



# Our Hen House Podcast: Transcript for Episode 694, Interview with Rachel Larsen

**Jasmin Singer:** Welcome to Our Hen House, Rachel.

**Rachel Larsen:** Thank you, Jasmin.

**Jasmin:** I'm so excited to talk with you. I wanna know so much about you and Tiny Chef, and I've read that you don't remember exactly when you met, but you obviously became close. So was your shared herbivorism a big reason for that?

**Rachel:** There was a lot I related to with Chef, and I met him in kind of a cool time period of my life, I think, where I went vegan, and I quit drinking. He's pretty pure at heart, and he is a little herbivore, and I just liked his philosophy on life and related to a lot of how he views the world, and we hit it off.

**Jasmin:** Yeah, I can totally understand why you would. Has he always been vegan?

**Rachel:** Yeah. You know, like dinosaurs, some of them are just herbivores for life. I think he's a little herbivore. That's always just been part of him. I think it might be part of his species, I'm not sure. But yeah, he doesn't know anything different.

**Jasmin:** Does he ever talk about why he is an herbivore, or as he puts it, does he just let it speak for itself?

**Rachel:** I don't think he even totally realizes there is anything different. I think he just cooks with plants, and I don't know how aware he is that people use animal products in food. It's just how he cooks.

And I think he's still getting to know our world. It's just how he's always been. So it's, I think, part of who he is.

**Jasmin:** How about you? Have you always been vegan?

**Rachel:** No, I was kind of one of those people who just didn't even consider it. I just...it's hard to explain, I think, but you want to do what you want to do and don't wanna be told what to do. I think I probably viewed it in a way like that. I wanted to eat what I wanted to eat, and I didn't wanna be told any different.

Then I was living in Norway and met a really good friend, and he was vegan, and we just had really good conversations about it. And the way he explained it kind of turned the way I viewed it because he was so kind of nonchalant about it. And we would go on really long walks together, and we would just talk about our lives, and at some point, I couldn't argue what he was saying if that makes sense. Like the way he was...

The best way I could put it is I kept asking questions like, "What's the point of chickens, then?" You know, I just was so in the mindset of, "cows and chickens are here for us" because that's how you grow up. You say "chicken," it's like you're probably thinking of the meat, not even the animal.

And I just was asking all these questions, and he finally was like, "I think it's more like not thinking of everything as here for us. It's everything is here on their own accord. Like every living thing has their own right to be here. And it's not just for our consumption or our exploitation, you know?"

And I think that really changed the way I viewed life completely. Because it's true. You think of these things as existing for your benefit. And it's not just veganism, it's like how you view everyone, everything. It's that everyone has a right to be here, and I think it kind of unlocked something in that pretty selfish way of viewing the world, and it kind of shifted me a little bit. Like not just what I ate but how I view everyone and everything.

**Jasmin:** That's so interesting because you said that you were a person who didn't want people to tell you what to do, and I think a lot of people can relate to that, especially people who aren't vegan. Or maybe when we're thinking back to before we were. And yet, if you think about it, it's actually society mandating that we eat animals. It's just that happens to be the norm.

Anything that isn't the norm is considered like, "Oh, okay, why is someone telling me what to do?" But why do you think that it's not just like a blank canvas for how we express everything from our gender to our sexual orientation to what and whom we choose to not consume?

**Rachel:** Yeah, I think about it a lot because it's interesting how history sort of plays out and like where we are and why we have the beliefs that we do and the way we view things. And it's so weird because when you break everything down, it's so simple, and it's like the word vegan is so weighted, but at the core...

You'll be like, "These are vegan broccolis," you know? And someone'll be like, "Ewww." It's just broccoli, you know? But pointing out that there are no animal products, it's angering, you know?

And I think change is really hard. No one wants to change. I can say that personally, I didn't. That was a big part of it. I didn't want to change, I didn't want to change what I was doing or what I liked.

I didn't want to remove anything from my life, so I can just say from my own stubborn living I think change is really uncomfortable and especially on a big societal level. It's like it's disruptive, and people resist disruption. It doesn't mean you shouldn't disrupt it. It's just that there's this uncomfortable period where you have to reframe everything.

