

# Episode 96

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## SUMMARY KEYWORDS

culinary entrepreneurship, Rose Previte, Michelin star restaurants, restaurant branding, finding your why, Compass Rose, Maydan, food and culture, Ada Ohio upbringing, Ohio Northern University, small town roots, raising capital, liquor license battle, women in business, food bringing people together

## SPEAKERS

Jason Duff, Rose Previte, Ethan DeLeon

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R

**Rose Previte** 00:00

design and space mean a lot. There's something like fancy chefs that like they don't care what the rest are like. It can be white. They don't care. My restaurant group is called No White Plates because I literally want to make that all go away. I think the atmosphere, what you're eating on, what you're looking at really matters to the whole experience, not just what's on your plate.

E

**Ethan DeLeon** 00:23

Welcome to the Small Nation podcast brought to you by Coverlink Insurance, where people are more important than policies. On this show, we unpack lessons from entrepreneurs, break down development strategies, and do deep dives on small town success. Our goal is to provide value to our listeners by hosting conversations that teach, inform, and inspire. Hey everyone, my name is Ethan DeLeon, and I'm here in the studio with the founder and CEO of Small Nation, Jason Duff. Today we're excited to be hosting a Michelin star-winning restaurateur, culinary entrepreneur, and cookbook author Rose Previtt on the show. Rose, welcome.

R

**Rose Previte** 00:55

Rose!

J

**Jason Duff** 00:56

We are so excited to have you.

R

**Rose Previte** 00:59

I am very happy to be here. Thank you guys for having me all the way from Los Angeles.

J

**Jason Duff** 01:04

I love— well, so you have to tell us, you're in a— for those that are listening, they don't have the pleasure to see us on YouTube right now, but tell us about like, what are you doing in LA right now?

**R****Rose Previte** 01:14

Well, I have actually lived between LA and Washington, D.C. for 7 years, so they call it bicoastal. I don't love the way that's— I feel like it sounds pretentious, so I don't say it, but it is accurate. I've gone back and forth for about 7 years. And now I'm actually bringing one of my businesses here, even though the rest are back in DC. So Made on Market will be opening here in February of 2025. But we came here about 7 years ago for my husband's job while he was working for NPR. They asked him to work out of the West Coast office, which took us from DC to LA.

**J****Jason Duff** 01:47

I love that. And I'm excited about this episode because we have a shared background. We found Ada, Ohio and Ohio Northern University. Which, a really awesome small town, great small private college in this village of less than 6,000 people in Hardin County, Ohio. Tell me, you've got more history than Ada than I do. Tell me about what it was like being in Ada.

**R****Rose Previte** 02:15

Oh, growing up? Yes, you weren't a townie like I was.

**J****Jason Duff** 02:18

Yes, that's right.

**R****Rose Previte** 02:21

I think we're a little unique in that not enough of my extended family, we have no roots there, but my dad went to law school. At Ohio Northern. And when he graduated, they offered him a professorship, and him and my mom had just gotten married. And even though he's an Italian guy from New Jersey and my mom's a Lebanese lady from Detroit, he was like, but I like it here, I'm gonna stick around. So that is how we got there. So I ended up growing up as like a professor's kid in a town of 3,000 people, which most of my life only had 2 stoplights. By the time you got there, there were 3.

**J****Jason Duff** 02:53

Yes, that's actually true.

**R****Rose Previte** 02:54

You were really there for a growth period. Um, but it's a, it's a beautiful place to be from. It is truly a village. It is actually designated in Ohio as a village, but it feels like a village where people help each other. Your neighbors are your friends. I really got a kind of perfect small town upbringing. I'd say the thing that maybe made it a little different for me was that we were, you know, very diverse for town. We come having a Middle Eastern background and an Italian background and parents who were very overly proud of it. We kind of felt like we stuck out. Yeah. And food quickly became an expression of culture and history. And how we introduced ourselves to people, because I think my parents were afraid being away from Detroit and New Jersey that we would kind of lose the history of where we came from. And I have 3 brothers and all of us, you know, quickly learned to cook with my parents in order to sort of pass on and pass on the culture. And I should say everyone was very kind. I don't have a sad story of like getting bullied for this or anything. Everyone was always like very welcoming. And by high school, my house was like the house to eat at, you know, once kids started to care about food. But growing up, it was— yeah, it was a very small town upbringing. But with a very diverse kind of background.

**J****Jason Duff** 04:07

And you mentioned your dad being a professor, and one unique thing of me getting to know him, he was leading up the international student population at the university, is that right?

**R****Rose Previte** 04:19

Yeah.

**J****Jason Duff** 04:19

Yeah, so I mean, you got introduced to all kinds of cultures and people probably by default because of that.

