

## **Introduction**

**Marion Kane:** It's been said of you that you are the most relevant chef in the country.

**Matty Matheson:** Yeah? I don't know about that. That's ridiculous. I'm not. I'm just a guy that has a lot of hits on YouTube and got a TV show and is a chef.

**Marion Kane:** Pudgy chef Matty Matheson has been called the John Belushi of the Toronto food scene and not just because he's witty, brash and talented but because his addictions nearly killed him. I'm Marion Kane, Food Sleuth® and welcome to "Sittin' In the Kitchen®". Matty Matheson is executive chef of the trendy Parts & Labour but today he's busy with his hugely popular VICE TV show *Dead Set on Life* plus nearly 200,000 Instagram followers and YouTube videos seen by millions. I met him at his restaurant in the Parkdale neighbourhood of Toronto.

## **Interview**

**Marion Kane:** Finally I meet you Matty. It's taken six months to get this interview.

**Matty Matheson:** Now we're here so we're good. We're good.

**Marion Kane:** Let's not complain about it.

**Matt:** No.

**Marion Kane:** How are you mood-wise? Are you a positive person?

**Matty Matheson:** Yeah. I think I'm a pretty happy guy. It takes a lot of work to be an asshole. I've got a wonderful family. I've got a wonderful job.

**Marion Kane:** You're in your early 30s now and it hasn't always been that way.

**Matty Matheson:** Four years ago, I was at the end of my rope. I was just a typical party chef, every cliché in the book, thinking that drinking and doing drugs, partying hard and

working really hard was a sustainable way of living. And it wasn't. I had to cool my jets a bit and I stopped doing all that shit about three years ago.

**Marion Kane:** You had a heart attack in 2012. Was that a serious heart attack?

**Matty Matheson:** I think most heart attacks are pretty serious.

**Marion Kane:** Was it a wake-up call for you?

**Matty Matheson:** It was but it certainly wasn't the end of what I was doing. I had my heart attack and then I partied for two more years. I grew this Superman ego because I didn't die. So then I was like, "I'm invincible. I'm going to do more drugs". I had to do things more secretly because a lot of my friends were scared or cared about what I was doing so I had to turn into more of a sneaky dude. That's when I turned into a real addict. I had to really find things and dig around and go to deeper, darker places to get drugs. I'm lucky I got to come out the other side and it's cool.

**Marion Kane:** What do you think in hindsight drove you to those addictions?

**Matty Matheson:** I don't know. I don't have too many demons. I was definitely more of a happy-go-lucky party animal. I just really liked doing drugs. There is excitement about going to seedy places and really getting into the underbelly of shit. There's always that weird romantic thing about it for some reason. That was about it. I really liked that grimy underbelly of Toronto. Trying to get drugs at 6:00 AM is a bit of a chore so you get to meet some savoury characters (laughs).

**Marion Kane:** It was partly a sense of adventure and danger and living on the dark side.

**Matty Matheson:** Yeah. I didn't want the party to stop. It was that kind of a scenario, just kept going and going and going, you just don't want it to stop. Finally you're the last guy at the party and that kind of clicks. You're like, "Yeah, nobody else is here." It really turns into a sad story very quickly.

**Marion Kane:** Do you now not drink or do drugs? Abstinence?

**Matty Matheson:** Complete abstinence for three and a half years. Nothing. I haven't had a relapse yet. It's pretty awesome.

**Marion Kane:** Well you're very successful. That must come with a thrill – fame and fortune.

**Matty Matheson:** The first thing I've learned is that fame isn't fortune. I thought I'd get a TV show and then all of a sudden I'd have like... I still can't afford a house in fuckin' Toronto.

**Marion Kane:** Do you rent a flat?

**Matty Matheson:** We rent a house in Parkdale, which is sweet.

**Marion Kane:** You have a wife and child?

**Matty Matheson:** I've got a wife and child, yeah. Trish and Mac and they're great really amazing people.

**Marion Kane:** You grew up in a small town – Fort Erie – near Buffalo. How was that?

**Matty Matheson:** It was awesome. We just rode our bikes around. We had tree forts, go to the beaches, it was really awesome. When I got a little older it was amazing because I could go to Buffalo and that's where I found the punk and hard-core scene. It was really cool.

**Marion Kane:** I saw that episode of your show *Dead Set on Life* when you go back to your hometown and you revisit the favourite food of your childhood. Chicken nuggets on a sub.

**Matty Matheson:** Growing up, going to Robo Mart which is just like a gas station with a bodega in it where you can get sandwiches or chicken wings or whatever it's just like humble beginnings. My favourite restaurant is a gas station in Fort Erie.

**Marion Kane:** Your parents appear in that episode. They seem like nice people.

**Matty Matheson:** Who? My parents?

**Marion Kane:** Yeah.

**Matty Matheson:** My parents are amazing. Very creative. Very supportive. Very adventurous. Really cool parents. They really gave me the notion that I could do whatever I wanted to do. They're sweethearts. I love them.

**Marion Kane:** You're very funny on that show. I was prepared to hate it because I'm older than you, considerably, and I thought, "Oh, it's just going to be antics."

**Matty Matheson:** Yeah.

**Marion Kane:** He's a tattooed guy, uses foul language. You haven't used one swear word yet today.

**Matty Matheson:** I'll be out in public, and then this is all weird because it's all very new. I went into this shoe store and some guy's like, "Oh, I can't believe you're in here. You're not like how you are on TV." Am I supposed to yell at people? I think people misconstrue – like, they see a big tattooed guy and they don't see the smaller moments where I'm just chillin'. I'm human and I'm not running around in public yelling and swearing all the time. I am that person in some respects but it is television and I'm entertaining. There's a lot of moments in the day where I'm not entertaining and I'm just chill. I'm just relaxed and everything's cool.