It just makes people responsible, and that's hard. It's like you're now responsible for thinking about what you're putting in your body. It makes us have to do some work, and no one wants to do work. So I think there's just a base of laziness to it and then on top of it, whatever your core beliefs are that you grew up with and (what) the people around you believe. That's like another element to the whole thing, but I don't think it means you shouldn't do it. It's just there's this uncomfortable period you have to go through before you view things differently, like on a big societal level.

**Jasmin:** Yeah. You kind of alluded to your childhood just now, and it's something I'm curious about with a lot of the people I interview.

What was your relationship with food like when you were a kid?

**Rachel:** It was, I think, super basic. You know, my mom did a rotation of probably 10 meals, and we would eat as a family. I don't remember it sticking out in any particular way, I think. I remember I went vegetarian at some point when I realized what was happening, and I didn't agree with it, but I couldn't hold onto it. It was hard to do in a family where you're not cooking.

**Jasmin:** Yeah. I grew up in the eighties, and so there were a lot of TV dinners. There was a lot of frozen lasagna that you would microwave for like ever, and it

would still be frozen in the middle and burned around the edges. And it was this super, super processed kind of experience where I was as far away from food as one could get. I had no connection to the fact that...certainly not the animal products. In fact, my cousins were vegetarian, and I remember going to Burger King, and one of my little cousins ordered a burger without the brown part. And we always teased her about that. She meant the patty, but it was like this instinct...

**Rachel:** That's all brown...

**Jasmin:** Right. Exactly. Which is also by itself sort of disgusting, not even thinking about the rest of it. But then you look at Chef, who clearly has this huge audience, including many, many children, and Chef thinks it's really important for kids to learn about food and how to cook.

So I guess a more specific question would be, how would your childhood have been different if you had Chef in it?

**Rachel:** I think I would definitely have cooked if Chef was the show I was watching, or (if I was) just obsessed with Tiny Chef as a kid, I would probably get obsessed with cooking. I think that is definitely my hope- he influences kids to cook and kind of everyone...

I think when you are close to the food and the source, it totally changes how you view food because it's...I had the same experience now that you say that. Totally same. Very processed and very like, "I don't know where this came from or what it is even."

It's almost like that is the first step, I think. Even before veganism, necessarily. It's really kind of understanding where your food's coming from and what it is, and how it's even here. I think we're so removed from the source. Even the grocery store experience is very sterile. And I think definitely if people had to go kill their own food, it would just change...It would at least change your perspective. It would be a much heavier experience.

I don't know how to reverse it, though. It's like, oh my God. There are so many elements to where we are right now. There's poverty, there are so many people to feed. There are already these systems in place.

It's like, "Wow, how do we unring this bell?"

**Jasmin:** Right, right. Well, what would Chef say?

**Rachel:** I mean, Chef would start probably very small. Just start cooking your own food. I think what's beautiful about Chef is he doesn't think in overwhelming ways. He really just lives his little tiny life.

How he sees life should be lived, and I don't think he overwhelms himself with the bigger question of it. I think he just lives a really beautiful, simple life.

And (it is) probably part of the answer for sure. And it is interesting because your taste buds and your expectations of food change. When you're eating like chips, it becomes more like a drug than a food, I think. And I think when you cook something really simple, and that's whole foods, basically, you're reminded of actually how good a carrot is. And I think our memory deletes that when you think of chips or something that's just designed to almost be like a drug.

**Jasmin:** Yeah. Designed to go down your gullet at exactly the right speed with exactly the right ratio of salt and sugar that exactly hits those brain receptors. That's like, "Give me more of this crap."

And then you've got Chef. When you talked about simplicity and how he is sort of smaller, simpler in a way, which I think is utterly brilliant, it reminded me of an experience I had in Portland. We were just talking about Portland because you used to live there, and I spent a great deal of time there as well. I had a friend who was raising her kid vegan, and I remember being in the car, the kid was little, and we were driving, and there was this children's album that came on, and a song was about hunting. I swear to God, there was a children's song about hunting. And the kid was like, "What's hunting?"

And the mom, my friend, was like, "Well, you know..." and she was like, "Well, some people..." She started to explain what it was, and the kid like put her hand over her ears and was like, "No, no, no, no, no!"

