defacto, volunteer, sommelier from the kitchen.

Tim Ferriss: And had you been acquiring tastes up to that point?

Richard Betts: Yes, yeah. I still had, basically, no money. You're earning minimum wage. And I spent every dime I could on every bottle of wine I could find.

Tim Ferriss: And so you how did you choose bottles to taste?

Richard Betts: Things I hadn't had before and areas I wanted to explore. So I don't drink much Chilean wine today, but at that point, it was like, okay, people are talking about this. So what is this about? So then, it was a deep dive into Chile. What are these things about? How do they relate to each other? Is this one just an outlier, or how does it fit in the context of the whole? Really very methodical about that.

Tim Ferriss: So you thought you then categorize mostly geographically in the beginning.

Richard Betts: Yes, yeah.

Tim Ferriss: It gives you at least a plan for starting, right, insomuch as you can compartmentalize in an orderly way. So you're not just helter skelter trying capriciously this wine after the next.

Richard Betts: Exactly. Exactly. And, ultimately, the intellectual value of wine comes from this idea of terroir. And terroir is a French word for this notion that everything that makes up the wine makes up the place that goes into the wine is this idea of terroir. So you should pick up a glass, and it should reflect a place. Just like that ordinary bottle of wine.

Tim Ferriss: The soil, the climate, the barometric pressure.

Richard Betts: The pig farm down the road, everything. Everything goes in there. And so that's what got me into it in the first place because I picked up that bottle of wine. I didn't know anything about it. But that sensory memory got me to blow off law school. So I kept on that path like, okay, what is it about this place that's a common thread amongst these wines be it Merlot or Cabernet or whatever it may be? And when you can take that trip in a glass of wine, that's the intellectual value.

That's the part that matters and how I convince myself I'm getting smarter when I'm drinking.

Tim Ferriss: And so your wait staff started asking you questions.

Richard Betts: Yes.

Tim Ferriss: And you're on the line.

Richard Betts: I'm on the line cooking. Like do this, do that. And it was like a free swing because I didn't have to face the guest.

Tim Ferriss: Yeah, you didn't have any consequences.

Richard Betts: Totally.

Tim Ferriss: Practice without consequences. So what might a question be that a waiter would ask? What goes with this entrée?

Richard Betts: Yeah. Or hey, your special tonight, where is the acid at? Is it going to work with a sauvignon Blanc? Or is it lower acid, and I should use Chardonnay? Or hey, I saw you put [inaudible] with grapes. How is that going to work with this? Those sorts of things.

Tim Ferriss: Very cool.

Richard Betts: Yeah, it was super cool.

Tim Ferriss: And then, what then?

Richard Betts: Then, this was in Tucson. Well, why would you go from Montana to Tucson, another place that's not necessarily known as a culinary, important hot bed?

I went to Tucson after going to Portland and San Francisco both. And this was in '97/'98. And I believe in myself and really believe in my ability to make a decision to do something I love. And then,

when I'm doing it, then, I'm going to put everything I have into. Am I the best at it? I have no idea. But I know I'll try harder than most. So I went to Portland. And I was like there are so many kids getting into the food scene that I'm just going to have to get in line with these kids. Then, I went to San Francisco, same story. Just super expensive to be here, although less than now, but also, just huge lines of kids competing for positions.

And then, there were these two chefs that I wanted to work for in Tucson that are actually great, well regarded on a national level, and nobody wanted to move there to work with them. So it's like I can get immediate access, supercharge my learning and my path. So I did. I went to that second chef, and I said, "Hey, man, I want to work with you. This is why I'm in Arizona." And he said, "Great. What have you been doing?"

And I told him about my work with Al Zeiman, the other chef. And he's like, "Okay, cool. Why don't you audition?" And so he spent a week auditioning in the kitchen and doing all of this different stuff. At the end of the week, we sit down in his office, and he's like, "Okay. So I understand you've also been spending time learning about wine." And I was like, "Yeah, doing this and passed my first Court of Masters Sommelier's exam."

Tim Ferriss: Your first what?

Richard Betts: Court of Masters Sommeliers.

Tim Ferriss: Court of Masters.

Richard Betts: Exactly. A big mouth full. Which is a certifying body for sommeliers. And there are four exams in the process. And I had taken the first one while cooking at that first restaurant in Arizona.

Tim Ferriss: So just so we can lay out that for people, what are the four tests?

Richard Betts: There's introductory, lecture, and exam. And that's not a very hard test. But you have to know a little something. If you're a quick learner, you can pick it all up in the lecture. Then, there's the certified –

Tim Ferriss: Oh, so they give you a lecture, and then, they test you on what's in the lecture.

Richard Betts: Yeah.

Tim Ferriss: Got it.

Richard Betts: Ideally, you've read something before you get there, or you have more than a passing interest.

But that's a course/exam that's very much meant to inspire. Like here is the cool world of wine. And if you're into it, you're going to read about it, check it out, build yourself a plan to acquire the knowledge, and then, come back and see us for more exams as you go. So that's the first one. The second level is the certified exam because there is a –

Tim Ferriss: And the organization is called the Court of Master Sommeliers?

Richard Betts: Yeah. Different than the master of wine. They're two –

Tim Ferriss: Organizations or certifying bodies like [inaudible] for diving?

Richard Betts: That's exactly it.

Tim Ferriss: Got it.

Richard Betts: Which are you?

Tim Ferriss: I'm Patty.

Richard Betts: I'm the other.

Tim Ferriss: Yeah. This podcast is over now, done.

Richard Betts: So anyway, so certified exam is the second step. And that one is necessary because people are like I'm a sommelier, I passed the first exam. And just from the course perspective, and I'm not intimately involved with it on a day to day basis, but if people are going to use this as this is the standard, and I am now this, then we felt like we actually ought to make it a real standard.

So we inserted the certified exam where you have to be proficient in certain elements of wine service and champagne service, old decanting wine service, all of these sorts of things. So that's Level 2. Level 3 is the advanced exam, which is, indeed, really, really hard. And it's three days of examination. There's a blind tasting exam where you blind taste six wines. And I don't mean blindfold. You just walk into a room, and there are six glasses with wine in them. And you have no idea what they are until you sit down and get after it. So six wines in twenty-five minutes, what are they?

Tim Ferriss: How specific do they expect you to get?

Richard Betts: If it's Ridge, Litten Springs, Zinfandel from 2010, you should come up with this is Zinfandel, California, north coast, 2010. You don't have to say Ridge, but you've got to get there.

Tim Ferriss: Yeah, you're not that far off.

Richard Betts: Exactly.

That's one part of the exam. The second part is a theory examination. Anything that you eat, drink, or smoke could be on that exam. That's a written paper.

Tim Ferriss: Oh, it's a written paper.

Richard Betts: Yeah. Well, pardon me, multiple choice or and some sort essay.

Tim Ferriss: What would a hypothetical question on that –

Richard Betts: There are so many that we all are sworn that we'll never talk about.

Tim Ferriss: Eat, drink, or smoke, not a precise question. I'm just wondering could it be something about pipes or cigarettes or smoking?

Richard Betts: Cigars predominantly. And that's actually super de-emphasized now. And I'm not even sure that there are test questions that deal with it any longer. But at the time, you needed to know cigar service is actually done from the left side. Whereas everything else you've done in that test to that point, wine service, for example, is done from the right side. And it's things like that. Ring gauges.

Tim Ferriss: So which is which? Right is?

Richard Betts: Right is wine service, left is cigar service. And then, memorizing ring gauges of cigar sizes, and things that are, for me, completely worthless.

Just like the periodic table. I learned it for a moment, and I forgot it the next day to make room for something different. The same thing for cigar ring sizes.

Tim Ferriss: And that's the advanced.

Richard Betts: Well, that's Part 2 of the advanced. Part 3 of the advanced is actually service. So you walk into a room filled with master sommeliers. So sensibly, it's a restaurant situation. And you go from table to table and perform different tasks that you're asked to do. And they're hard. And it's a real thing. And it's amazing actually. And then, the fourth and final level is exactly that again, but the volume is cranked all the way up. And the theory portion is not written, it's oral. And that's the master sommelier program.

Tim Ferriss: That's the master sommelier test?

Richard Betts: Exactly. There are just about 200 of us in the world today.

Tim Ferriss: And you were the ninth person to pass it on your first attempt?

Richard Betts: I was. I just got done bagging on my OPO when it comes to working in the kitchen. But I definitely had my OPO when it came to studying for that test.

Tim Ferriss: We'll come back to that. So you're talking to the chef you wanted to work for all along. And he's like so you've been getting into this wine stuff. And you give him the replay of having already passed the first level of examination. And then what?

Richard Betts: Yeah. He says, "Okay, you cook well. So do you want to be the sommelier, or do you want to cook?" And I was like, "You've never had a sommelier." And he's like, "Exactly right. We're going to move the restaurant to the foothills, and it will be a bigger space. And we're going to have a 10,000 bottle cellar. And someone has got to fill it and sell it. Do you want to do that?" And I was like, "I absolutely want to do that." It was an incredible first job.

Tim Ferriss: What a God send.

Richard Betts: Yeah. It was really amazing. And you learn so much when you build your own list, and you're responsible for budgets, and you work for a chef owner. Chef owners are notoriously maniacal. I'm friends with a lot of them, and it's true, they are. So that was an amazing experience. And I'd walk in with my order sheet every week, which he had this standardized order sheet.

This is what I want to order. This is who it's from. This is how much it costs. This is how many bottles. And it would be so well reasoned. I would have thought out everything. And everything would have been researched from a point of view like how good is

the wine? How well is it going to age? What if it doesn't sell? What's its trajectory? Does it pair with the food? Are guests asking for these sorts of things? I was totally armed to the hilt. And I would go in there, and I'd hand it to him, I'd slide it across the desk to him, and he'd sit there and put on his reading glasses and look down and pull out a pen and just start crossing things out without even asking questions. It was brutal.

- Tim Ferriss: Was it mostly pricing based, those that got crossed out?
- Richard Betts: I think I approached that with the wrong philosophy. I went with this is exactly what we need. And he probably thought that I was coming with more knowing I would get cut down to less, which is what I ended up doing every time. So you learn a lesson.
- Tim Ferriss: Okay. So you learned to negotiate with the chef owner by bringing in a couple of give me's that you're happy to let go.
- Richard Betts: Totally, yeah. The real obvious ones, expensive, neon lights on them and just watch him cross those out.
- Tim Ferriss: And when you said if they don't sell, does that mean just looking at return policies and things like that or how you would resell them, how they would age?
- Richard Betts: How they would age. There's really no return policy in any real way. And it's funny, I'll go look at lists now, and I'll be like wow, there's a whole bunch of 2004 California sauvignon blanc. Probably most of those are no good any longer because it's not something that, from this particular place, is known to age well. And someone was enthusiastic for it. They bought a bunch. But in reality, that restaurant only needed two. Or buy one, sell it out, then buy the next one, sell it out.
- Tim Ferriss: Like buying 20 avocados at a time.
- Richard Betts: That's exactly it. But if it's something that's meant to age or will improve and actually appreciate, then it makes some sense to do it.
- Tim Ferriss: So you're building this list. You're getting wise to the horse trading that you do with your boss. What other things do you learn in that first experience?
- Richard Betts: One of my most humiliating experiences as a sommelier, I mean, I remember the first time, even the table, I think it was Table 110. You walked down the stairs, first one on the left. And someone ordered a bottle of [inaudible], which today is fantastically

expensive. In 1999, or it could have been of 1998, that was all of \$448.00 on the wine list. And I was trembling. I remember going to the table. My hands were trembling and shaking and super nervous. And since then, I've served bottles of \$50,000.00 or \$100,000.00. And at \$50,000.00 or \$100,000.00 and that all goes away. But it was not shortly after I sold that –

Tim Ferriss: I'd be nervous of a \$450.00 bottle of wine.

Richard Betts: Yeah. So that's now where the embarrassment came, but that was the first one. And then, it was like a week later. I was on a role. And we were selling these things at a real clip, really expensive things.

And it was an '85 Beranger special cabernet sauvignon from Napa on the table with an '85 [inaudible], which is a fifth growth Bordeaux from France. One of the five big deal chateaus I Bordeaux recognized as one of the great wins in the world. And this guy had a table of six. He ordered both bottles at once. He wanted them served side by side. And they were just going to compare and enjoy these things. And so I decant them both and serve them both as he wishes. And then, I don't know, 30 minutes later, I go back to refill, and of course, I pour the [inaudible] on top of the Beranger.

And I'm going, oh, boy, this is going to be horrible. And he just smiles and laughs, and he looks at me, and probably he knows I have no possibility of paying for this whatsoever. And he couldn't have been more gracious about it. And I thought I was going to die at that moment.

Tim Ferriss: Because how much were both of those combined?

Richard Betts: More than, \$1,000.00.

Tim Ferriss: Yeah, that's a lot.

Richard Betts: Yeah. And in '99, a young sommelier, it's like I spent \$169.00 on my suit.

Tim Ferriss: There's my rent for the next four months.

Richard Betts: Exactly, the whole thing. And he couldn't have been more gracious, which was actually the real lesson. Apart from paying attention, it was really about what does it mean to be graceful and thoughtful and so on and so forth. So that was an amazing moment.

I worked at that restaurant until 2000. And remember the guy who sold me that bottle of wine that changed my life in Flagstaff in grad school?

Tim Ferriss: Yeah.

Richard Betts: About 30 minutes ago.

Tim Ferriss: Wait, you're talking about the bottle that was across Route 66.

Richard Betts: Exactly, that one. In the meantime, he had gone to Aspen and taken the job with Little Nell, for sure, one of the world's best places to drink wine.

Tim Ferriss: What was the name again?

Richard Betts: The Inn at the Little Nell, or even just the Nell, as it's commonly referred to.

Tim Ferriss: N-E-L-L.

Richard Betts: N-E-L-L in Aspen, Colorado right at the base of the mountain. It's ski in and ski out. It's an amazing spot.

Tim Ferriss: Sounds incredible.

Richard Betts: It's special. So he had been the sommelier there, and he was leaving to go become the sommelier at The French Laundry and said, "Hey, I'm leaving. You should apply for my job."

And I was like, "Of course, I'm going to apply for your job. Great." And huge shoes to fill. I had no idea what it meant to be in Aspen. I mean, the caliber of wine drinker at that time is it's as big as it can be. It doesn't get any bigger. It's an amazing place.

Tim Ferriss: You mean in terms of the clientele like sophisticated wine drinkers.