**R****Rose Previte** 04:26

Oh, that makes me happy. I'll let him know you said that, 'cause yeah, it's a very, again, in a place, you know, especially when he was first starting out in the late '70s, early '80s, there weren't any restaurants for folks, international students, to go to. And my dad made our house like the de facto cooking location for all international students because it wasn't— you'd have to go to like, I mean, I don't even think Columbus had much as far as international restaurants at the time, right? So we had Japanese students in our home, we had African students in our home, Middle Eastern students. So I was like getting this like global education from Ada, Ohio.

**J****Jason Duff** 04:59

That's awesome. What a unique experience. So did you grow up always knowing that you wanted to get into the restaurant space and open your own one day, or is that something that came later?

**R****Rose Previte** 05:09

Yeah, not really. Um, my mom started sort of like catering out of our house, Middle Eastern food. Like, you had this whole expression of like constantly educating. I would, um, I would go to the county fair. I went to the Harding County Fair every year with her. Yeah, we did cooking demos at the fair because she had come from Detroit and saw all these farms because she was, you know, had a very urban upbringing. She came to Aida with my dad, and she was like, I see the sheep, but there's no lamb kebab at the grocery store. Like, I don't understand. And so quickly my parents got involved in the Hardin County Lamb Sheep Improvement Association. And before you knew it, we were making like lamb kebabs at the Hardin County Fair. We were cooking classes because my mom at the time, farm to table wasn't a thing. But she's like, no, I see your farms, but I know you guys aren't cooking with this stuff. Let's teach you how. So from day one, like, you know, food education and cooking out in the world was like part of my upbringing. But Mom and Dad were always like, you're going to college. In fact, you're going to Ohio Northern University. Oh, thanks for telling me.

**J****Jason Duff** 06:14

You know, like, um, what did you graduate with, Rose? What degree did you graduate with? What's that?

**R****Rose Previte** 06:21

You graduated with Communications in Spanish with a minor in International Studies. Okay. No, my dad, I should say, was a pharmacy law professor, so fortunately he was never my professor. But I also did not date any pharmacy students. Okay, that was a good That's funny. So there was a unique experience being the professor's kid, but at least I didn't have to take classes in the pharmacy building. But yeah, it was so, you know, they were always like, you're going to school. No one was encouraging me to open a restaurant by any means. I went and got a master's in public policy in D.C. It wasn't until much later that I circled back to the food as, oh, I could make a career out of this.

**J****Jason Duff** 06:56

Well, and D.C. was your first restaurant, right?

**R****Rose Previte** 07:00

Yes. Yeah. But not till I lived in DC many years before and I went to George Mason for graduate school there. So many years before I opened the restaurant.

**J****Jason Duff** 07:08

Very cool. And what was, what take me from wanting to go into public policy and, you know, in college and later years after that into your evolution into your first restaurant?

**R****Rose Previte** 07:21

Yeah, I, well, I wanted to change the world. I wanted to fix everything when I graduated Northern and I thought, where could I do that? I'm going to go to Washington, DC. Seemed logical. I also had apparently did not take a geography class because in my mind I also wanted to live by the ocean, and I was like, oh, I'm going to the East Coast, it'll be so close. Just for your knowledge, 3 hours to the ocean from Washington, DC. So I didn't quite get there, but I, I wanted to be in DC to kind of create change. Um, I was, you know, very active in human rights work. I've been in— I had run Amnesty International at Northern. I wanted to like do good for the world. So that is how I got to DC and went into policy. And I did start working for the D.C. City Council and then the New York City Council. I moved to work for them because I really believe actively in local governance. Like, I could tell quickly in Washington things took a really, really long time at the federal level, and I'm very impatient, and I want to like see the product of my work. And so I thought, okay, I'm gonna get into local government. And so I did that, but then I did it through city council work. And about a couple years into my career, my husband came home and said, that he had gotten a very unique opportunity to move to Moscow, Russia, to be the foreign correspondent for NPR.

**J****Jason Duff** 08:37

And I'm like, wow. And just, can we just take a little commercial? Your husband is pretty special as well. He's a journalist. But, you know, David Greene, and, you know, he worked at NPR for at least a decade or longer, right?

**R****Rose Previte** 08:53

16 years, almost 20.

**J****Jason Duff** 08:54

Yeah. And he was co-host of the Morning Edition. And For anyone like I've been an NPR listener for many years and heard his voice and heard the work that he did, really inspiring stuff. I mean, and especially being able to accomplish being a foreign correspondent and that travel opportunities like that, that was a very earned opportunity, well-deserved. And just a shout out to him as well.

**R****Rose Previte** 09:18

No, I like a David Greene commercial. That's okay. Like, yeah, you do.

**J****Jason Duff** 09:21

I aspire to have the voice like we— Ethan, I were— we were practicing before you got on. We've got to— we've got to do better with our voice. And he has.