And then my friend was like, "Okay. It's when people go hunting for sales. Like when they go to the mall, and they're like..." and she pivoted, and the kid was like, "Okay, we're good now." Do you know what I mean? And it just like, it's so traumatic what we're doing to children, what happened to us, how we normalized this violence. I wish more than anything that I had Chef as a counterpoint to that when I was growing up.

What would you say are some of his favorite recipes?

**Rachel:** He loves pizza. I think he loves pizza because it's like he can play with the toppings, you know? And he loves lasagna, he loves pasta dishes. But I

think what he loves is like...he's talked about loving the variety of color that comes in vegetables and fruits. I think he's very drawn to color as a chef and as a little being. I think it's probably why his apron is all colors, you know? I think he loves the variety. There's a color element to him, I think, that he's really into.

**Jasmin:** Not brown, as my cousin would put it.

**Rachel:** Not beiges.

**Jasmin:** So how has his and your, I suppose, life changed since debuting on Nick Jr?

**Rachel:** Well, for him, I think he is really happy he got a show, and it's out in the world. I think he is really proud of himself and his little team. He is really hustling for his second season. He just stays super busy. You know, people want him doing commercials and stuff. He is just really busy, and the tiny team is just constantly just trying to keep up with him.

So as his life changes, we just sort of follow him and try to help him keep his little dream going, so it's busy.

**Jasmin:** Well, yeah, and he seems so full of emotion! We've seen how he felt about the show winning awards. How did he react when he was asked to co-star in a Super Bowl commercial, and how did that come about?

**Rachel:** Oh, he was very excited! So DoorDash asked him to be in a commercial, and he was just very excited. He loves Rayquan and Chef Matty, and he was really into it, and then, I think, halfway through the commercial was like feeling pretty cool. So they asked if Chef would be up for being in the Super Bowl commercial, and he said, absolutely.

**Jasmin:** That's amazing.

**Rachel:** He was real excited.

**Jasmin:** Yeah, I can imagine.

You know, one thing that I appreciate about him, one of his most important characteristics, is his willingness to admit when he has made a mistake and make amends. Do you think that's an important part of his enormous appeal with his target audience?

**Rachel:** I think so. I think he is not afraid of his emotions, and he is not afraid to be vulnerable. That's what I love about him. I think he is authentic to himself, you know? So I think when he's wrong, or he makes a mistake, he apologizes. I think he's just fearless, you know? And I think it really shows up in his ability to express his emotions.

Because I think when it's hard to express emotions, it's because you're scared of the reaction that it's gonna cause, or being vulnerable is really scary. And I think Chef is just a little bit fearless in that way.

**Jasmin:** Yeah, I think that's a really good point. It's funny because I have unfortunately, I would say, a lot of experience working with people who do not share that trait and not currently, for anyone I work with now, not currently, but in the past, I'm like, "dude."

And I don't wanna be ageist, it's not like I'm this old thing, but I feel like they're actually is sometimes a generational thing, not always, but sometimes, a generational thing. And so I really appreciate that Chef is out there and the way he is. Kind of modeling good behavior, and he also has a lot of other characteristics that come across in his show.

As two examples that I can think of, he is very confident. Appropriately so, I would add, and he is a very good dancer. So, in addition to teaching them about food, what would you say are the other most important things he wants children to come away with from watching his show?

**Rachel:** I think his main focus is the cooking. I think he wants to share the love of cooking, and I think everything else he expresses is...he just assumes, I think, everyone else is dancing the way he dances.

I think he just assumes we're all singing while we cook. I think he doesn't know any other way to live, so I think he's probably very much like a child in a way. Kids are already kind of like that too. So he probably just relates to kids pretty easily because I think they share that quality. But I don't think Chef has intentions in that way. I don't think he wants to teach anyone anything other than cooking, and I think everything else is him just sort of living how he knows how to live.

I hope kids and adults all sort of take away to maybe live a little more freely and joyously. I think that's what I get from Chef, but I think he's just sort of living his life and trying to teach people to cook his recipes.



**Jasmin:** Well, that comes across, that sort of authenticity. Tell us about some of Chef's guests and who inspires him. He's inspiring so many of us; who inspires him?