Richard Betts: Exactly. Way over my head. But I applied for the job. I had flown to Aspen, and we do the whole dance there. And I fly and meet the GM. He's in Los Angeles for a day. We meet there. And then, the food and beverage director comes to Tucson, and you save your best suit all week for when she comes in. And it was great. And I got the job. They probably had no business giving it to me at that time. But I got the job as a sommelier/wine buyer at The Little Nell

where I had no budget and had a ton of storage. And everybody drinks everything. And we sold a lot of really great –

Tim Ferriss: You said you had no budget.

Richard Betts: No budget, buy what you want.

Tim Ferriss: Oh, I see. Unlimited budget.

Richard Betts: Unlimited budget.

There was no one crossing things out across the desk from you. You just had to count it once a month, which is also a reason not to go crazy. But it was outrageous. And very quickly I realized how big the shoes were I had to fill, which is good. I very much respond to pressure. It's like if you want to get fit, I sign up for an event. I will run. I don't want to suck.

Tim Ferriss: What were the pressures? What were some concrete realizations that you had?

Richard Betts: Almost all of the guests knew more than I did. And that was intense.

Tim Ferriss: That's a lot.

Richard Betts: That's huge. And so that means sleepless nights, read, read, read, read, read, taste, taste, taste, taste,

Tim Ferriss: And practice for the master som test, I'd think.

Richard Betts: Exactly. And part of the tasting, I had a healthy education. That's the only place I did have a "budget". It was an education budget. Open whatever you want, and you have a certain number –

Tim Ferriss: Oh, for tasting?

Richard Betts: Yeah. So you can learn really quickly.

Tim Ferriss: That's cool.

Richard Betts: Yeah. That came back to that.

Tim Ferriss: What is the right way to taste when you're given an opportunity like that?

I mean, is there palate fatigue? Is it just like kind of physical training where it's like you can overdo it?

Richard Betts: You can definitely overdo it. I think everybody can overdo it no matter how much you practice at it. There are some obvious things like don't eat jalapenos before you're going to go taste wine. Don't mess up your receptors in any strange way. Similarly, walnuts or artichokes, all of those things. Walnuts and artichokes contain tannins, which dry out your palate and make it feel strange.

Tim Ferriss: That's very funny considering what I just had before we started talking. I know we're going to have a few things to drink in a bit. I had iced artichoke – oh, Ferriss, here we go.

Richard Betts: Definitely not a good way to start your wine tasting. So there are a few rules like that. But for the most part, it's the thing that you really have to have is a method. And I spoke earlier about a context. That's half of the program. The other half of the program to do this well is you have to have a method.

And by that I mean you do the exact same thing every single time.

Tim Ferriss: It's an experiment.

Richard Betts: Exactly, yeah. I mean, I'm a big fan of a friend that articulated this. He's a wine maker in California. And there's all kinds of fun experimentation. But if you don't control the variables, what do you actually learn. And so Terry waxes on about the importance of data not dogma. And I love that saying. And so when you have this method, it's really about collecting the data in the same way every single time. And it's objective. It's not subjective. It doesn't start with do I like this wine or don't I. That happens when you decide what you're going to put on your table. But when you're trying to learn about wine, it's not about you. It's about doing the same thing every single time and collecting the same observations.

Tim Ferriss: And you're taking this down in a notebook or something like that?

Richard Betts: Exactly.

Tim Ferriss: So to someone who is listening and is like I'd like to give that a shot, how would they go about it potentially?

Richard Betts: Well, shameless plug is, to start with, buying the Scratch and Sniff Wine Book.

Tim Ferriss: I've read it. I've mentioned it. I've given it as gifts to people.

Richard Betts: Within that, it's really a subset of the method that I used to get through the master sommelier exam. And that's looking at three main areas of wine. And that's fruit, earth, and wood. And, essentially, those three categories populate almost everything that you're going to smell and, therefore, taste in wine. So make the same observations every single time. What are the fruit elements I smell? What are the elements that could be imparted by wood if the wine was aged in wood that I smell? What are the earthy elements that I smell? And that's the place to start. And you do it with what you smell and then with what you taste.

Beyond that, you have to make observations on what you see. You talk about color. You talk about visual clues for alcohol levels. And all of these things lead you to a place.

Tim Ferriss: Those are visual queues for alcohol levels like legs?

Richard Betts: Legs, exactly. Legs, tiers, whatever you want to call them.

Tim Ferriss: So how does it correspond?

Richard Betts: So the slower the legs fall, the higher the alcohol level.

Tim Ferriss: Got it.

Richard Betts: Assuming there's no sugar.

Tim Ferriss: And I'm going to be blasphemous here or sacrilegious, it's the drips. Like if you swirl the wine, it's the drips down the side of the glass.

Richard Betts: Exactly. From the high point of the liquid, what drips back down to the glass, those are the legs or the tiers. And so it seemed counterintuitive to me when I first learned this like alcohol is thinner than water or the fruit juice. So if you have more alcohol, why would it run more slowly? But there's actually this capillary action that pushes it back up the side of the glass. Plus, it's always evaporating and condensing on the sides of the glass. So the more alcohol there is, the slower those tiers fall. And the reason you want to know that is, if you're going to be a geeked out wine taster, is it talks about a wine making style.

It talks about an origin. So in Germany, you'll have thick tiers by virtue of the sugar but not by virtue of the ripeness. It's a cold

place. Or even go through the Loire Valley in France and sauvignon Blanc and cabernet franc and all of these very beautiful varieties.

But they don't have much alcohol, which is as it should be because it's not a warm place. When you come to California, particularly this year, where it's really a warm place, you're going to develop riper fruit, which riper fruit means more sugar, which means more food for the yeast and more potential alcohol. And once the yeasts eat it and create the alcohol, there it is.

Tim Ferriss: So would that be, for instance, why, and I'm just kind of making this up on the spot, but why you find a lot of Zinfandels and Malbecs have a high alcohol content?

Richard Betts: Exactly.

Tim Ferriss: These new world wines.

Richard Betts: Yeah.

Tim Ferriss: Now, when you're taking this down, let's get sort of prescriptive on the tasting. How much wine do you – do you drink it? I know a lot of people spit when you go to the wineries. Do you drink it, and how do you taste? You have a bottle of wine, and then what?

Richard Betts: Pour yourself a glass. The first thing you do is you turn it over sideways. And you don't want to spill it out away from you. So tip the glass away from you and look down through the wine against a white background. And the color tells you a lot. So we don't smell color, and we don't taste color. It's very important to know that. But color is an indication of the varietal and potentially, also, the climate. So pinot noir should be –

Tim Ferriss: And the varietal meaning?

Richard Betts: The type of grape.

Tim Ferriss: The type of grape. Whether it's cabernet sauvignon, sauvignon blanc, whatever.

Richard Betts: Exactly. So cabernet sauvignon is a thick, dark skinned varietal, so it's going to make a dark skinned red wine. In fact, if you bite any grape that you want to make red wine from in half, it's white in the middle. So all the color in a red wine comes from the skins. So be it as cabernet is thick and dark, you're going to have the result

think and dark, pardon me, dark colored red wine. Whereas pinot noir is thinner and lighter in color.

And so you're going to have a lighter colored wine. It doesn't have any less flavor. It isn't worth less of your attention or interest. It's just different. So the first thing you want to do is look at that color. And it should give you, if you don't know what the wine is, it will give you a visual clue. Like if it's light red, don't think about cabernet. Start crossing that off your list. It's about deduction. But if you know it's cabernet, and it's light red, well, then you might think something is wrong because that's not a typical color for it. So the first thing you do is you look at it. And you look for color. And you look for sediment.

Is there anything solid in there? You look for gas. Is it bubbling? If it's read and it's bubbling, there are maybe two or three possibilities on the planet of what it could be, including things like sparkling shiraz, which is totally gross and I don't drink. But those visual queues tell you a lot. And then, if it starts to brown, if we assume our glass of wine is tipped away from us, and we look out to the far northern edge, if it starts to brown, it tells you that, potentially, it's made in an oxidative style.

So the wine saw some oxygen while it was being made. Or it's older. And that's probably more common. And let me ask you this. So what happens to an avocado if you cut it and leave it on the counter?

Tim Ferriss: It oxidizes, gets brown.

Richard Betts: Turns brown. Same thing with old bananas or whatever it is. And so the same thing happens with wine. It's just grapes, and so grape juice goes through the same process. It starts to turn brown. So if you see that sort of brickish browning at the edge of the glass, you can start to surmise it's showing signs of oxidation. Therefore, it's older. And then, you do the exercise. You look at the legs or the tiers. And you start to discern what's the alcohol level. And so that brings us back to the context, and we'll take a quick tangent on that. If you don't – I can look at that and say, okay, those are medium plus viscosity based on how those tiers fall.

Well, you only know what medium plus viscosity is if you've had all of the wines of the world. So that's the context. So you've got to have a method. You've got to have a context.

Tim Ferriss: You have to have experienced extremes and the spectrum.

Richard Betts: Exactly, right. So for everyone that wants to do this, this is your homework. And you just have to taste a lot of wine. It's great.

Tim Ferriss: Now, I've heard, for instance, and I want to be corrected if this is not correct, but that you should sort of take the first swish of wine and just rinse your mouth with it because that's not the sip that you want to try to evaluate. Is that necessary, incorrect?

Richard Betts: Well, it depends. If you just brushed your teeth, you should drink a whole glass. But yeah, first palate impression is not necessarily the right one, so spend some time with it. Before you do that though, you definitely want to smell it. The things we really taste are sweet, sour, salt, bitter, and if we're fortunate, this idea of umami, this savory, Japanese –

Tim Ferriss: I just had an umami burger last night.

Richard Betts: I like it.

Tim Ferriss: Very delicious.

Richard Betts: Nice.

So everything else we think we taste, we're actually smelling. And so it makes sense to smell the wine. So when I smell the wine, I always think about this acronym FEW, which stands for fruit, earth, and wood. And so you want to smell for those things and force yourself, require diligence to answer all three of those questions. Don't just blow by it. So you might pick up a wine, and it's just like, oh, my God, strawberries, raspberries, cherries, great, cool. Let's taste it. What about the earth and the wood because those are two huge pieces that inform the wine? They give it that intellectual value and make it complete and make you smart.

So always come up with at least three fruits, whatever they are, and use your own language. There is no wine speak. That's a big thing.

Tim Ferriss: So I guess to do that, you probably also have to get into the habit of tasting. I mean, you should taste things that have fruit, earth, and wood characteristics.

Richard Betts: Totally, yeah. So we can talk about all kinds of things we can juxtapose to supercharge that process. But you definitely got to do it.

Tim Ferriss: What do you mean by juxtapose?

Richard Betts: So if you want to understand what is earth, well, let's buy Napa Valley cabernet and compare it to cabernet from Bordeaux.

Tim Ferriss: Got it.

Richard Betts: They're both the same grade, but the place really makes a huge difference. They're likely made in very similar ways. They're aged in the same oak. But it's that soil that gives the Bordeaux the earthy thing that will isolate that for you. And that's pretty cool.

Tim Ferriss: So if people wanted to say get a handful of reds and a handful of whites, all of which were very different, just to start developing this, what would a few choices be?

Richard Betts: So let's think about three whites. Buy German Riesling. There would be no oak, so that's an example of an oak free wine. It will likely have a little residual sugar depending on what kind you buy, which is really interesting. You say I don't like sweet wine. Well, this isn't about you right now. This is about your learning not about your palate. So what you will learn there is that it's about balance. And so the sugar will be balanced by acidity. It's all about balance in any wine.

So you'll also have earth. So in the German wine, you'll have something earthy. You'll have a great example of balance with residual sugar. And you won't have any oak or woody characteristics. And compare that to California chardonnay, which won't very likely have any earth. It won't have the same level of sweetness. It will have oak. So you can start to say there is that caramel, there is that vanilla, there is that butterscotch. That's the oak. So then, you can put your finger right on that. And then, compare it to something like maybe French sauvignon blanc or even Bordeaux blanc, which is sauvignon blanc and Semillon together in a blend, but it speaks to the place, Bordeaux.

And so you will have oak like the California chardonnay. But you will have earth like the German Riesling. And so you have little bits of each one. And when you can triangulate, that's when you start to get really smart like okay, that's the wood. Okay, that's what earth smells like.

Tim Ferriss: When you're removing one element at a time.

Richard Betts: Exactly.

Tim Ferriss: Or examining one element at a time.

What about for reds?

Richard Betts: Red, you know what would be pretty interesting to do would be I'm a big fan, as we just chatted about, same varietal from different continent. That can be pretty interesting. If we want to do different varietals, do something like dolcetto from Piemonte in Italy. There are lots of great dolcetto.

Tim Ferriss: I'm so bad at remembering Italian wine names.

Richard Betts: Dolcetto is the actual name of the grape. And unlike most of the wines in Italy, this is actually named for the grape and not the place.

Tim Ferriss: Not the region.

Richard Betts: Exactly. But dolcetto is red wine, but it's most frequently made in stainless steel or with absence of new oak. So you'll taste grape, and you'll taste place, earth, but you won't taste any influence of wood. And then, you can even go right next door and drink barbaresco or Burolo, so same region, different grape. So you can identify what that grape is about almost 99 percent of the good cases definitely aged in oak.

And so you can feel what oak does there. And you'll probably find a tie in in terms of the earth. So as long as they have one tether to each other, then, it makes it really useful to see, okay, what's different? And then, grab a Zinfandel from Napa Valley. And there, you'll see the alcohol is really different. And what does that feel like? And the oak will be different because it will be new oak and maybe it will be American oak, which will taste like dill. So all of these little things where you just start to triangulate. But you've got to keep notes and keep it organized in some way. I actually don't keep notes physically any longer. I just keep it in my head.

Tim Ferriss: But you did keep physical notes for a long time.

Richard Betts: Oh, my God, stacks and stacks of notebooks. If they fell over, they'd hurt you. They're stacked that tall.

Tim Ferriss: What is one of your favorite Zinfandels, just out of curiosity, because I tend to like Zinfandels myself.

Richard Betts: I have lots of favorites. I love the wines of Turley.

They're based in Napa, but they make Zinfandel from all over. And Christina Turley, Larry Turley who founded it, it's her daughter. And she's working with Tegan Passalacqua to make some of the really, really special Zinfandels from California. And then, Ridge is a classic. Paul Draper has been making wine at Ridge for north of 40 years. And it's as blue chip as Zinfandel can get.

Tim Ferriss: Cool. What are some underrated wines? And I'd love to get as specific as possible just for people who are looking to try some wines that, perhaps, they wouldn't be exposed to that haven't been sort of over lotted. What are some that you could bring up?

Richard Betts: So pinot noir is all of the rage, right. It's for sure an overindulged princess. There's so much sweet, expensive, unduly expensive pinot noir that I look elsewhere, but I look for that same set of characteristics. And I call them the S word.