**R****Rose Previte** 09:28

No, you guys are great. I think he would approve. He has a very deep radio voice. It's insane how, like, yeah. And he was in, I should also say, a newspaper reporter when I met him. He wasn't always using his voice in radio or podcast. He is now though. And yes, he was a White House correspondent for, well, for the Baltimore Sun when I met him. And then he was a White House correspondent for NPR until this foreign correspondent job came up. And he'd always wanted to be a foreign correspondent. As newspapers have shrunk, there's been less opportunities, right? Because there very expensive to have foreign bureaus, but NPR was really dedicated to keeping them. And so it seemed like a once in a lifetime opportunity. Russia was not at the top of my list of places I wanted to live. I had studied abroad at Northern in Spain, and I— Spain, I'm good, right? And so I think in my naive brain, I was like, oh yeah, Russia, it'll just be like study abroad. I don't even know what I was thinking. It's probably better I didn't know.

**J****Jason Duff** 10:26

Yeah. But what an incredible experience, especially, you know, even fast forwarding today and seeing you know, how everything has been unfolding with Russia and Ukraine. And I look at your background and I, you know, I imagine you've got a pretty interesting perspective of when you were there 15 years ago. And, and even, you know, we know that politics is divisive. We know that countries, you know, there's lots of conflict in the world. But I love what part of your story is like tying together how food brings people to the table.

**R****Rose Previte** 10:55

Yeah. And I think that became even more apparent while we were traveling because for the— I was familiar with it within my family, right? But I hadn't really experienced it at an international level. And then while we were living in Moscow, we were able to travel everywhere and it quickly connected like food and memory and storytelling to kind of everywhere that we went. And that ended up being the basis for my first restaurant, for Compass Rose, was this idea of like travel memory and food experiences. And we were welcomed into homes. I'm telling you, we were like, on the Trans-Siberian in the middle of winter in, in Siberia, being welcomed into homes of families who didn't even have indoor plumbing. Like, and I have used outhouses in Siberia in subzero temperatures.

**J****Jason Duff** 11:38

Wow, let's go! Brave, brave, kudos!

**R****Rose Previte** 11:41

That was very serious. So, but they were so kind and, um, brought us in and fed us around these tables even though they had next to nothing. And it just was a constant refrain in my mind was like, food— here we are, so different as human beings and such different life experiences, but at this table we're connected and we're the same and we're vulnerable and we're, we're letting our, our, our, our barriers down, you know, and like all of our walls and, and we're connecting. And I think food gives you a very unique opportunity to do that that most other things in our daily life don't.

**J****Jason Duff** 12:12

So, so for a lot of small business owners, they maybe have an idea that they want to start a restaurant or they want to start a boutique or a retail store, um, and they find the product. So like they, they work on the menu items or they work on curating the right inventory, but maybe they don't spend as much time on the brand or the why. And one thing that I think you have done so well is you began, I think, with answering the questions of why are we doing this? Can you speak to a little bit of that or any advice that you have about that as you built your restaurants and your brands?

**R****Rose Previte** 12:48

Thank you. I think, yeah, no, the why is, I mean, to me, kind of everything, right? Because once you forget why you're doing it, it gets a lot harder. And, um, you know, that, that train in Siberia is important because that is where I kind of transitioned my thinking to, I want to go back to the US and open a restaurant. I, I wanted to like completely like pivoted right from what I was doing. We were there 3 years and it took those 3 years of kind of soul searching. And I, I was very privileged to have that opportunity. I, I couldn't work, I couldn't speak Russian, I couldn't get a visa to work, so I just was traveling, kind of following my husband, which was not something I had planned to do. I wanted to have my own career and my own identity, and I felt like I had lost it. And so I was really searching for like what would bring me joy and what would give me purpose back in the US. And it really, again, all that travel and time, it was kind of like an Eat, Pray, Love moment. I know that sounds a little cheesy, but I was like, wait a second, I love bringing people together around a table, around food. Like, so why don't I just do that? Like, why don't I open a restaurant? And so, you know, deep down, maybe I had always wanted to do it or thought I'd do it later in life. But again, parents were not encouraging it. I felt like I had to get a degree. And something about that moment told me that, like, later is now. Like, go back and just do it. And I mean, the why was just to continue that celebration of culture and connection that I started at my family's dinner table in Ada, goes all the way around the world, is actually the same everywhere in the world. At the end of the day, that's what everybody wants, just security, food on their table. You know, I was living in a country where that wasn't common, right? People were constantly— had to worry about where their food was going to come from. And, um, knowing I could come back to the States and I had this enormous privilege of, of being in — like, being able to have a small business. I should also say that one of the other things about Russia outside of my experience with, like, food connecting us was the lack of small business. And I would walk around Moscow and I was like, I'm like, what's wrong here? Like, something's missing. It took me a while, and I'm like, there's no small businesses. Like, you don't just walk into a little boutique. You don't walk into many cafes. They're always owned by like big restaurant groups. And then you quickly realize the big restaurant groups have all these connections to the government, and they're paying people off. And an average 30-something-year-old woman could not just open a restaurant. And I was like, that is a privilege of being American. I'm gonna go back and do that. Yeah. And so I really started to value small business and like take on the risks. And it was hard as hell. I didn't know what I was doing. I had to ask a lot of people. I had to make a lot of mistakes. But I don't think the why ever left me. It was like, this is a privilege that you have that most of the world does not have, so use it. And then the other one was just the why of like, like nothing is more important to me than the energy that's created when people are in the same space being very real with each other. And I wanted to create that every day.