**Rachel:** Yeah. I mean, I think he really loves people. I think he loves meeting people. I don't think I've ever met someone more open and loving to the people he meets. I think he really takes everyone for who they are and is curious about everyone. I think he's inspired by everyone he meets. I think Chef doesn't really have a hierarchy, so I think Miss Penny's probably top of the pyramid for his favorite beings, but then everyone else is on the same level.

I think he's inspired by everyone he meets- animals, people, celebrities- they all kind of, in some way, are on the same playing field for him. I think he just kind of embraces everyone for who they are and where they're at, and I love that about him.

**Jasmin:** Yeah, I do too.

I'm glad you brought up Miss Penny. Cheffers are wondering, how is Miss Penny doing?

**Rachel:** Miss Penny's good. She lives with my sister in Portland, and they take good care of her. She's got a new brother, Simon, and Chef has yet to meet Simon. But I think those two will get along really well. \*chuckles\*

But yeah, Ms. Penny's doing really good.

**Jasmin:** So Tiny Chef clearly has a very caring relationship with Henry, who is a snail, and Ruby, who is a caterpillar. Can you tell us about the role of these companion animals in his life?

**Rachel:** I think he sees them as like best friends; they came to the stump while he was sleeping. Initially, he tried to get them to go back outside.

I think he viewed them as outdoor animals, but then they didn't want to leave, so I think he's embraced them. But I think he's very careful about ownership of different beings, so they're definitely there voluntarily. And I think they love Chef as much as Chef loves them, so they've just become a staple in his tree stump. I think he views them as two of his besties.



**Jasmin:** Yeah. Well, that comes across, and I know Chef is also good friends with Kristen Bell, one of our favorites. Can you tell us a bit about their relationship and her influence on his life?

**Rachel:** Yeah, she saw some of his videos on Instagram, and she reached out and asked him if he wanted any help getting his cooking show up and running. They became quick friends. Through Jackie Tohn, too. Jackie Tohn introduced them.

And she's just helped him get up and running on his cooking show. She's been super helpful. She is an amazing person. They're besties, and she's been really helpful just getting his show up and running. And I think they share a lot of qualities. They both tend to embrace people wholeheartedly, and they're just both people you want to be around. They're just kind of both full of love.

**Jasmin:** I love that. Okay, so occasionally...well, very rarely...all right, maybe not that rarely...I may have trouble understanding everything that Chef is saying. Has this ever been an issue with anyone else? Like, what language does he speak?

**Rachel:** I think he's got his own language. Like when I first met him, there was no English happening. He picked it up really quickly, but his accent is thick. He has been taking voice lessons to really help with his pronunciation. But yeah, it's challenging to understand him sometimes.

But I think that's maybe part of his appeal, too, because you somehow still get the essence of what he's trying to say. And there's something really great about still understanding someone, even if you can't understand them completely.

**Jasmin:** Oh, this is really unusual, Rachel, but apparently, we have a caller on the line...

I'm sorry we didn't go over this. Do you mind taking a caller?

**Rachel:** Yeah, that's fine.

**Jasmin:** Okay. All right. Hang on. Let's see who we've got.

**Caller:** \*high-pitched voice\* Yes. Hello there. I'm a first-time caller \*laughs\* who has never met Rachel before ever. \*laughs\*

**Jasmin:** Okay.

**Caller:** \*high-pitched voice\* I would like to ask a question. \*laughs\*

**Jasmin:** \*chuckling\* Yeah, sure. Go ahead with your question.

**Caller:** \*high-pitch continues\* This question is for Rachel, please. Rachel, I've been told that you and Tiny Chef \*laughs\* go on lots of adventures and solved lots of mysteries together over the years. However, one mystery remains unsolved...the mystery of one missing kazoo...Care to comment?

**Rachel:** Oh gosh, I didn't get your name. Who is this?

**Caller:** \*laughing and dropping the high-pitched voice\* Rachel! Oh, I fooled you! It's me, Cheffy.

I know we will find that kazoo one day. Anyway, I'm just so, so excited that you're on the Our Hen House podcast with our friends Jasmin and Mariann!

I just know you're having so, so, so, so, so much fun together! Well, I'll let you get back to it!