Wines that are silky, sexy, supple, soft, things that are full of allure. Those are wines that appeal to me. And pinot noir doesn't have a proprietary right to those, as I describe them, pinot characteristics. They happen in things like Grenache. In fact, I'm a huge proponent of Grenache and believe that it's just the warm climate analogy of pinot noir. So think about pinot with just a little extra warmth, a little extra give, but all of those same S words, and it's great.

Tim Ferriss: What would be a specific Grenache that people could try to find online to check out?

Richard Betts: I'm a big fan of Rusden Grenache. R-U-S-D-E-N. And they make a Christine's Vineyard Grenache. It's from the Barossa Valley in Australia. I spent a lot of time there. To me, Australia is a whole other thing that we could talk about for days. But that wine, in particular, exhibits so much elegance when Australia, maybe, as a country, is not known for elegance.

Tim Ferriss: [Inaudible]. Sorry, Aussies. I know I butchered that. That's my kiwi's friend, their influence.

Richard Betts: Exactly. It's something very elegant, and it punches way above its weight.

Tim Ferriss: Very cool. What are some common, and we're going to talk about other things like whiskey and Mezcal and all sorts of goodness. But before we get to that, what are some common misconceptions about wine or old wives' tales, things that annoy you?

Richard Betts: That's an interesting question. Well, the first one is that more expensive is better. That's definitely not true. I think it's absolutely not true. It's a supply and demand thing, to a large degree and hype. That [inaudible] that I poured the Beranger on top of 20 minutes ago, in my most embarrassing sommelier moment, that's, on release, maybe 500 Euros a bottle in Europe today before you even get it to America.

Why is it that much money? Who knows? Other than they make something like 20,000 cases of it. That's a lot of wine. So why does it cost that much money? Because someone said hey, this is the best thing in the world. And so everybody has to have it. But is it really worth that?

Tim Ferriss: Right. It's like fashion.

Richard Betts: It's just like fashion, exactly. And importantly, I actually get asked that question a lot. They say is this wine worth this much money? I say well, it depends on the individual.

Tim Ferriss: Yeah. It's a marketplace question not necessarily a quality question.

Richard Betts: Yeah, 100 percent, exactly. And so for someone, it might be worth it. And for someone else, it might not be.

Tim Ferriss: Yeah.

Richard Betts: But more expensive is definitely not better. That's a big thing. Color –

Tim Ferriss: If somebody wanted to apply a positive constraint to themselves where they couldn't buy wine over X number of dollars, and let's say this is somebody who is not poor but makes \$50,000.00 a year, so they're not extremely wealthy either.

Richard Betts: Super easy to do.

Tim Ferriss: What is the sweet spot in terms of –

Richard Betts: Between \$15.00 and \$20.00. To find a bottle of wine for under \$10.00, you probably don't want to drink it. I mean, there are, of course, exceptions. There are people get in the weeds, they blow things out and so on and so forth. So maybe you get a steal every now and again. But as a rule, it's very, very hard to make something for under \$10.00. You do it by using fermentation tanks that are as large as a city block with mechanically harvested grapes that were mechanically grown in a place that's probably environmentally very bad. I've seen this stuff in process. And it's gnarly.

And you won't have any connection to the land. So between \$15.00 and \$20.00, you can actually get real wine from real people. It probably won't come from the fancy Appalachians. But that's great. Those are always there. Who cares? Go explore the margins and learn something. And there are so many thrills.

Tim Ferriss: What's another wine between say \$15.00 and \$20.00, or in that range, that people probably haven't tried that you would suggest they give a go?

Like I haven't had much Grenache, so I'm going to try some more Grenache.

Richard Betts: Please do. You can get a lot of great Grenache from Spain. For a long time, the most widely planted red variety in Spain, so there's tons of it. Sometimes, it goes by the name of Rioja where it might be in a blend.

Tim Ferriss: Oh, okay. So Rioja is Grenache.

Richard Betts: With Tempranillo in a blend.

Tim Ferriss: Okay. I'm a big fan of Rioja.

Richard Betts: Yeah. We can drink white Rioja, too. No one thinks about that. We say Rioja, and everyone thinks red. But white Rioja can be great. It can be super age worthy. It can be very affordable. I drink a lot of rose from the south of France. That's \$12.00 or \$15.00. And a new producer I'm really smitten with from the Loire, the name is Mosse. The wines are made from the Chenin blanc grape. They're totally cheap, \$20.00 and amazing. I mean, world class special. I would drink them before pretty much any white wine from California for which you could spend \$300.00.

Tim Ferriss: Wow, very cool. So I interrupted you though. You were saying misconceptions. More expensive is better. And then, I want to say you said color.

Richard Betts: Oh, yeah. So color, that was a real pet peeve of mine as a sommelier. You open a bottle of something and pour the taste, and before the taster had even tasted it, they'd be like oh, that's great, or oh, that's going to be terrible completely based on the color. And as we chatted about it, you don't smell color, and you don't taste color. And color has no bearing on quality at all. So just because it's dark doesn't mean it's going to be good. I would much rather look at my beautiful date and smell and taste something beautiful than just be impressed by a big, inky glass of whatever. And the only bearing color has is on the actual type of grape not whether it's good or not.

Tim Ferriss: Bear with me one second. My puppy is eating my documents. The dog is literally eating my homework. One sec.

Sorry.

Richard Betts: No, it's all good.

Tim Ferriss: All right. So we are still rolling. So we got the color, and what else? I mean, I know you've said before that you think of wine as a grocery. Could you elaborate on that?

Richard Betts: Yeah, definitely. That's also born out of that time living in Italy. The table is not set until there is wine upon it. It might come out of a pitcher and poured into a tumbler, but it's always there, lunch and dinner, it's on the table. And I lived that when I was living there. And I actually brought that back and live it now. And so that's an idea that isn't a very American idea because we're so new in terms of wine drinkers. As a wine drinking community, we're still so young. But there, it's well established for centuries, millennia. And it's that idea that wine ought to be a part of your everyday life. It makes your life better. And so yes, I have an ism that wine is a grocery not a luxury.

Tim Ferriss: And this is embarrassing to admit, but I've been in the Bay Area of 15 years, and I didn't become interested in wine until I lived in Argentina for a year and wine was on the table every single meal, always. Everyone drank wine at dinner.

Richard Betts: Totally.

Tim Ferriss: That is part of the process. It's like setting the table with a knife and fork. You put the wine on the table. And then, I came back with a renewed interest in sort of exploring. Similar to the pinot noir, I feel like Malbec kind of flooded the market and became very popular.

Richard Betts: Totally.

Tim Ferriss: And as a result, people could get away with sort of murder in terms of low quality and high prices. But I've been exploring more. I just like the really kind of fruity, high alcohol content like Chilean and [inaudible] and whatnot. But now, you have expanded though since all of your time in the wine world. And I'm sure maybe there are similar languages like wine is Spanish and whiskey is Portuguese.

But we have a bunch of bottles sitting behind me. Should I go grab those?

Richard Betts: We should and six glasses.

Tim Ferriss: And six glasses. Okay. So we're going to pause this and go get a number of things, a number of tools to have alcohol at 11:00 a.m. in the morning. We'll be right back. So we're laying out six glasses. I asked what type of glasses, and the answer was they really just need to be large enough that you can smell. So like a sake glass wouldn't be large enough. But I'm using, for those people interested, beakers because I'm a weirdo, and I like to scare people who come over for dinner into thinking that we might be drinking out of something I put urine in previously. They're 250 milliliter Kimax Kimble beakers. And 250 milliliters is exactly one-third a standard bottle of wine.

And I love these glasses. I was first exposed to them at a place called Flower and Water. And I'm actually an investor in one of their other restaurants called Central Kitchen in San Francisco. But they used beakers. And they also use beakers for candles. And we have a lot of booze laid out in front of us. I'm excited about this. And the whiskey story, I mean, how did you segue – I'll let you finish the last pour because we have six of these. But I'd love to hear how you segued from wine to whiskey, or if that's always been present?

Richard Betts: No, it's definitely a segue. I think of my job as to help people enjoy their lives. And I think we do that by helping people find

easy ways to get smart about things, which can then increase their enjoyment, frankly.

Wine was scary. So we write a Scratch and Sniff wine book that makes it not scary. Knock it off the pedestal. Make it easy, make it accessible. And tell people that it's actually super democratic. It's up to you what's good. It's not up to me. Don't drink something because I said drink it. Drink something because you figured out that you like that. That's the key. And so in creating that book, you create a methodology. And it's, again, breaking it down to its component pieces. It's just like dissecting a frog. Like where is this, where is this, where is this, and how do they make the think tick?

And we did that with wine. So you understand that it's, again, about fruit and earth and wood. And those things populate all of the smells that you're going to smell. And then, you can put them back together in whatever order you want to make what you want to drink, what will make you happy. And that same methodology applies to whiskey. There are some things to which it doesn't apply.

Like I don't think it applies very well to beer, particularly with the explosion in craft brewing.

Tim Ferriss: Why is that?

Richard Betts: Because the place part has been so obscured. And so now, we can make a beer in California.

Tim Ferriss: The origin.

Richard Betts: Exactly. The origin part. So whereas 10 years ago, I think it really mattered. We would say this has to be Belgian because you recognize certain flavors that come from certain yeasts that only happen in this place. But now, those yeasts are imported here. And there are all kinds of souring techniques and things that people do to really obscure place. So it doesn't apply to beer. But it applies really well to whiskey.

Tim Ferriss: Now, whiskey, I'm cheating a little bit here because I know the answer, but I was so excited to see this because I've always felt like a dumbass when trying to write the word whiskey. With or without an E at the end?

Richard Betts: It depends on the country of origin. So it's a great rule. It's W-H-I-S-K-Y if the whisky comes from a country that doesn't have an E in the name.

Tim Ferriss: Scotland.

Richard Betts: Scotland, Japan, and Canada. If it comes from a country with an E in the name, Ireland or America, then, it's spelled W-H-I-S-K-E-Y. Pretty cool.

Tim Ferriss: I love that trick.

Richard Betts: It's very, very cool.

Tim Ferriss: There's another one, this is just for people like me who are maybe a little slow, perhaps born in a place like Long Island like I was. I always forget, this may reflect how ill suited I am to something like a master som test, but I always forget which bread is mine and which water is mine. So I'm stealing bread. I'm drinking other people's drinks. And if you touch your index finger to your thumb on both hands like you're making an okay symbol, your left hand will make a B, that's bread, and your right hand will make a D, which is drink. And that's what I'll do under the table sometimes when I'm unsure of which to grab.

Richard Betts: Tim, I love that. That's super smart.

Tim Ferriss: And then fork, or if you're setting a table, fork, knife, it's the number of letters. Of fork is four letters. Left is four letters. So they fit on the side associated with the number of letters.

Richard Betts: I love that.

Tim Ferriss: So you were talking about whiskey. So if wine is FEW, is whiskey also FEW?

Richard Betts: It is fruit, earth, and wood. And so but the fruit, in this case, isn't fruit as in a grape. It's grain. And so the first thing that affects the outcome of whiskey – I mean, the first thing to know about whiskey is that it's just distilled beer. That's it. You take beer, and you put it in a still, and you turn on the heat, not too high but just high enough so that only the alcohol evaporates because it evaporates at a lower temperature than water. And then, you condense it, and you capture that on the other side of this thing, and you've separated the alcohol from the water. Genius. It's called distillation. So what we put in at the beginning is just beer.

So you make your beer. And what do you make the beer from makes a big difference. Predominantly, corn, wheat, rye, and malted barley are the four big grain types cereal grains, that are used to make that beer to become whiskey. In America, corn is king and now, rye is sharing the stage as well. But if you're drinking bourbon, it has to be at least 51 percent corn.

Tim Ferriss: No, I'm going to ask yet another embarrassing question. What is the difference between bourbon and whiskey? Or is bourbon a subset of whiskey? Is it a regional name for whiskey?

Richard Betts: So bourbon has a set of laws. It has to come from America. It doesn't have to come from Bourbon County, Kentucky as there is a Bourbon County, Kentucky. But we make bourbon all over the country. So it has to come from America. It has to have been made from at least 51 percent corn. So the balance can be that rye, it can be the wheat, whatever. And it has to be aged in charred, new, oak barrels.

Tim Ferriss: New oak.

Richard Betts: Yeah. So you fell a tree. You cut the tree into planks, or in this case, they're called staves. And then, you bend them using heat to make a barrel. And then, you actually char the inside of the barrel with a flame. And when you do that, it, obviously, changes its color. But it also pulls out all kinds of flavors and caramelizes things in that tree, which also contribute flavors. So it's the brown sugar. It's the brown spices like cardamom and cinnamon. It's vanilla, lots of vanilla, butterscotch, all of those flavors come from that oak barrel. So if you age it in that barrel, and it's made from 51 percent corn, and you did it in America, you have bourbon.

Tim Ferriss: That's bourbon. Cool. So I didn't want to interrupt. So the main options, again, can you roll through that? You've got corn –

Richard Betts: Wheat, rye, and malted barley.

Tim Ferriss: What does malted mean?

Richard Betts: So it means you sprout it. And just like we would eat sprouts, they sprout the grain. And then, you arrest that process. So you kill it, essentially, with heat.

And so it's a big deal in scotch production and in Japanese whisky production as well.

Tim Ferriss: So what is scotch then?

Richard Betts: So scotch is any whiskey that comes from Scotland. And, of course, Irish whiskey coming from Ireland.

Tim Ferriss: Got it, got it. Okay. Cool. This is making a lot more sense now because I've never really felt confident. I think part of it is that I'm usually drunk when I'm trying to have these conversations. But to have a whiskey conversation, which has been actually a handicap for me, in some cases, because I spend quite a lot of time in Japan. And they love their whisky. And it doesn't help that we're also speaking in Japanese. So what are we looking at here.

Richard Betts: So we're looking at a bourbon from Jack Daniels. We're looking at E.H. Taylor rye, which is whiskey made in America, but rye is the predominant grain. We're looking at Jamison, straight up Irish whiskey. We're looking at Nikka Taketsiru 17-year-old, Japanese whisky.

We're looking at Edradour, which is a lower part of the Highlands in Scotland. It's a region in Scotland whisky, but mainland Scotland is the key. So Edradour 10-year-old. And we're looking at Ardbeg, specifically, it's called Uigeadail, which is a scotch made on the Isle of Islay, which is off the coast. And so very different than mainland Scotland because you're right on the ocean. And so we'll see, in these six glasses, the difference that grain contributes. And we'll see the different types of oak and what that contributes and then how place really influences the final product.

Tim Ferriss: Cool. I'm going to go grab a camera because I want to take a photograph of this for folks before we get into it. Can you please explain the tattoos that you have? Why do you have the tattoos that you have, and what are they of?

