



Rise of the Feminine Radio <http://www.voiceamerica.com/show/2581/the-rise-of-the-feminine>

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Episode 9 50 Shades of Men

Featured Guest David Brower

Gina: David, here we are in Brussels but you're from Paris, an American in Paris, you've been 25 years living there. You have, perhaps perspective on how masculinity might show- the men might be like in France. They might be slightly different to your experience of men in America and we cannot say all men are the same. Is there **something about the French culture** that makes men little bit different from your experience of living there a long time?

David: Yeah, surely, like you say, you can't generalize. It would a little bit unsafe for me to say that...

Yeah, my experience has been that there's a **certain sensuality of life in Paris** and that's through the food, that's through the **culture**, through the **arts**, through the long history that is there and it feels to me like there's **somewhat of an opening to the feminine expressive**, verbalized almost Latin culture side of *being* that's more expansive, more colorful, more sort of *verve* and French *panache* that people talk about is true. In the men there, there can be a lot of **very expressiveness** that comes through them which I think is really a reflection of the world that we live in. Where there's an **extreme appreciation for the culinary arts** and also the time around the table and the discussions that happen around the table which is usually about politics, sex and food.

Gina: Good combination!

David: Good combination! There's really a **sense of being able to express really what's on your heart in a colorful way**. In a way that can be very passionate, that can be **very engaging without it necessarily being aggressive**, without it being necessarily so differentiating from you. It's really an expression of self that's not something that's so black and white, there's **a lot of shades of grey** there and everyone appreciates that you can have a certain specific opinion about something and that you express that way in a way that can be quite colorful.

David: Growing up in the states, I don't there's a little bit of a sense of a political correctness I feel coming from there which in France they kind of walk over that in a way that's charming, it's irreverent, it's kind of bold in a lot of ways from where I came from. That's something I really appreciate, you get a sense people are kind of **exposing their heart**, they're exposing the **essence that they have in them** that's very myriad and eclectic and deep and at the same time, full of lots of humor and taste. French men are also quite elegant, are usually quite well-educated, I guess there's a sense of romanticism, I can't really talk for that.

Again, there's a **certain sensuality**, I think, a lot of them don't shave too much, they've sort of a leaving like I have here, I guess. Little bit of the ten o'clock shadow.

Gina: Designer stubble.

David: Aha designer stubble, that's a good way of putting it and so there's also sort of an expression of sexuality there that men can be sexy and that's

Gina: That's maybe new in other cultures but you say that that's part of being French, they've been able to do that for a long time because **men's grooming and being sexy is kind of new**, isn't it? Men have expressed themselves that way a long time in France as part of being French.

David: Yeah, a lot of the kings used to wear pretty extravagant high-heeled colorful clothing so maybe it carries on from them but yeah, there's a certain Haute Couture in the way that people dress and it gives a certain stature to people. It's one of the glorious things I feel about Paris is when you walk through the city there, you couldn't be anywhere else in the world. There's a certain **appreciation for the beauty of the sartorial arts that we see with a lot of men.**

Yeah, there's a sense of they carry themselves with a **certain assurance about a connection with the sensual, the feminine**, the beauty which maybe another way of seeing the **vulnerability of masculine entity**. Obviously, men double kiss each other there when you get intimate with people which- never had that in the states, you're hugging, you're patting each other in the back, in France, you're double kissing like you would with the women.

There's also this proximity thing which, again, for me, joins this sort of little bit **more nuanced human connection of sensuality**, of sensoriality that I think contributes to the connection between people.

Gina: In the valuing of food, family life around the dining table is very important to French family life, French culture and you think that affects the men too. Because there's something about the French and the number of days they have off and the working time, they seem to have- they value family life or private time to a greater degree than working cultures, perhaps like the American culture where greater number of hours, only a couple of weeks holiday for the average American worker, whereas in France, vacation time is highly valued, isn't it?

David: Yeah and family is a big priority in France, definitely. It's one of the countries today, I believe in Europe that has the highest rate, if not the highest rate of children birth 2 point something, between two and three per family. There's a real sense of- almost like everyone has their own castle. They want to build their family within their castle and take care of that and the time together with family means something. Again, for me, it goes back a lot to the food for those, and not everyone cooks amazingly or has a family that necessarily super interested in that. but generally speaking, a lot of people come together to spend time around a dining table.

Again, it takes back to eating amazing food that's prepared by love, probably mostly by the mother there's men that cook. I cook a lot and there're a lot of men that cook a lot also. That time around the table is conversation time, that time around the table is connection time, again, it's sort of **the initiation from a father to his children about how to be at a table**. How you can create conversation, how you can push the limits, break the rules, express yourself, hold yourself properly at the table, eat with both hands on the table, a lot of things that bring **the elegance and the art of the table into the culture** that has lasted for decades and decades and decades. I learned a lot about how to eat sitting at a table once I came to France.

Gina: As an American, you're a "one fork", this is something that happened when the British culture went over to American, somehow the knife got lost, you reclaimed that.

David: It's funny we Americans .. a lot, even very educated people can eat with one hand, the other hand is under the table, they're slanted on the right side or left side, so yeah, I've become extremely sensitive to that actually, that certain amount of elegance.

Even in simple things like it was funny, I was in an airplane once, it was in France, I was flying somewhere. I was sitting next to a very elegantly dressed gentleman and I was sniffing a bit because my nose was- because the air conditioning, my nose was dripping. I kept sniffing in and at some point the gentleman turned to me and he said, "Take a bloody Kleenex" with a pretty strong suggestion there. My first reaction was like, F-off, leave me alone and he was like, there's something that's showing you certain amount of respect for me for him that I would handle that in a way that's a little bit more elegant.

I always like to use the word elegance, that there's a, I'm respecting his space by taking care of my space and not just using my sleeve or just sniffing the whole flight which is not really a glamorous way to be together. Even that, the gentleman expressing something like that is good. I don't know, maybe there's a bit of a sense of men being able to express certain things between each other in France that probably men wouldn't express to each other in the states even though there's this whole thing about authenticity and be yourself, still there's a little bit of political correctness, I think. There's a little bit of pull-down towards something that's a little bit conservative in the way that they communicate to each other, maybe.

Gina: Interesting insights into Paris, France and the Frenchmen, thank you David.