Oh, and one more thing, Rachel, could you please pick up some Brand, Brand oat milk on the way home? Ok, thanks, everybody; you keep chatting, \*laughs\* don't let me keep you! \*laughs\*

**Rachel:** Uh huh.

**Tiny Chef:** Ok, love you so much, bye!

**Jasmin:** Oh my God!

**Rachel:** Bye, Chef.

**Jasmin:** That was amazing. Ok. He is so hilarious! \*laughs\*

I really had no idea it was him, and what an honor to have Chef call in! Wow!

I feel like we really need some backstory on this kazoo situation, though.

**Rachel:** Oh, yeah. He is pretty sneaky on the mystery call. \*laughs\*

Um...well...he...look, he was gifted a kazoo. And it was like a nonstop feature. This was during lockdown...and it went missing...and it's yet to be found... But that's, that's all I know. I...look...I think he lost it.

So I think that's where I wanna leave this. \*laughs\*

**Jasmin:** Okay. No, that's respectable.

All right. Let's shift gears. The oat milk, would you say that oat is his favorite milk?

**Rachel:** I think so. I've seen him use all the nut milks for different things, but I think he definitely likes Brand Brand's affordable oat milk, but he's used all the nut milks in different forms of cooking.

**Jasmin:** So what about cheese? I know he sometimes makes his own cashew cheese and also buys it at the market.

Does he have any other favorite types of vegan cheese?

**Rachel:** I've seen him make his own mozzarella. I think he is got a gamut of nut cheeses that he makes. We haven't fully shown the extent of what Chef can do in the kitchen. Which I'm really excited that we get to share even more of his recipes.

But he is real good! He's got some real winners.

**Jasmin:** That is so cool. I wish I could try it.

I know that there have already been two books published about Chef's adventures. Can you tell us about them and tell us whether there are any more books in the planning stage?

I guess what we're all wondering, Rachel, is will we ever get to see all the recipes in the book that was missing?

**Rachel:** Oh, like his OG recipe book?

**Jasmin:** Yeah! Yeah.

**Rachel:** Yeah, I think a recipe book is definitely on the way.

The first two books were based off of...He's a real storyteller, you know, so he has so many stories of different things that have happened, and the Tiny Team, sort of, we're all listeners of his stories. So we kind of got together and decided to make these two books off of two of our favorite stories he has told for a while now.

We'll probably do more of those too. Just things that have happened to Chef. I'm assuming they're all true stories, \*laughs\* but they definitely make great books. So we've got tons we could do from his gamut of life stories. But I definitely think some recipe books are in the future.

**Jasmin:** Whoa, that's so exciting! We need a TC cookbook. That is so great.

Wow. I feel so inspired and honestly very hungry right now. So, Rachel, before you go...and I do hope you stay on, actually, to talk to our flock a little bit more about your own story, if that's okay with you?

**Rachel:** Of course. Yeah.

**Jasmin:** Okay, awesome. So before we go, tell us how people can watch The Tiny Chef Show and follow both of your adventures.

**Rachel:** We're on all the socials, so if you go to The Tiny Chef Show, we're on Instagram and TikTok, and Twitter and YouTube; those are probably the best spots because you get his current life. So what he's currently doing, you'll get updates on what he's up to now.

And his show's on Nick Jr. And you can go to the Nick Jr app and watch the episodes. You can go to Amazon and get this his first season show. And then [thetinychefshow.com](http://thetinychefshow.com) is our website, and that will link you everywhere.

But, yeah, I think Instagram and TikTok are a great place to start because you get the whole gamut of Tiny Chef.

**Jasmin:** Excellent, and we will link to all of this in the show notes for those of you listening. Rachel, thank you so much for joining us today on Our Hen House, and thanks to Tiny Chef for making a surprise appearance! \*laughs\*

That was shocking!

**Rachel:** Oh, yeah. I definitely thought that was someone else. \*laughs\*

**Jasmin:** Yeah, it was like we've never...I didn't even know we could take calls, so that's amazing. Really. \*both laugh\*

**Rachel:** He found a way.

**Jasmin:** Yeah, he's very talented. That trickster!

Well, thanks again, Rachel, and stay on the line for us if you don't mind.

**Rachel:** Cool. Thank you so much.