Richard Betts: So on my right arm is a dandelion. It's a love note to a woman named Carla Rasuscky who I love more than I've ever loved anybody, actually, and didn't think it was possible.

It's great. And she has something very, very similar, a very similar dandelion.

Tim Ferriss: Why a dandelion?

Richard Betts: I am a big fan of how a dandelion changes so rapidly through its life. And I love the part where it ends up with a great big shoot.

And it actually depends on the wind to disperse its seeds. I think it's a beautiful, quite, profound thing that happens.

Tim Ferriss: Poetic.

Richard Betts: Yeah. It's really, really pretty.

Tim Ferriss: And the left –

Richard Betts: The left arm, it's a collection of memories and of things that have made me happy over time. And there's Mt. Vesuvius, which I had probably the most amazing single day of my life on.

Tim Ferriss: Where is that?

Richard Betts: It's just off of Naples in Central Southern Italy. There's a fish on a bun, so think a fish burger and a mermaid and a heart. And that's an ode to a mermaid I fell in love with, Karla. I fell in love with eating fish on a bun sandwiches at the Cup and Saucer on the corner of Canal and Eldridge in China Town in Manhattan.

There's a seashell with some sea critters in it that are from a story I spun for my daughter called Samuel the Sea Cucumber. And he and his friends managed to travel around the entire globe in a seashell tethered to a piece of seaweed. And we use it as a lesson in geography –

Tim Ferriss: This is a story that you made up, or a story that you –

Richard Betts: That I made up. I would spin it to her every night at bed. And so it would just keep going.

Tim Ferriss: That's how the Princess Bride came to be also. It was a story that William Goldman would tell I think it might have been his daughter and his son, and then, he eventually put it down.

Richard Betts: That's awesome. That's really great.

Tim Ferriss: What's the 27?

Richard Betts: Born on the 27th, and 27 is a lucky number for me over and over and over. It keeps repeating itself. And, in this case, the red above the gold are from an apartment that I shared with Karla in China Town. And there were actually three 27's on the building where they would just – it was the original address. Then, it all got painted over.

And they stuck another 27 on it. And 100 years later, it had patina, and they stuck another 27 on it. And 27 is very cool.

Tim Ferriss: Be nice.

Richard Betts: Be nice. It started as a B, and it was in there for 10 years all by itself.

Tim Ferriss: Just B-E.

Richard Betts: No, just the letter B. And it's kind of on the inside. So it was a note to self to just be kind, be thoughtful, benevolent, take your time, just be a good guy. And sometimes, I thrash about, and it's a little reminder. Note to self. And it just grew into be nice just plain and simple.

Tim Ferriss: What about the safety meeting and what is that? Oh, it's some type of mythological creature between the safety and the meeting?

Richard Betts: Yeah. It's the dragon off of the Corona bottle.

Tim Ferriss: So what's the story there?

Richard Betts: It's a shout out to my homies from The Little Nell where we would have safety meetings. This is one of the joys of restaurant work. You'd be on the floor, and you'd be in the weeds, or someone would be yelling at you about something, and you just look at your favorite waiter, and we'd say safety meeting.

And we both knew that meant walk into the kitchen, walk into my white wine cooler, lock the door from the inside, pound a Corona, walk back out on the floor, and rock service. Period.

Tim Ferriss: That's amazing. Safety meeting. I was just talking to someone who shall remain unnamed, but a very, very high performer, and he, with his friends, they would have some hair-brained question that usually had dangerous implications. And they would say let's play let's find out. So their code was let's play the game let's find out.

Richard Betts: That's so good.

Tim Ferriss: I interrupted you though because I wanted to take photos of this for people. And for those people, go to the show notes, and you'll find links to everything we're talking about. But you'll also find the photographs. So that's just fourhourworkweek.com all spelled out. Click on podcast. And you'll also see photographs of some of the

audio gear that I'm using here. But so I'm excited about this. So what's the next step then?

Richard Betts: So the next step is you're going to smell the first, which is Jack Daniels bourbon and the second, which is the E.H. Taylor rye.

Tim Ferriss: Okay. Am I looking for anything in particular or just impressions?

Richard Betts: So the real thing here is they're both aged in new, charred, American oak. They're both made in America and Asian America. So wood and place are relatively equal. The big difference is that the bourbon is 51 percent, at least, corn. And the rye is rye. And so when we talk about what are the three things that inform a whiskey, well, the first one is grain. And that's what I want to illustrate for you here. And hopefully, you can smell the difference. The rye should be more pungent and spicy.

Tim Ferriss: Let's see. One moment, folks.

Richard Betts: He's got his nose all the way in that beaker.

Tim Ferriss: This is like golf commentary. Oh, yeah.

Richard Betts: It's crazy, isn't it?

Tim Ferriss: Yeah, it's a huge difference.

Richard Betts: So rye is, actually, classically, I mean, it's been around forever, but also, it's used in a Manhattan.

Tim Ferriss: It has almost like more of a paint like bite to it. Or maybe not paint, maybe it's paint thinner that I'm thinking of or a turpentine thing.

Richard Betts: You get that varnish thing with protracted aging in a barrel. So it does take that on. So that's a function of time.

Tim Ferriss: Got it.

Richard Betts: The spice from the grain itself should also be there. And it plays in the same area. When I smell things, I think about it a lot like musical ranges. And so the bass hangs out down here. And there are rich things like chocolate and the vanilla can happen down in there sometimes.

Tim Ferriss: I've got a question. Does it ever take your nose time to warm up? Because I feel like I just smelled this the fourth time, and I'm getting a lot more from it.

Richard Betts: One hundred percent, it does. And another key would be open your mouth when you smell. Everyone slams their mouth shut. And you actually get less information.

Tim Ferriss: Oh, that's right. What is it called? The retroactive –

Richard Betts: The retro nasal.

Tim Ferriss: Damn it, I was so close.

Richard Betts: But it makes a huge difference.

And for those of you listening, don't take a hard pull on it like you do wine, or it will actually really burn. So with spirits, you can smell really gently.

Tim Ferriss: You don't want to give yourself a rye nasal irrigation.

Richard Betts: Yeah. It almost smells like a rye bread, which is so interesting that that actually comes through.

Tim Ferriss: Yeah, it does. You're right.

Richard Betts: And then, this guy, the Jack Daniels, just smells sort of sweet and round. And it doesn't have any of that same spice. So that's the first piece. Grape. The next piece –

Tim Ferriss: Or grain in this case.

Richard Betts: Pardon me, exactly. Of grape and grain, my favorite spots.

Tim Ferriss: That could be your next book title.

Richard Betts: It should be. Well, we have to throw agave in there, so succulents. The next is Irish, and so this is Jamison. And just straight Jamison, which is a brand going crazy. But what makes Irish Irish? And I just want you to think about it as it compares to the things before is that, frequently, they distill more than twice, three times.

And the farther you go with the distillation, or you can even use a column still, which we need not bother ourselves with. The point is the farther you go with the distillation, the more you take out of it.

So if we start with our beer is 100 liters, and we distill it, we end up with 30 liters. And if you distill that again, maybe now, you're at 15 liters. And you distill it again, and now, you're at 7.5 liters.

Tim Ferriss: Is it subsequently removing more of the characteristics that make it unique, and you're getting closer to rubbing alcohol?

Richard Betts: That's 100 percent, you're all over it. Vodka, essentially. So it has nothing to say. And it has something to say, but it's not saying it very loudly. So that's a very Irish thing to do.

Tim Ferriss: This is like the Catholic school version. Spoke when spoken to.

Richard Betts: Exactly, 100 percent. So it's this is where process is a function of place. And so this is typically what happens with the vast majority by volume of Irish whiskey.

Tim Ferriss: Do you have any idea why they do that? Because I'm just thinking back do Ireland, potato famine. Why would they take such a high volume of stuff?

Richard Betts: And make it smooth.

Tim Ferriss: And make it so much smaller also.

Richard Betts: That's a great question. I think it was really a matter of what people favored in terms of drinking. And so it's so different than Scotland. And each of them were competing for the royal favor. What are people going to drink, and what is going to be the drink? They were very, very different. And they've each enjoyed popularity at different times.

Tim Ferriss: So Jamison, this should bring back some memories for me because I remember being in Dublin, and for those of you who have read the *Four Hour Work Week*, this was in late 2004. I had just landed. I was in London, and then Ireland was recommended. I landed in Dublin. And then, later, they said what the hell are you doing in Dublin? You should go to Galway. And that's how I ended up there. But I got really into hurling. And Guinness sponsors the senior sort of nationals and the competition for this.

For those who haven't seen hurling, not the puking game, that's also popular in Ireland, but it's the fastest field sport in the world. It's like la crosse plus baseball with axe handles on a soccer field. It's extremely violent, fantastic game. But I wanted to take a tour of the Guinness factory as a result. I was just curious. I don't really

drink beer. I got on a bus. It was a hop on, hop off bus. Got to the Guinness brewery, massive as you would imagine, and this was probably 9:30 in the morning, and the line was just hundreds of people.

And I opted out. I was like no, I don't even really drink beer. If it were easy, I would do it. But no thanks. A few stops later, the Jamison distillery shows up. And I'm like okay, sure. Let's check it out. I go in, and they go for later, we're going to need a few volunteers. I raised my hand, and they picked maybe two or three of us. And later, we have to do a tasting but a marathon tasting.

And so all of us wander out at like 10:00 a.m. completely shit faced drunk. That was my introduction to Jamison.

Richard Betts: I love it.

Tim Ferriss: So should I smell for anything in particular?

Richard Betts: I think just relative to the last one. So again, this is developing your context. And I have some things that I attribute to Irish whiskey, but I would rather you smell unfettered.

Tim Ferriss: It's very subtle.

Richard Betts: Yeah, it is subtle. Exactly.

Tim Ferriss: Oh, my God. I'm getting anxious like a school child who feels like he's going to the exam naked.

Richard Betts: There's no wrong answer. That's the whole key to this is that you just use your own vernacular.

Tim Ferriss: I found out that I have a deviated septum in one nostril, which has been bothering me for years. But I just thought I always had a stuffy nose. I know that it's much understated compared to the other two.

Richard Betts: Totally. Exactly.

Tim Ferriss: But I'm not sure –

Richard Betts: And so why is vodka so popular? Because it doesn't taste like anything, and you can mix it with things. And so that subtlety and its amiability make it actually quite popular.

Tim Ferriss: It's very flexible.

Richard Betts: Yeah, very flexible. It's very easy to drink. It's a little bit lower proof than the rye I poured you, lower percentage of alcohol. So for me that comes from the process associated with the place. You keep distilling, you keep taking things out. It has less to say. And to me, it's always kind of grassy, kind of herby, a little bit of like a honey thing maybe. But this is just personal adjectives.

Tim Ferriss: Have you found – is the nose like height meaning you were born with a certain nose. And it's maybe malleable a little bit but not very? Or is it like muscle mass where you can develop it?

Richard Betts: Yes, I think it's totally trainable. My dad is a great example.

He was like I can't smell anything. And his son is getting into wine, and now, he can smell everything. And it's like a radio. You just have to tune it in, right. And once you get there, I think it's –

Tim Ferriss: I'm so greedy. I'm like my dog. I stuck my nose right into it.

Richard Betts: When we were hunter gatherers, we depended on this scent of smell for life. I can eat that, or I can't eat that. That's rotten. That's poison, whatever it is. And we don't have to rely on it at all to the same degree. So it's the first of the senses that we tune out. And so when you get into this, it's a matter of just tuning it back in.

Tim Ferriss: I think part of that is the amount and the frequency with which we eat. And I've done a number of fasting experiments. And, for instance, I just fasted. I broke a fast last night. So I fasted for a short fast for me, like 48 hours. And your evolutionary biology upgrades your smell immediately. Whatever brain power is dedicated elsewhere is suddenly harnessed for the nose. It's really interesting.

Richard Betts: That's super cool.

Tim Ferriss: Yeah, very, very cool. They do that for falconry also, I understand. If they're doing hunting or any type of precision work with falcons, they will starve is a hard word, but they'll restrict their food so that their senses are sharpened.

Richard Betts: That's amazing.

Tim Ferriss: Yeah, pretty cool. If you guys want to see something crazy, you can watch falconry in Mongolia where they hunt deer with falcons. So let's see, we were here at the Jamison.

Richard Betts: Yeah. So we're going to leave Ireland. And we're going to go to Japan. And so the Japanese model is very much based on the Scotch model, which you're going to have in the last two glasses. So malted barley, so this is really a single malt. When it's a single malt, or you read that on a bottle, it just means that it's made from malted barley.

Tim Ferriss: Now, the Jamison, what are the grains in the Jamison?

Richard Betts: So barley, wheat, rye.

Tim Ferriss: Okay. No corn, which makes sense.

Richard Betts: Well, there could be corn in here, but it's definitely –

Tim Ferriss: Those are the primary.

Richard Betts: Exactly.

Tim Ferriss: And then, the Japanese is the malted barley.

Richard Betts: It's malted barley. And so those guys took their queues from Scotland as to how to do this.

And they very much tried to emulate what they did in Scotland. But it happens in Japan, so it has the place factor is a big, big difference. And I always get some – for me, it feels, you have a much deeper understanding of Japan than I do, but I always find things to be very subtle and very beautiful and very complicated but not outwardly so.

Tim Ferriss: Right, not ostentatious.

Richard Betts: Exactly, yeah. So I love Japanese whisky.

Tim Ferriss: It smells delicious. It smells very floral to me.

Richard Betts: Yeah. So that's it. You're right on it. Tim is actually a great taster.

Tim Ferriss: I appreciate the pat on the podcaster back. But I get the floral. The Japanese also love barley. So one of my favorite things, and part of the reason why I'm liking this artichoke tea that I'm keeping cold, is I really became a huge fan of barley tea, I think it's barley tea, Mogitcha.

Richard Betts: I'm going to taste this.

Tim Ferriss: Yeah, go for it.

There's a tea called Mogitcha. So even in Chinese, it's the same like [inaudible]. But the Mogitcha they use in the summer and drink cold. So the barley is used elsewhere in Japan. But you guys should try that out if you have the chance. Or you can try some chilled artichoke tea without anything else. But I really like the smell of this. And what is this called again?

Richard Betts: So this is from Nikka, and it's specifically Taketsuru. And it's 17 years old.

Tim Ferriss: Taketsuru is like a bamboo crane. I think somebody can correct me here, but siru I think is crane. It might be herring. But taka is I think it's like shitaka, or maybe that is like as in the mushroom. But bamboo, that's cool. That's very cool.

Richard Betts: That's very cool. Well, that floral thing you hit on is sometimes referred to as old temple in this whole whisky –

Tim Ferriss: Like incense.