**Marion Kane:** I made your Mac 'N' Cheese last night with Cheetos® on top. It was delicious. I was totally shocked honestly because it was so easy.

**Matty Matheson:** Yeah. Those recipes are made to be easy. It's the *mise en place* that's hard. It's getting everything ready, you've got to cut stuff, clean stuff.

**Marion Kane:** The pan was very hard to clean after melting cheese with milk.

**Matty Matheson:** Yeah, that'll get you.

**Marion Kane:** But that's all you do: melt the cheese with milk and pour it over cooked macaroni and then crumble the Cheetos® on top.

**Matty Matheson:** It's a perfect little thing.

**Marion Kane:** Where did you get that idea?

**Matty Matheson:** My mom always used to make a roux-style cheese sauce for broccoli and it was always too watery or too thick. It was never the same. It's like doing Velveeta® or whatever. You just melt cheese. So you just take milk and melt like a million Kraft® Singles slices in it. It's literally the most basic cheese sauce you can make and it's delicious.

**Marion Kane:** The Cheetos® are excellent on top of it.

**Matty Matheson:** A little crunch, a little gratin you know?

**Marion Kane:** I've never heard that idea and I've cooked a lot.

**Matty Matheson:** Yeah, well, there's a lot of culinary stuff going on up here.

**Marion Kane:** You don't worry much about healthy, nutritious food.

**Matty Matheson:** I think good food is healthy and nutritious. Eating a giant bowl of that Mac 'N' Cheese is probably not going to do you any good but Parts & Labour has I think on the menu right now we have almost 10 vegetarian items. People always see me as a cheeseburger/fried chicken guy. If you come to Parts & Labour that's only two items out of the 22 items we have.

**Marion Kane:** I'm going to ask you about politics briefly.

**Matty Matheson:** Politics?

**Marion Kane:** Yeah. You're known for speaking out about politics. What do you say about this?

**Matty Matheson:** I don't know.

**Marion Kane:** About Trump?

**Matty Matheson:** I think that what's happening is wrong, what he's doing is wrong and I think he's taking away a lot of people's freedoms. He's definitely reinvigorated a lot of racism and xenophobia and transphobia and just phobias. He's making it okay to hate. The whole reason I did those posts and did that Instagram shit was like... I literally put up a picture of a pin that said, "No Racism. No KKK." It was anti-racist pin on an upside-down American flag. An upside-down flag means the country's in distress. Half of the

country is in distress. Half the country is a bunch of racist pieces of shit that believe what Trump says. It just sucks. People that follow me think that I would be about what Trump's about. How many people that I'm some insane racist, conservative psychopath? Why are they following me? You can't control who likes you. It really just made me kind of sad and actually rethink. I'm like, "Man. I'm a big fat white tattooed dude, you know?" I have a shaved head most of the time. My whole head's tattooed and, if you were to put me up against a wall and have a bunch of people look at me and be like, "What does this guy look like?" they'd think he looks like a big white supremacist probably. I think a lot of people associate with that. I have a voice luckily. I think people that are in distress, people that are just trying to live their lives, need to be able to live their lives. How is some government supposed to tell you who you're supposed to love or who you're supposed to be? It's disheartening. It's really sad. It's an insane thing.

**Marion Kane:** You're doing TV. Are you doing a cookbook?

**Matty Matheson:** Yes, I am. I can't talk about it but I've got a cookbook deal. I'm pretty excited about that and spend the next year doing that.

**Marion Kane:** How often do you work in the kitchen?

**Matty Matheson:** Uh, never. I'll be honest. I don't know. I'm not here often. I'm gone six months of the year shooting the show and then with events and travelling and all that kind of stuff I don't cook often. I change the menu a few times a year. I'll come in and bang that out and work with the cooks and the chefs and do the new menu with them and then hang out and make sure the food's tight. And keep doing my thing. I'm just me. If nobody calls me "chef" again, that's cool. I'm proud of the food we have at Parts & Labour. I can sleep at night knowing that the food is good. We're not taking the piss. I get to travel and see the world right now and that's an amazing thing.

**Marion Kane:** Do you want to say anything else?

**Matty Matheson:** I don't know. I just want to say keep cooking. I think more people should cook more at home. I think cooking at home and learning to cook is an amazing thing. I've got two brothers that don't know how to cook and I just laugh every time we

hang out. You see them eating boxes of cereal and they're like 35, 36 years old. It's kind of a funny thing. I think more people should know how to cook.

**Marion Kane:** I teach my daughter, who's a nurse, 29 years old. Every week I cook a dish with her.

**Matty Matheson:** Right.

**Marion Kane:** We cook beef stew, chicken with mustard sauce, and tomorrow we're doing shepherd's pie.

**Matty Matheson:** Amazing. See, that's what it is. My wife's a really good cook and she cooks at home all the time. It's a nice thing to do. It's just nice you know, cook at home and you can cook whatever you want.

**Marion Kane:** Julia Child said, "Take up cooking and you get to eat the results".

**Matty Matheson:** It's perfect. Julia I love you.

### **Conclusion**

**Marion Kane:** That was my conversation with chef Matty Matheson, colourful host of *Dead Set on Life* on VICE TV. Find out more at [VICEland.com](http://VICEland.com) or [partsandlabour.ca](http://partsandlabour.ca). I'm Marion Kane, Food Sleuth®. You can find more stories like this one at [marionkane.com](http://marionkane.com) and in iTunes. You can find Matty's amazing recipe for fluffy pancakes on my blog. Thank you for listening.