Richard Betts: Incense, cedar, and sandalwood.

Tim Ferriss: What an amazing smell.

Richard Betts: Isn't that cool?

Tim Ferriss: That smells really good.

Richard Betts: So that's made a whole lot like this next one is made, Edradour.

Tim Ferriss: What is it called?

Richard Betts: Edradour.

Tim Ferriss: How the hell do you spell that?

Richard Betts: You spell it E-D-R-A-D-O-U-R.

Tim Ferriss: Got it.

Richard Betts: And so that's from mainland Scotland. So the big variable here is place. And so all things being equal, you've got Japan versus mainland Scotland.

Tim Ferriss: Very different, totally different.

Richard Betts: So different, right?

Tim Ferriss: I need to smell more things. I need to follow my puppy around and smell everything or most things. Not everything my puppy likes I'd like. I'm having a really tough time pinning it down, but it has a very, very particular scent to it.

Richard Betts: It's fun to poke at it.

And when all of you are smelling, you shouldn't rush. I would say one of the great joys of smelling and tasting things, and if I had to pick one particular moment, the first time I smelled a Rutherglen Muscat. So Muscat is a dessert wine made in Rutherglen, Australia, and I never had one before. And I picked it up, and I smelled the glass. And immediately, I was back in fifth grade after school running through my grandmother's front door, and she just pulled ginger snaps out of the oven. And I was 35 years old when that happen. And that memory came streaming back.

Tim Ferriss: It's like the ratatouille in the movie when Anton Ego eats the ratatouille.

Richard Betts: Exactly, it's so cool. And so however old each of us are, we have that many years of memory based on smell. And it's so cool to let those just come floating back to you.

Tim Ferriss: I can't pin this down. I want to say it's like a very dark chocolate or something.

Richard Betts: I'm with you.

Tim Ferriss: I can't quite nail it. It's a very familiar smell to me. And it isn't scotch. But how would you describe this?

What descriptors would you use?

Richard Betts: For me, this is actually quite rich. And it does have this sort of malted milkshake thing, the vanilla part. But it also has a lot of oak on it. So it does have that richness, almost milk chocolate, caramel, vanilla thing.

Tim Ferriss: Maybe that's it, yeah.

Richard Betts: I mean, it's pretty round and voluptuous for scotch.

Tim Ferriss: It's like a milkshake. It has that kind of milkshake type smell to it.

Richard Betts: Exactly. So what do they put in the milkshake? Just malt, the same stuff.

Tim Ferriss: That's true. That's right.

Richard Betts: So it's the malt from the milkshake that smells like the malt that happens when you make barley.

Tim Ferriss: That's what I'm associating because I've had more milkshakes than I have had scotch.

Richard Betts: Isn't that cool?

Tim Ferriss: That is cool. That's super cool.

Richard Betts: Okay. So the last glass, same country, Scotland, but now, you're out on an island where so this is really about place. And so same process in terms of making the stuff, in terms of distillation and cask aging.

Tim Ferriss: What type of wood are they aging it in?

Richard Betts: So great question.
Used barrels from Jack Daniels amongst other bourbon producers and used sherry barrels from the south of Spain, used Madeira barrels from the Island of Madeira.

Tim Ferriss: And the sherry barrels are made out of what type? Is that also oak?

Richard Betts: It's all oak.

Tim Ferriss: Is there any type of cask aging that is not done in oak?

Richard Betts: Yeah, there's chestnut, which is common in Northern Italy. But that's more for wine.

Tim Ferriss: Got it.

Richard Betts: So this all happens by the ocean. So there's the use of peat.

Tim Ferriss: This last one.

Richard Betts: Yeah, exactly. So place matters a lot here because peat is used in a really profound way. So when we malt the barley, you're taking the barley, you're getting it wet, you're letting it sprout. And then, we halt that sprouting process with heat. And the heat comes from burning peat.

Tim Ferriss: In this case, in the last case, on the island.

Richard Betts: Yeah.

Tim Ferriss: It's a moss, right?

Richard Betts: Yeah. It's, essentially, a stage short of coal. So it's compressed, dead grass, dead moss, so it's a bio fuel. And so you cut it out in like bricks of really dark looking adobe almost.

Tim Ferriss: Interesting. So it's like cow dung that you would burn for fuel I Mongolia.

Richard Betts: Exactly.

Tim Ferriss: Interesting.

Richard Betts: So that flavors it. But then, also, you age these casks by the seaside.

Tim Ferriss: Oh, very smoky.

Richard Betts: Yeah. I get things like there's smoke, iodine, brine, salty.

Tim Ferriss: Yeah, it does have a briny smell to it. That is so different.

Richard Betts: Isn't that crazy?

Tim Ferriss: Yeah. That's cool. This is fun, guys. You should definitely do this.

Richard Betts: And these are the short strokes with this. So you just put some things next to each other, and you can really supercharge your learning. And so what does place do? You've just seen. What does oak do? Well, you've just seen.

Tim Ferriss: You can treat it like a workout. You can treat it like an actual learning session. So you sort of separate the recreation from the learning, even though you can transport the learning then to the enjoyment but keep the training separate.

Richard Betts: Exactly.

Tim Ferriss: So what's next?

Richard Betts: What's next? We release a book on this stuff.

Tim Ferriss: What's next as it relates to me with this plethora of goodness in front of me.

Richard Betts: Get drinking.

Tim Ferriss: So I have six of these in front of me. Any particular order?

Richard Betts: I would go in the same order that we tasted. Actually, no, I'm going to put the Irish first. It has the least to say. Let's start there. And then, we'll resume –

Tim Ferriss: Okay, so starting with the lightest, got it. So this is the Jamison.

Richard Betts: Exactly.

Tim Ferriss: How much when you're tasting something like this?

Richard Betts: Just a little bit. Enough to get it down your throat. I think you see a lot of wine tasting. Everyone spits and so on and so forth. And first of all, I want to advocate responsibility. That's important. You've got to do what's right for you. But if you're really going to get the information, and you have nowhere to go, you've got to swallow a little bit because you feel certain things in certain parts of your mouth.

Tim Ferriss: There are also taste receptors outside of the mouth. A lot of people don't realize this and all the way down to the stomach even.

Or I mean, further through the GI process. Okay.

Richard Betts: So it's your first of the day, so you're probably feeling the alcohol.

Tim Ferriss: Yeah.

Richard Betts: But beyond that, what do you feel?

Tim Ferriss: God, I just feel like I lack the vocabulary here. I'm being asked to name musical notes when I don't know how to read sheet music.

Richard Betts: But don't read sheet music. Use your own vocabulary.
Tim Ferriss: For those of you who have seen the chess lesson between Josh Waitskin and myself, it was an extra for the Tim Ferriss experiment, my face looks about the same right now. I should really have an answer, and I don't have an answer.

Richard Betts: It doesn't really have a lot to say. It tastes kind of boozy, and it tastes kind of thin, and there's not a whole lot to it.

Tim Ferriss: Okay. That's pretty much what I would say. Yeah. I don't have a lot more to add to that.

Richard Betts: Totally. You could add ginger ale and maybe make it – there's nothing wrong with Jamison. But point being, that's why it gets mixed with things.

Tim Ferriss: Got it.

Richard Betts: Okay. And Jack Daniels.

Tim Ferriss: And this is bourbon.

Richard Betts: Yeah. Well, corn. It's Tennessee whiskey.

Tim Ferriss: Tennessee whiskey, okay.

Richard Betts: So this is a question while you're tasting. The difference between Tennessee whiskey and bourbon is that Tennessee whiskey actually does have to come from Tennessee. And if you come from Tennessee, you also have to go through this other thing called the Lincoln County Process where they filter the booze through a 10 foot column of charcoal. And that just takes out impurities. And so it makes it smoother. But, essentially, the Tennessee process, apart from that filtering and bourbon are very, very similar.

Tim Ferriss: So I want to say I think I might be pulling a rabbit out of a hat here, and I don't even know there are rabbits in the hat, it's a terrible metaphor, but I get a more viscous sort of caramel type experience.

Richard Betts: Absolutely.
Tim Ferriss: Totally different from the Jamison.

Richard Betts: That's due to the heavy corn use here. And it's due to the new wood that's used here. So the Jamison doesn't use near the same

amount of the charred new barrels that the Jack does. And so it gives it that richness. It gives it that viscosity.

Tim Ferriss: Now, what about how would you explain, for instance, I went to Kentucky to visit Drew Curtis who was a friend of mine, at one point. He runs a site called FARK.com, which is hilarious and amazing. You should all check it out. And we went through a lot of bourbon and whiskey and whatnot. And I didn't really gel with bourbon until I had Bulleit bourbon. And I have a bunch behind us in the cabinet.

B-U-L-L-E-I-T. And the way that someone explained that to me was it has a higher rye content. And that's probably why you like it. But if you had to guess or to explain that, what would you say? Why was Bulleit so much easier for me to drink?

Richard Betts: I think it's a little, compared to the Jack, I find somewhat showy. And the volume is turned up on just a couple of things. To me, the volume isn't turned up quite as loud with the Bulleit. And there may be more pieces to it. It's almost a little finer. It has a little bit more cut on the palate. And I don't mean bludgeon like straight punch in the face of flavor. It's almost more live in a certain way.

Tim Ferriss: A little more subdued?

Richard Betts: Exactly.

Tim Ferriss: Got it. So it's like if you were listening to music, and the bass is out of control and shaking your car, the rest of it might be fine, but you can't listen to it for very long.

Richard Betts: Exactly.

Tim Ferriss: Interesting, yeah. The Bulleit is tasty. I do like the Bulleit quite a bit.

So we are on -

Richard Betts: The E.H. Taylor rye.

Tim Ferriss: All right.

Richard Betts: What do you think?

Tim Ferriss: Sorry, you guys. These silences must be fascinating for you guys. Yeah, it has a lot of bite. So I struggle to –

Richard Betts: It comes from two things.

Tim Ferriss: It has a lot of bite. So I was really struggling to try to separate the – and this is the one I said smelled more like turpentine to me.

Richard Betts: Exactly.

Tim Ferriss: I was struggling to sort of separate that kick in the nuts from the flavor profile. But I was having trouble doing it.

Richard Betts: It takes practice. Practice, practice, practice. So the bite comes from you have 10 percent more alcohol here than the last one you drank. So for sure, you feel that. But also, the rye gives it a bite. And they sort of play in the same range. When we were talking about musical ranges, turpentine can also play in the same range as the rye.

They're all high toned aromatics.

Tim Ferriss: What is that? What do you mean by that?

Richard Betts: So when I smell, I think about the musical range and the fat notes are the bass. And then, there's this mezzo, which everything has. It's kind of neither here nor there. But the alto tends to be where these high tone notes of flowers, of spice, something like turpentine. It's the stuff that lives up high. And you can almost physically feel that in your nose when you smell.

Tim Ferriss: Yeah, I did 100 percent.

Richard Betts: Yeah. It's pretty interesting. And so the rye, on the palate, plays almost in the same vein as the alcohol that serves to make it spicy and give it cut.

Tim Ferriss: Now, I was just wondering, there are standardized tests for vision, and people have eye checkups. They go to the ophthalmologist or whatever. And there are standardized tests for hearing. I can't think of any time in my life where I've had my smell tested.

Richard Betts: Yeah. Unless you faint, and they put smelling salts under your nose.

Tim Ferriss: Do those exist though? Are there standardized smelling ability measurements of any type?

Richard Betts: Not that I know of, no.

Tim Ferriss: What the hell is up with that? That's so weird.

Richard Betts: Well, I wouldn't endorse them even if there were. I'm a big believer in making this thing inclusive not exclusive.

Tim Ferriss: No, no, no, understood. But, for instance, not exclusive in the same way that some people say if you have a mixed dog, you shouldn't try to find out what the breed is because then, you'll impose on that dog expectations. And in the same way, if you found out you had a low – I'm interested in it not so much to decide if I am a good or bad smeller but to be able to track some type of progress as a metric.

Richard Betts: That's fair. But if you wear glasses, you can never fly a fighter plane. I wouldn't want anyone to feel like they can't be a happy drinker if I have a bad nose. They would feel condemned to not participate.

Tim Ferriss: Okay. Fair enough. I guess it depends on how quirky their nerdome is when it comes to metrics and tracking. I have lots of foibles and neuroses. But, fortunately, I guess, I can get a bad report card and just want to improve it.

Richard Betts: Totally.

Tim Ferriss: So this is the Japanese.

Richard Betts: Back to Japan.

Tim Ferriss: Back to Japan.

Richard Betts: Exactly.

Tim Ferriss: [Japanese]. That means long time no see, basically, which by the way is from Chinese, actually. It's [Japanese], which literally means long time, no see. [Japanese], which is the same [Japanese] see you again. So this is the Japanese Taketsuru.

Richard Betts: Yeah. He's thoughtfully tasting, everyone.

Tim Ferriss: That is amazing. I love that. It's very silky. There aren't any kind of rough aspects to it.

Richard Betts: Nope.

Tim Ferriss: I could just sip that for hours.

Richard Betts: Me, too, and I do.

Tim Ferriss: Wow. I'm going to write that one down. This is the, what was it, 17 year?

Richard Betts: Mm-hmm.

Tim Ferriss: The 17 year Nikka Taketsuru. Wow, that's good stuff.

Richard Betts: So it comes back to that idea of balance, right, and use. So the first four you tasted may be balanced in different ways. But I don't think you liked the rye quite as much.

Tim Ferriss: The rye, on the rocks as one drink with some bros before we play pool, fine. But I couldn't sit down and nurse that over hours of a poker game.

Richard Betts: Isn't it interesting? And then, similarly, you might not take the Taketsuru and make a Manhattan with it like you would the rye.

Tim Ferriss: Yeah.

Richard Betts: So then, you add sweet vermouth, it calms it right down. You stir it over rocks and temperature, calms it right down. So it's like where is the end point for these things. So I'm with you. I'm probably not sipping the E.H. Taylor rye very often, unless I'm around a campfire and that's all there is. But the Taketsuru, all day long.

Tim Ferriss: The Taketsuru, it is really fascinating how whether it's the Irish distilling process, the characteristics of the Japanese scotch, they really match the sort of cultural stereotypes well.

Richard Betts: Yeah, totally.

Tim Ferriss: There's a really I think it's a fascinating book, there are gems in it, even though some of it may be found very boring to people. It's a short book called *In Praise of Shadows*. And it's a book on sort of architecture and esthetics written by a Japanese fellow whose name is escaping me right now. I want to say Kanazaki, but I could be making that up. And it just talks about how, for instance, people in the west will buy objects from Japan that have gold foil or embroidering and put it in their homes, but it looks gaudy. And the

reason that's the case is that Japan and Japanese esthetics makes use of shadow and darkness more.

So they compensated for that darkness by having more ornamentation with things like gold because you'd be seeing it in low light settings. And just the whole book is really interesting. It talks about he has very strong opinions about Japanese versus western toilets and whatnot.

But that type of sensibility you can detect, even in the scotch, which is cool.

Richard Betts: And it applies to wine, too, same parable.

Tim Ferriss: And then, this, now, we have the mainland –
Richard Betts: Edradour, 10-year-old scotch.

Tim Ferriss: All right. While I'll taste, I'll let you answer this. I think that a lot of people, myself included, tend to assume or have a bias towards older age. Like it must be better if it's older.

Richard Betts: It's the same rule with wine. More expensive isn't better. Older isn't better. And, in some cases, you can actually go really too far. I feel like, for you, the rye, which is 10 years old, is probably beyond the pleasure principle for Tim. And things age at different rates depending on where they are. So it's cold and wet in Scotland. Proof can actually tend to come down in the aging.

You can lose some alcohol through evaporation whereas you lose less water because it's so humid. But because it's cooler and wetter, it takes more time to develop the patina that happens with age. Whereas if you're in a rick house, which is just an aging warehouse in Kentucky, even today at the end of summer, it's hot. It's really hot. So that whole thing proceeds at a much greater pace, much faster. And you can blow right by the sweet spot and get to something that just becomes a varnish, turpentine extract of oak. And you've lost all the other character and nuance.

Tim Ferriss: Which makes perfect sense because if you have that added heat and all of the metabolic processes are accelerating – now, what was the name of this again? I'm so bad at spelling anything from Scotland because there are lots of O-U-G-H's and so on that I can't make sense of. But what was the name of that again?

Richard Betts: This is Edradour, E-D-R-A-D-O-U-R 10 year.

I think it's actually Scotland's smallest distillery.

Tim Ferriss: I like this a lot.

Richard Betts: It's my favorite in Scotland on the mainland.

Tim Ferriss: Oh, no kidding. This is delicious, really, really nice. And words are failing me, which I suppose happens a fair amount, but particularly in this case. How would you describe this?

Richard Betts: To me, it's pretty and rich, which is kind of, again, back to balance, it's a hard balancing point. It's easy to get rich. But how do you stay pretty, too?

Tim Ferriss: Yeah. I also feel like it's strong. It has – and look, guys, for those people listening, I get really irritated by sort of the snobbery that can come with a lot of this. But I'm lacking better words to use. But there are a lot of ridiculous stuff out there when it comes to beverages at the high end and so on. However, with this, the way I would describe this is it's a lot stronger.

Not necessarily in alcohol content but the characteristics and the flavors are a lot stronger than Japanese. But just short of really head butting me in the face like the rye. And so this I could do for a longer period of time.

Richard Betts: Totally.

Tim Ferriss: It's kind of like 75 is perfect, 85, if you're in the sun, can be too much. And this is like hanging out right below that threshold.

Richard Betts: Yeah, I totally agree. When I taste this, I actually taste Raisinettes.

Tim Ferriss: Oh, interesting.

Richard Betts: It's such a trip. I get the malted milkshake thing but also the chocolate over the raisin. And it's rich, and it's yummy, and it wears the alcohol well.

Tim Ferriss: Yeah, I do get it. I mean, power of suggestion being what it is. Who knows? So this is the islander.

Richard Betts: Exactly. This is full gas on a lot of fronts. It's big, it's rich.

It's the most alcoholic on the table. It has 54.2 percent alcohol, so that's 108.4 proof. It's not for the meek. From Ardbeg, Uigeadail.

Tim Ferriss: Yeah, that will put hair on your chest.

Richard Betts: Mm-hmm.

Tim Ferriss: I had trouble with that. I was trying to do the aeration and swishing and whatnot. I was like oh, my God, I could barely get the first part down.

Richard Betts: But if you just put a little bit in your mouth, and it just fills your whole cranium with this crazy perfume.

Tim Ferriss: Yeah. It's very perfumed and very smoky just like before.

Richard Betts: I love sipping on these, but just in small amounts. It's not a drink, it's like a sip.

Tim Ferriss: Yeah. That would have to be like sitting reading a book at your own speed someplace cold.

Richard Betts: Cold and snowing outside.

Tim Ferriss: Like an island in Ireland maybe.

Richard Betts: Yeah, exactly.

Or Scotland.

Tim Ferriss: Or Scotland, I'm so sorry. Jesus. All the Scottish people are going to punch the earphones as we speak.

Richard Betts: I'm supposed to know.

Tim Ferriss: So now, let's talk about one other thing. And we can introduce it maybe as a story. So tell me the story you told me about the convoy, and let's use that as a segue into Mezcal.

Richard Betts: Yes, let's do. So I was telling a story about I have a Mezcal brand, it's called Sombra. I started it 10 years ago actually when everybody thought I was selling mescaline. Like Richard, you're going to go to jail. And I was like what do you mean I'm going to go to jail. Well, mescaline is illegal. It's a drug. I'm like no, no, no. It's not mescaline. It's Mezcal. Without going through the long strokes, 10 years has taken us a long ways. And we've gone from a time when everybody thought that to it's actually on everybody's lips. So Mezcal is really the authentic agave spirit of Mexico. Everyone talks about tequila.

Tequila has really changed in a lot of ways, and it's been bastardized over the last since 1860 when it became tequila. Before that, it, too, was Mezcal. So for me, the idea is –

Tim Ferriss: I'm sorry to interrupt. In what ways has it become bastardized?

Richard Betts: So at a certain point, you could have used dozens of different types of agave to make, and you can still, Mezcal. And tequila was one of those things. And when it went from being Vino de Mezcal to being tequila, they legislated for industry and not for artistry. So no longer could you use these 20 some flavors of agave.

Tim Ferriss: Now, it's just blue agave?

Richard Betts: It's just blue. And they say because it's the best. Well, it's not necessarily the best. It's the best if you want something to grow big, fast, soft so it's easy to cut. And now, they've created this monoculture of it's like the cheetahs. There's no DNA variability. And so the first thing –

Tim Ferriss: You said like cheetahs?

Richard Betts: Yeah. You know how they're about to be extinct because there's like –

Tim Ferriss: Oh, no.

Richard Betts: Oh, yeah. Their gene pool is so tiny that everyone is afraid that's if one of them catches the flu, they're all going to die.

Tim Ferriss: Oh. There's no variability.

Richard Betts: None whatsoever. So the same thing is happening to tequila with blue agave. And so that's why they have these blights that take out all of these plants.

Tim Ferriss: Tons of production.

Richard Betts: Yeah. It's huge. And so in addition to the plant, it was the processing methods have changed. And you are so far from what was originally produced in tequila to get to what they're making today that, hey, I still drink the stuff. But it's not –

Tim Ferriss: If you drink tequila, what do you drink? It's kind of like the Dos Equis guy. I don't drink tequila often, but when I do –

Richard Betts: I drink a lot of Siete Leguas. They do a great job.

Tim Ferriss: Siete, seven, Leguas.

Richard Betts: L-E-G-U-A-S. I like the guys at Tequila Ocho. Actually, I don't know the guys at Tequila Ocho. I like their tequila a lot. And then, we make one called Astral like astral, which is really a deliberate throw back to what was it like before 1860

When they legislated for, basically, vodka production. So for me, Mezcal is the real thing. It embodies that intellectual value we've been talking about, and it embodies process and place and people and geology and geography and history and cuisine. It's all in there. So that's interesting to me. And so we've been down there doing this stuff. But it's definitely –

Tim Ferriss: What is Mezcal for people who haven't had it?

Richard Betts: So think of it as tequila from the rest of Mexico. But for sure, it's going to be more full flavored. So much like this last scotch you had where they used peat in the process that gives it that smoky quality –

Tim Ferriss: Yeah. It has a very smoky characteristic.

Richard Betts: Exactly. So if we just take a step back, and we think well, if Mezcal is made from agave, what's agave? Agave is starch. And you need yeast to eat sugar to make alcohol. Yeasts don't eat starch. So the way you turn a starch into a sugar is with heat. And today, it's done with steam or even with enzymes in some strange cases, cases I try to avoid personally.

But, traditionally, it's done with fire. And so in Mezcal production, you actually dig a hole in the ground. You build a fire. You put rocks over that fire. And then, you put the agave hearts in there. And you roast them for two days buried in the ground. And that heat converts the starch to a sugar. It also, much like this last scotch, imbues it with a smoky flavor. And so that's my Mezcal has that smoky quality. And so think of it like the original tequila plus smoke.

Tim Ferriss: And that's based in Mexico.

Richard Betts: That's based in Oaxaca, Mexico, almost the very bottom –

Tim Ferriss: Also famous for mole.

Richard Betts: Also famous for mole, great food, amazing people, amazing traditions.

Tim Ferriss: A little unpredictable.

Richard Betts: Yeah, it's definitely unpredictable. There is so much beauty and so many wonderful things. And you definitely have to watch your step.

Tim Ferriss: So what happened with the convoy?

Richard Betts: So what happened with the convoy, we were there with some friends and business associates.

And after being out at our [inaudible], our two cars pulled back on – [inaudible] is where you distill. And after driving from the distillery and the mountains, 17 kilometers down a dirt road back to the main highway, which is the Pan American, we turned onto the Pan American highway. And two trucks of state police soldiers pulled in front of our two cars and started slowing down. And the guy that was driving the car in front of us didn't understand the clues, which is we were also supposed to slow down and stop with them.

Tim Ferriss: Was he Mexican?

Richard Betts: Yeah, he was. He's the son of the guy that was driving our car. And he just didn't know the clues.

Tim Ferriss: Didn't pick up on the hint.

Richard Betts: Which was a little scary because, in half a breath, you had two trucks of soldiers with their rifles pointed at the car. And the guy that works for us down there is an amazing guy. He's been there forever. He knows the clues. And he's like grabbing the kid, stop the car, stop the car, narrowly averting disaster.

Tim Ferriss: And they're stopping the car, I would imagine. I mean, I've had this experience in Panama. I've had it in many other places to, potentially, extract like a little have a nice day.

Richard Betts: Yeah, have a nice day, exactly. I don't think I've actually been on that road without having been stopped and had the car emptied at one point or another. I'm told from our local friends that it's always better when we're in the car. I wouldn't, obviously, know

the converse situation. But all in all, everybody is okay, and that's all that matters.

Tim Ferriss: I had a scary experience in – well, scary because I'm not accustomed to this happening elsewhere in the United States, but in Panama where I was driving out from Panama City to I want to say [inaudible], or I was actually driving to the coast to go to the [inaudible] marine reserve, which is amazing. And I got stopped a million times because I was just like this obvious white dude in a pickup truck driving.

And the tip I got before arriving in Panama was get an international driver's license because, when they pull you over, they're going to ask you for your passport. And if you hand it over, now, you won't get it back until you do everything that they ask you to do. But if you have an international driver's license, and you say you don't have a passport, and then, they say well, we're supposed to fine you, but then you have to go to trial and this place and the other, and then, the protocol, the dance is is there any way I could pay my fine now. But the price is going to be 10, 20, 100 X if they had your passport as opposed to the international driver's license.

Richard Betts: Yeah. Same thing happens in France all of the time.

Tim Ferriss: In France?

Richard Betts: The joke used to be with myself and my friends when we were doing a lot of wine work there is that don't let Richard drive right off the plane. At some point, the first day, getting pulled over. The same story. Give me your passport. Of course, I've never given them my passport. You can have my driver's license. I have plenty of those. But same story.

Tim Ferriss: France?

Richard Betts: Oh, yeah. Pay the fine right on the side of the road.

Tim Ferriss: Oh, God.

That's so wild. It happens more places than not, I would say.

Richard Betts: Yeah, for sure.

Tim Ferriss: Brazil is the scariest, but that's another podcast. You can see [Spanish], the elite squad or elite team. There's a movie. Watch that, and then, you'll know what I'm talking about. The second one

is pretty good as well. So let me ask you a couple of rapid fire questions as I nurse this Taketsiru.

Richard Betts: Do it.

Tim Ferriss: When you think of the word successful, who is the first person who comes to mind and why?

Richard Betts: My folks, both of them equally. My parents.

Tim Ferriss: Why?

Richard Betts: Because they were able to come from a place that's – I mean, I consider myself successful. But when I look at what they did, I think of their road as having been so much harder, so much harder. I'm super impressed.

Tim Ferriss: So is success then in the overcoming of obstacles?

Richard Betts: It's finding your way to happiness, that's what it is. And that doesn't have to be associated with anything material or not.

And for them, it was just changing the surroundings and finding the way out when there was no helping hand. You've got to do it yourself.

Tim Ferriss: So if you had to pick someone besides your parents?

Richard Betts: Well, you and I share lots of friends, many of whom are successful. And it's really anyone that makes their own way.

Tim Ferriss: So our buddy, Sacca. He's been on the podcast.

Richard Betts: Extremely successful.

Tim Ferriss: I'd say he's cut his own way.

Richard Betts: He's cut his own way. I mean, Obama has cut his own way.

Tim Ferriss: Just to be clear folks, that is not a mutual friend, or at least I don't know him on a first name basis.

Richard Betts: But you know what I mean, it's someone that's maybe against odds has figured out how to do what they love to do. And that's pretty cool.

Tim Ferriss: When do you lose track of time?

Richard Betts: I lose track of time on airplanes where I spend a lot of time. And I actually really try to take that time for myself. I like getting on the airplane. And there are times, like this morning, when I flew here, I was like I'm going to fly back this afternoon. I have to work.

But 99 percent of the time, when I get on a plane, that's Richard time. And I shut it off. And I get in a book. And what used to be long flights are over in a minute. Or even just think or anything. But that's where I actually lose track of time.

Tim Ferriss: How many days a year do you fly?

Richard Betts: I sleep in the hotel more than 300 nights a year.

Tim Ferriss: Wow.

Richard Betts: I'll do 170,000 or 180,000 miles this year.

Tim Ferriss: What book are you currently reading?

Richard Betts: It's the, Elle, please don't be wrong when I slightly get the title wrong, Should and Must, *The Intersection of Should and Must*.

Tim Ferriss: Absolutely. I have it right over there in the corner. Elle Luna, check it out, guys. I actually bought 2,000 plus copies of that to mail out with this quarterly mailing that I send out to people.

Richard Betts: That's amazing.

Tim Ferriss: Yeah. It's a really, really excellent book. So speaking of gifting, what book have you gifted most often to other people?

Richard Betts: For sure, it's my favorite book ever. It's called A Fan's Notes by Fred Exley.

Tim Ferriss: What is that?

Richard Betts: Probably 50 years on since it was written. And Fred is amazing, super smart. For me, this is like first, second and third place in terms of best book. It's that special.

Tim Ferriss: Oh, wow. Okay. It's a strong endorsement.

Richard Betts: And he's a brilliant guy who keeps messing up his life over and over again.

Tim Ferriss: Is this autobiographical or is it fiction?

Richard Betts: He says that certain events may resemble his own life. But, of course, they don't.

Tim Ferriss: Okay, but it's considered a novel.

Richard Betts: Yes, it is.

Tim Ferriss: Got it, okay.

Richard Betts: And it's painful. And I don't see sad movies. I don't read overtly sad things. But this is neither of those things. But, man, it's such a lesson. It's really, really special. And it's funny. And it's literary. And it's nuts.

Tim Ferriss: What do you get from it when you read it? Because I take it you've read it more than once.

Richard Betts: I'm probably on it's actually about a third through again. It's next to my bed.

And I'm probably on my twelfth or thirteenth reading.

Tim Ferriss: What do you get from it?

Richard Betts: Resolve.

Tim Ferriss: Resolve? Oh, that's good.

Richard Betts: Yeah. It's huge.

Tim Ferriss: That's everything.

Richard Betts: I mean, I'd be a liar if I didn't say I'm not totally motivated by many factors, including fear of failure. I would like to say that that's not true. But I'm supremely motivated by it.

Tim Ferriss: What is failure in your mind? And it could be something very specific. I mean, whether it's related to business or whatever. But in your mind right now, what is the failure that you're afraid of?

Richard Betts: Not achieving the things I want to achieve.

Tim Ferriss: Like what?

Richard Betts: Well, continue to work for myself, which is great. That's huge. Time is everything. I mean, there's nothing in my mind besides time and having your opportunity to decide how to spend it. It's going to be over. And believe what you want to believe. I believe we get one swing and that's it. And I want to make it great. And not having the occasion to decide what I do, not having the occasion to express myself in whatever way I feel like, that's failure.

It's a horrifying thought. I get physically ill thinking about it.

Tim Ferriss: I think you're a spectacularly good teacher. If you were teaching a ninth grade class, you could teach anything you wanted, what would the class be?

Richard Betts: Love yourself.

Tim Ferriss: Love yourself?

Richard Betts: Yeah. You've got to love yourself before you can love others. And without it, nothing productive is going to happen. And we can all bang our heads on the wall. But unless you really come from a place of this is who I am, this is what I have, which is like a mind trapped in a physical being –

Tim Ferriss: Trapped in a meat cube.

Richard Betts: Yeah, trapped in a meat cube. You have to acknowledge that and then make the most of it. I mean, really appreciate yourself. And especially in ninth grade, my daughter actually just entered tenth grade. But that's like such a tough time on kids. I remember what a tough time I had. And it's very easy to lose your bearings. It's like are they doing it right? Am I doing it wrong? All that's just like love yourself.

Tim Ferriss: I always thought I was going to be like a teacher, and I specifically wanted to teach ninth grade because that's the fork in so many paths. You know what I mean/

Richard Betts: Totally.

Tim Ferriss: So how would you help someone cultivate loving themselves? I'll be honest, I have trouble with that. I beat the shit out of myself all of the time.

Richard Betts: Yeah. I think helping someone cultivate that, I think it's probably –
Tim Ferriss: I'm starting to feel this Taketsiru.

Richard Betts: Yeah, it's good. I would say it probably comes with context again. We're always like the grass is always greener. Well, why don't you taste that grass and see what it is and see what it actually feels like. Try it on. Taste it. Put your toes in it. And if there's a way to, again, give people context of other things, we've done it with our daughter by travel. We just got back from the Galapagos Islands two weeks ago, by far the best place I've ever been. And the Galapagos themselves are really amazing. And then, you spend some time in [inaudible], and that's a really story of have and have nots.

And it's an amazing thing. But just as one example of what is it like to live these other lives, and everybody struggles. But the happiest people, that's the real wealth is being happy. And if you can show people, give examples of people, that are happy regardless of their material circumstances, I think that's a way to share with kids that it's worth loving yourself and making the most of it.

Tim Ferriss: Now, when you look at your financially successful friends, both of us know a lot of people who have achieved extraordinary levels of financial success, and we'll exclude Chris from this conversation because I don't want anyone to think that we're referring to him. I think Chris is a case study. I'm very fascinated by him because he's crafted an incredible life for himself.

Richard Betts: Absolutely.

Tim Ferriss: But of those financially successful people who are unhappy, generally unhappy, what do you think they have in common?

Or why are they unhappy?

Richard Betts: Misplaced goals.

Tim Ferriss: Misplaced goals?

Richard Betts: Yeah. I think chasing the financial or purely for the financial reward is not the right way to do it. That first chef that gave me that first wine job, he was great. We were overlooked for a couple of things in the press, and I'm new in this food and wine world. And he's like, "Look, Richard, if you work for the awards, you

don't do good work. But if you do good work, the awards will come." And it might not even be the specific press things.

But I think that people that do have that fantastic wealth and are unhappy, maybe they work for the wrong thing barring things like traumatic loss of a loved one or something like that, all that side, maybe they don't love themselves. Maybe they don't know how to share. Sharing is a big deal. Or maybe you just believe in the wrong thing.

Tim Ferriss: Asking for help is a big deal, too.

Richard Betts: Yeah, it is a big deal. It's a huge deal.

Tim Ferriss: There's a book by Amanda Palmer who has also been on the podcast partially because I read her book, *The Art of Asking*. An incredible musician but just fucking ask for help already.

Richard Betts: Yeah, ask for what you want.

Tim Ferriss: Because I grew up as such a book worm, I constantly try to revert to pro and con lists and writing and research to solve problems. And 9 times out of 10, especially after I read that book, I was like Jesus Christ, Ferriss, you could have just called this friend for that, this friend for that, and they would have been happy to help you.

Richard Betts: Totally. Another thing I think, and this is a little bit out of left field, but I think that some of those people forget that meat box you said we're contained in. You got to take care of that thing. You see so many people that are unhappy because they don't. And I live in this weird place like I make people happy by sharing booze, knowledge, and accessibility with them. There is such thing as too much of a good thing. And so you see a lot of that, too.

Tim Ferriss: Now, you are a trafficker of goodness but also vices for a lot of people.

Richard Betts: One hundred percent. I struggle with that, actually.

Tim Ferriss: No, no, no. And I'm not saying that in an accusatory fashion because I have an entire closet full of booze behind us. But my question for you, you're in very good shape. You travel 300 days of the year or more. What are some of the keys?

Richard Betts: Choose your hotels wisely, as in make sure that the gym is real. In fact, the best hotels don't have a gym at all, but they have a

relationship with a real gym across the street or down the block or something. That, actually, probably guides my hotel choice 10 to 1 to any other factor.

Tim Ferriss: How do you determine that?

Richard Betts: Well, that's a big thing. Part of it is experience. So I love to stay at the standard East Village in Manhattan, not the Highline but the East Village because they don't have a gym, but they have a relationship with the New York Health Club right across the street. So you dig around, and you can find that stuff.

But physical fitness is paramount to me. I know that I think better when I'm healthy. I'm a nicer guy when I've exercised. And I really try to pique. So if I'm at home, I have the most amazing trainer, Erin Carson in Boulder, she is awesome. And we've figured out this schedule. So let's do a real build over seven, or if I'm home for even ten days, which is rare, even four days, let's make it hard, hard, hard, hard, and then, I need a rest day when I have to get on the plane.

Tim Ferriss: Oh, when you have to travel. That's smart.

Richard Betts: Exactly. So you really try to fit them in there.

Tim Ferriss: Let's just say you're traveling for a month at a time. What does your week of exercise look like?

Richard Betts: Minimum five out of seven days. And sometimes, that might be –

Tim Ferriss: When do you work out?

Richard Betts: I try to do mornings.

Tim Ferriss: What time?

Richard Betts: I have to caffeinate. I would be a liar if I didn't say I'm fully addicted to caffeine, I prefer from tea to coffee, but I'll take it however I can get it.

Tim Ferriss: What type of tea?

Richard Betts: We drink a lot of oolong, a lot of pu-erh. Those are the two that matter a lot. I would have considered myself a coffee geek extraordinaire, everything dialed in, the scales and the temperature, everything just perfect. And then, I met this guy Sebastian who

taught me all about tea. And I had tried so hard. You know, I'd read something like, man, I should really know about tea. It appeals to my wine mind.

Tim Ferriss: Sure.

Richard Betts: And I could never do it. And then, I met Sebastian, and he just ruined me.

Tim Ferriss: Ruined you in a good way.

Richard Betts: In a good way. So it's all about in pursuit of tea now.

Tim Ferriss: Cool.

Richard Betts: Yeah. It's the best. So caffeine, and then, try to exercise right away. And certainly before you get into the email or your phone or any of that stuff.

Tim Ferriss: What time do you wake up when you're on the road or do you try to wake up?

Richard Betts: I try to get a minimum of eight hours. So the time is a moving target, especially when I've been in five time zones in the last seven days.

Tim Ferriss: And when you have to socialize at night with –

Richard Betts: It's huge.

Tim Ferriss: Now, is the travel to talk to retailers and distributors?

Is that primarily – like what accounts for the bulk of the travel?

Richard Betts: It's a lot of two things, making and selling. So the making part is easy for me. You dream something up, and you go, and you create it. And it's a physical thing. You have something. It's done. But that takes work. I mean, I make things on three continents today.

Tim Ferriss: Which continents?

Richard Betts: Australia –

Tim Ferriss: Wine.

Richard Betts: Yeah, so we make wine in Australia.

Tim Ferriss: What's it called?

Richard Betts: It's called Sucette. The first wine comes out next month actually.

Tim Ferriss: Oh, that's exciting. So let's put a date on that because people will listen to this for months.

Richard Betts: So that's October of 2015. And Sucette means to suckle in old French.

Tim Ferriss: That's a cool one.

Richard Betts: Exactly. You let your mind run wild with that.

Tim Ferriss: Yeah. I wasn't going to say anything.

Richard Betts: So the white wine will be called Nichon, and I'll let you look that up.

Tim Ferriss: Can you spell it? I'll let everyone look it up.

Richard Betts: N-I-C-H-O-N. You guys can put that together. We make some rose under my essential brand in the south of France. And of course, we make Sombra Mezcal in Oaxaca.

Tim Ferriss: Sombra meaning shadow. How did you choose that name?

Richard Betts: Two ways. First of all, I think Mezcal is, even still, a little forbidden, a little dangerous. And I believe everybody has a dark side. I'm certain of it. I know I do. And the second is maybe a little more historically referential of Mezcal very much in the shadow of tequila.

Tim Ferriss: Oh, I like that. I have a friend who has done a lot of work with, shall we say, plant medicine, psychedelics.

Richard Betts: Awesome.

Tim Ferriss: And oddly enough, he –

Richard Betts: [inaudible].

Tim Ferriss: That's true, very true. The little people and sacred mushrooms have been used for millennia in Mexico, of course.

And he did not spend time in Mexico. But for whatever reason, he drank all sorts of different alcoholic beverages before this work. And now, for whatever reason, he can only drink Mezcal.

Richard Betts: No, I believe that. Yeah.

Tim Ferriss: I don't know why, but that's the only beverage that he can consume. He does it very irregularly. But when it comes to alcohol, Mezcal is all he can consume out of nowhere.

Richard Betts: That's amazing. Crazy. It's good for you.

Tim Ferriss: Yeah, apparently so.

Richard Betts: But the other half of that travel question, why so much, is the selling piece. So if you, the listener, want to buy a bottle of Sombra, the first thing I had to do is import it to America. Then you have to sell it, thanks to the repeal of prohibition and all of the laws that followed that, I have to sell it to a distributor. So then, we have to sell it to a retailer. And then, the retailer has to sell it to you. So there are all of these things. So I can't just assume that you'd make the first sale, and then, it ends up on your shelf.

You actually have to push –

Tim Ferriss: So where can people find it for those people listening?

Richard Betts: Thankfully, everywhere. Ten years later, all across America.

Tim Ferriss: Everywhere.

Richard Betts: Everywhere.

Tim Ferriss: So if I went to, I'm just making one up, K&L here, am I making that –

Richard Betts: Absolutely.

Tim Ferriss: K&L Wine, it's not wine but K&L –

Richard Betts: I don't know if K&L has it, but we're certainly all over San Francisco.

Tim Ferriss: Okay. Well, you guys can search for it. What is the \$100.00 or less purchase that comes to mind that has had the biggest impact on your life?

Richard Betts: That's interesting. I'm not a material guy. And having that said, I like my stuff.

Tim Ferriss: It could be something free.

Richard Betts: It could be something free. Can it be a donation?

Tim Ferriss: Sure.

Richard Betts: Yeah. We try to support small things in many ways all of the time. So my daughter and I just gave to Donors Choose, which is amazing.

Tim Ferriss: Donors Choose is amazing. I'm on their advisory board.

Richard Betts: That's so cool.

Tim Ferriss: I've been doing stuff with Donors Choose for like seven years.

Richard Betts: Yeah. And to have the occasion to sit with her and figure out we want to give to this class near our community. Here is why. It's enriching because you get to enrich that experience in Donors Choose. But it's enriching for my daughter and I to have that discussion. And it facilitates so much more in father/daughter time and her education. And that's meaningful.

Tim Ferriss: Totally, yeah. My parents used to help me I want to say Unicef but I could be getting that completely wrong. I think I am. But determining what to donate to someone in a third world country, whether it be a number of chickens or a goat or a this or a that. And the conversation and walking your kid through helping them walk themselves through the decision is fascinating and I think very valuable.

Richard Betts: Yeah.

Tim Ferriss: Do you have a favorite movie or documentary or both?

Richard Betts: Yeah, several. It's funny, also on the topic of the kid, we watched the Breakfast Club last night.

Tim Ferriss: Oh, wow. A blast from the past.

Richard Betts: Yeah. So she just started her sophomore year in high school, new school. And I was like I remember this being so formative 30 years ago for me. And we watched it and just shooting tears and laughter

and the whole thing. But there are so many great movies like that. I wouldn't say that's my favorite, but for sure, that's the most recent on my mind. I love the movie Baraka.

Tim Ferriss: That's a good one. Very visual.

Richard Betts: Yeah. And it really reminds me of a lot of things. I mean, one –

Tim Ferriss: B-A-R-A-K-A.

Richard Betts: Yeah. And Baraka, for me, is meaningful because it talks about how amazing our planet is, how fragile our planet is.

It reminds me of the geologic time scale. This is like a profoundly important thing to me, the geologic time scale. When you look at how long it's taken everything. What is San Francisco going to look like in several hundred years? Well, we're all going to be long gone. In fact, humanity might be gone. Who knows? Who knows what will happen? But that we're just this tiny, little blip in time. We matter not at all. And so it just reminds me to party. Have a great time. You're barely here. Get after it and crush your life. It's awesome.

Tim Ferriss: Don't take everything so seriously.

Richard Betts: Totally. That's it.

Tim Ferriss: With your work outs, if you could only choose three exercises or types of exercise for your work outs, what would you choose?

Richard Betts: Burpees.

Tim Ferriss: Burpees?

Richard Betts: Yeah. Squats. And intervals, short intervals, 40 seconds on, 20 seconds off.

Tim Ferriss: Running?

Richard Betts: Running.

Tim Ferriss: Got it. That's a good combo. You're ready for the military.

Richard Betts: I used to run a lot. The longest I ever ran at once was 82.5 miles.

Tim Ferriss: That's fucking long.

Richard Betts: Yeah. Well, the race was 100. So that was a problem.

Tim Ferriss: So 82.5 miles is no joke, wow. So can you just fuck off at any given moment and just run 20 miles?

Richard Betts: I think I could probably get 20 miles done. I don't know if I can run them. And I quit. So after that summer –

Tim Ferriss: After the 82.5?

Richard Betts: Yeah. I started running in the year 2000 when I moved to Colorado. I loved it. And then, I started competing. And then, as a citizen, I did pretty well, by no means professional. But I really liked it. And it was a way to clear my head. And they say about runners, you're either running from something or to something. And there was for sure an element of that to my running also.

Tim Ferriss: Which one was it for you?

Richard Betts: Both. I can name both pieces.

So but I found let's go farther, let's go farther. And then, it was all trail marathons and then 50 mile races. And that was great. And then, you cross that threshold, and it becomes really catabolic. And I was almost 30 pounds lighter than I am now.

Tim Ferriss: Wow, and you're not a huge guy. I mean, you're not thin, but you don't have 30 pounds to spare.

Richard Betts: No. But it's about strength to weight ratio and how quickly you're going to get over that mountain and then over the next mountain and then over the next mountain. And I wanted to get stronger as things start to break. But you would get strong in the gym, and then, you go start running again, and your body just eats itself. And then, it all goes away. And with that comes so much inflammation. I'm a big believer, at least for me, I actually believe for people, it's not good to run that long of distance.

Tim Ferriss: Yeah. So feel free not to answer, but what were you running from and running to?

Richard Betts: Oh, I am, I think, probably not that dissimilar to you.

I'm also very hard on myself. And when I do something, I want to do it very, very well. And I think everything was really working very, very well for me, except for my marriage. And that wasn't working well at all. In fact, that was brutal. And I was running to a place of candor where, again, part of being hard on yourself is

being is being honest with yourself. And I treasure candor and the occasion to just live in it. So running to that place where I was honest about all of it. And where I was wasn't that place.

Tim Ferriss: Yeah. I'm not particularly good at intimate relationships. I don't think I'm the worst. I'm not abusive. I'm not a total bastard. But I shut off a lot in intimate relationships.

Richard Betts: Yeah.

Tim Ferriss: I don't like the uncontrollable, unpredictable nature of a lot of it.

Richard Betts: I feel you completely.

Tim Ferriss: Do you know what I mean?

Richard Betts: One hundred percent.

Tim Ferriss: Because you're the guy who has the 7 foot stack of notes on wine, and then, you win the game, so to speak. And we're sitting, for those people who aren't here, which is everyone, we're right next to a book shelf. And I have an entire shelf of notebooks. And it's like that's how I can predict the trajectory of fill in the blank. But with a relationship, oh, wait, there's another person with their own ideas and feelings and concepts and preconceptions just like me.

Richard Betts: Yeah. Free radical.

Tim Ferriss: My dog just stretched and kicked the crate door open but is not moving.

Richard Betts: She's still beautifully asleep. So completely asleep.

Tim Ferriss: When you were 25, where were you?

Richard Betts: When I was 25, I had just finished my graduate thesis and was about to take that first cooking job in Montana.

Tim Ferriss: What advice would you have given yourself at 25?

Richard Betts: Don't be so fucking shy.

Tim Ferriss: Don't be so fucking shy.

Richard Betts: Yeah.

Tim Ferriss: You were shy?

Richard Betts: Dude, even really until recently, I can still think of instances within the last 24 months where, man, Richard, I wish you had been more forward. I wish you had asked for X instead of being so subtle and implying it. And I try to go for that subtle elegant thing, which sounds really nice. I think part of that is actually being shy. And I am ferociously competitive with myself. But sometimes, the clues that you put outwardly are too subtle to be heard. Or someone is just talking louder than you.

Tim Ferriss: Exactly.

Richard Betts: And that's actually more and more the case I think. So I would have told myself to be much more forward.

Tim Ferriss: And what about at 30?

So let's put a time mark on that. Where were you at 30?

Richard Betts: So at 30, my daughter had been born 4 months prior. I had the best wine job in the world. I was getting fit, living in Aspen, learning a ton, very, very focused on this master sommelier exam. And I would probably party a little less, which I keep coming back to this thing of balance. And so you're in Aspen, and you party like a rock star.

Tim Ferriss: Yeah, Aspen is a party town.

Richard Betts: Wow. What that means for me is I also want to be competitive on all of these other levels. So you have to balance it with exercising like an Olympian. And I did that. So everything was very, very full. And it was great. The exercise was crazy. The partying was crazy. The sleep wasn't much. Family time was interesting and wonderful on so many levels and not on others.

And then, you're working, and you're studying for this exam. And so I don't believe in regret. I do not believe in regret. And so I don't want this to come across as that. But if I had that piece to redo, I would dial back some of the party, not all of it. I still party. I love it. But I would take some of that back and then reallocate that time elsewhere.

Tim Ferriss: And where would you allocate it?

Richard Betts: I probably would have started my first business sooner than later. It wasn't that far afterwards. I passed the master som exam, and I started my first wine company the next day.

Tim Ferriss: What did your first company do?

Richard Betts: So it was called Betts and Scholl, and I founded it with an amazing guy, Dennis Scholl. He's really special. And Dennis is amazing for a lot of reasons that you guys can look up and you should. He's really very, very driven also. We started making wine in Australia.

Then, we added France. Then, we added Napa Valley. Then, we co-founded another company called Scarpetta making wine in Italy. And in 2009, we sold all of it, Scarpetta to an investor group and Betts and Scholl to a small public company. That was a great day. But yeah, it comes back to that time function. I'm always thinking about, and I don't want to beat myself up over something where I see an inefficiency in my past, but if you have it to do over, I would try to get rid of those inefficiencies.

Tim Ferriss: What do you think are things that many people do automatically or – well, I'll leave it at that. What are things that a lot of people do automatically or assume they have to do that they should question?

Richard Betts: Go to college.

Tim Ferriss: Holy shit.

Richard Betts: I went to college, and I learned – I mean, I went to Occidental, and I made the dean's list and not the good dean's list.

I made Dean Canower's black list.

Tim Ferriss: What did you do to earn a place on the black list?

Richard Betts: A bunch of D's and F's, and I partied. I mean, I was in LA. I was a long way from the beach. But take a kid from the desert and stick him in the city, and he loves the ocean. I grew up also in the ocean almost every weekend in Mexico with my family. So I spent five days a week riding waves and not in class. So that was fantastic. I wouldn't take that back. I learned a ton. And I learned it about myself. It wasn't so much like I don't know a whole lot about Macbeth, and I don't care, and I don't feel bad about it. But I learned a lot about Richard Betts. And that was really, really meaningful.

I don't think I need to go to a liberal arts school and spend as much money as I did, which was all loans. You pay that back and deal with it. But I don't think that that was necessarily the only path to achieve whatever level of self awareness was achieved by spending that time there.

Tim Ferriss: If you hadn't gone to college, how do you think your trajectory would have been different?

Richard Betts: I think I look on the bright side. I'm hopeful that it would be more abbreviated. So those inefficiencies in time, I think some of those would have gone away. It probably would have been useful to go volunteer somewhere and just work for a good cause and come back. And you develop that self awareness. You'd be thankful for so much. And you would have avoided some of those distractions. Although, I don't know. I don't know if the need to hit the wall is genetic or not. I definitely had a need to hit the wall and hit it hard.

Tim Ferriss: Hit the wall in what sense?

Richard Betts: Just find the guard rails be it with substances, with grades, with significant others, with –

Tim Ferriss: Just to push it until it breaks.

Richard Betts: With physical things or you could have died. Like yeah. So finding those guard rails is important however you find them. Being at a fancy school facilitated a whole lot more fucking off.

Tim Ferriss: Yeah.

Richard Betts: Which sounds kind of counterintuitive and strange. But you're in this isolated bubble. You're not facing the real world, until you get out and you face your loans. But you're really not facing the real world. So I don't think that was super productive.

Tim Ferriss: What would you put on a billboard if you could have a billboard anywhere?

Richard Betts: I would advertise my ninth grade class, love yourself.

Tim Ferriss: There's a book that helped me quite a bit with that called Love Yourself Like Your Life Depends on It.

Richard Betts: And it does.

Tim Ferriss: It's got a very scary cover of this guy with this gun against his head with like a heart. It's by Kamal Ravikant.

He has the best hair in the world also. You should look up Google Images. Kamal Ravikant, I wish I had his hair. But his brother was also interviewed on this podcast, Naval. First of all, I want to segue to the book that is right here in front of me, The Essential Scratch and Sniff Guide to Becoming a Whiskey Know-It-All, whiskey with an E.

Richard Betts: Given its country of publishing, in this case.

Tim Ferriss: Exactly. What are people going to find in this book? Know your booze before you choose.

Richard Betts: Exactly. You're going to find democracy is essentially it. I think the role of the critic has never been less important. I really believe that. It's one thing to curate something, but it's another thing to prescribe something. And I'm really interested I helping people enjoy their lives. We don't do it with stuffed shirts. No ascots, no talking down to people, no fancy language, none of that matters.

And it's certainly not inclusive. All those things do is serve to intimidate and make it exclusive. So much like the wine book, my co-creators, Crystal English Sacca and Wendy McNaughton and I have tried to apply methodology to knock whiskey off the pedestal and say this is it. It's not that hard. This is what goes in it. This is what makes it taste the way it does. And then, decide which pieces you like and put those back together to find the drink that's going to make you smile. And that's the key.

Tim Ferriss: The format is beautiful.

Richard Betts: Thank you.

Tim Ferriss: The layout, you guys are a hell of a team. Crystal, obviously, is amazing. Wendy, just an incredible artist. And for instance, there's a two page spread here. It's Richard naked laid out on a bear rug. No, I'm kidding. It's the language of the label in the United States and everywhere else. And it's this bottle split in half.

And it shows you, in a very graphic way, or a very visual way, how to make sense of labels. And then, you have, I haven't explored this yet, but I'm excited to, the map to your whiskey desires.

Richard Betts: Exactly.

Tim Ferriss: So can you explain this?

Richard Betts: Yeah.

Tim Ferriss: It looks like an astrological chart, but it's not.

Richard Betts: Exactly. Essentially, the book is 20 pages, 10 spreads, hard cardboard pages. So it's that kids' book feel, except for adults, obviously. And when you scratch and sniff your way through it, you understand this is what the different grains smell like. Next, this is what the different wood components smell like. Finally, this is what place smells like. This is what the place where the whiskey is made and how it's aged imparts to the different whiskeys. So you've scratched and sniffed your way through this thing. And now, you put them back together.

So you start in the middle, and the first question is do you want it spicy? Okay. Well, I'm guessing you probably don't because you didn't go for this rye. But you do like the malty thing.

Tim Ferriss: The malted milkshake side, so then, I end up heading outward. This looks like a series of concentric circles. Kind of like a choose your own adventure map to finding your ideal group of whiskey.

Richard Betts: Exactly.

Tim Ferriss: And as you travel from question to question, from inside to outside, then, you end up with your selection of whiskey to start with. And what's really cool, I didn't notice it until right now, is they traverse a spectrum from mix/rocks to sip to sip slow. So this last guy that we had would be in the slip slow category.

Richard Betts: Exactly.

Tim Ferriss: So cool. Well, dude, this is fantastic.

Richard Betts: Thank you.

Tim Ferriss: Everybody should check this out. I have given away the scratch and sniff guide that Richard and his co-creators put together for wine many, many times. And I'm very excited about this because, as insecure as I was around wine, I could bullshit my way through it.

But I could never bullshit my way through whiskey. And this actually gives you more than bullshit. It gives you a very solid, fundamental understanding not only for yourself but that you can explain to other people. So you should definitely check that out. Richard Betts, B-E-T-T-S. Where can people find you on the inter webs and so on?

Richard Betts: @yobetts everywhere.

Tim Ferriss: Yobetts.

Richard Betts: Yeah. Y-O-B-E-T-T-S. And that's true for everything, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, so on and so forth, G mail.

Tim Ferriss: So people can holler at you and say hello on Twitter @yobetts. Is there any ask, recommendation, suggestion that you have for the people listening that is not related to the book?

Richard Betts: I love that. First of all, I'm psyched you're listening. That's a really big deal. I can only speak from personal experience. And that's to be candid.

That's been the biggest touch point. I'm still struggling with it. It's the biggest thing that I've really worked on over my whole life.

Tim Ferriss: Being candid meaning being direct.

Richard Betts: And with each other, with yourself. That's really where it starts. Love yourself to love others. But be candid with yourself, and you can be candid with others. But, obviously, we're all getting older. I live in a business of excess. And I want to get old gracefully. So I can't lie to myself and say you're in good shape. Or you did pushups yesterday. No, be honest with yourself. Like look, dude, get up and do them. It matters. You have to. Or hey, look, maybe you're not being as good a partner as you can be to your partners. Wake up and think about how to be a great partner, which, generally, means what's the mission of the partnership, and do that.

There are a million examples in all of our lives if we look around. And it's a matter of what can we do better. That's it.

What can we do better?

Tim Ferriss: Be candid with yourself and others. I love it. Richard, this is fantastic.

Richard Betts: Thank you, Tim.

Tim Ferriss: I am feeling this delicious set of adult beverages that you have laid before me. I've been sipping two of them. And then, we had the Taketsiru and then this was the Edradour 10 year, delicious. So everybody check it out. Also, visit Yobetts everywhere on the inter webs. And you can find the show notes, as always, links to everything that we talked about, at fourhourworkweek.com all spelled out. Click on podcast or just fourhourworkweek.com/podcast. You can also find every other episode and all of the show links and show notes associated with those. And as always, thank you so much for listening. Until next time, bye.