**J****Jason Duff** 15:37

I love that in the way you speak about it, you can sense how authentic and genuine you are about it. And also, I respect that you are, you know, open to saying these are my weaknesses. Like, I didn't know all the steps of opening up a restaurant and negotiating commercial leases and working on construction contracts. I mean, all those— there's literally a billion items when you're building something from scratch to something significant. But you had the courage and to move forward. Can you speak a little bit like what gave you the confidence and courage to start that first restaurant? And now, you know, we're moving on to restaurant number 6, I believe. So like, tell me, tell me more about what gave you the confidence to do that.

**R****Rose Previte** 16:22

You know, it's funny, I don't even know if I started with a lot of confidence. It's funny, I, I started with a a dream. I know it sounds a little cheesy, but it was just a dream and it was a vision. And I really had in my head what I wanted it to look like and what I wanted it to say, like what I wanted to say to people. And I just used that as like a guiding light. And then I just started talking to people because I didn't— there is no book. Anyone that owns a food business knows there is no like 101 for opening a business. No one's like, oh, let's— you can get a business degree, sure. But we all know if you want to be an entrepreneur of a small business, that's like a degree in itself that no one offered me anyway, you know. So you have to figure it out. And I was so— I'm so grateful to so many people that just sat with me and answered my questions. My now business partner, I was a boss of mine at a bar in Capitol Hill where I had bartended in my early days in DC. And I just walked into his house with a six-pack of beer, sat on the floor and said like, could you please tell me how to do this? Because he owned a couple bars. And I just started writing down notes. I still have them somewhere probably. And it was just little bit by little bit. So I, you know, I had the— I have a partner, obviously, in David that was amazingly encouraging. So I cannot, you know, say enough how important it is to have someone like that as a cheerleader. But there were dark days where I'm like, this isn't going to work. I'm going to lose this money. How the hell am I going to pay everybody back? I'm going to disappoint all these people. But it was like equal parts, probably like passion and perseverance and like some of it being naive, like actually not knowing how hard it was going to be. I don't know. I think like if I really understood it, maybe I would've been afraid, but I just went in like, this is what I'm going to do and nothing is going to stop me. But I, I actually think it's when the doors opened that I, it gave me confidence I'd never had before when it actually did work and people came in and it all came together. I'm like, oh, you figured it out. And it gives you confidence to do so many other hard things in your life because other things don't seem as hard anymore.

**J****Jason Duff** 18:24

Yeah. When did you kind of realize after you got the restaurant opened, and this would have been Compass Rose, how long did it take you to realize like, I actually think this is going to make it and I'm going to stay in business? And then what was the step to then say, hey, I want to take this passion that I have and open up other restaurant concepts?

**R****Rose Previte** 18:43

It was probably like a year. I mean, before I felt like this is not going to fall apart around me. And I don't know why. Yeah, I remember the year mark very distinctly because I didn't leave the building. I have I was there every single day from 2014 to 2015. And I remember the very first trip I took and left the building. And that is the moment I was like, it's okay without you. It is okay.

**J****Jason Duff** 19:07

It's like a child, is it not? I mean, that's the analogy that I have. Like, it literally is like you're taking a baby and moving it through, you know, infancy to adolescence to adulthood. And it's messy. It's not perfect. Like, if people could see the behind the scenes, and this is why I appreciate you just sharing so much. Authentically about like, actually, this was really hard. And, you know, I didn't have all the answers, but I sat on the floor and we— and the other thing I think you're good at, and I just sense this, you're good at asking questions. And I think that's another thing that some folks, maybe because they get embarrassed or they don't want to feel like, you know, it's an inappropriate question. Like I've just found with people, especially other business owners, like just asking the question, they're like, yeah, I'd love to share the behind the scenes of what I learned and how I figured that out.

**R****Rose Previte** 19:53

Yeah, I think for some people it's actually therapeutic because we don't stop very often in restaurants or any small business. Most of it, we're just going, we're surviving like all the time and we forget to stop. So sometimes when people ask you, you're like, yeah, great, I'm happy to tell you. And it turns out when you ask, they usually, yeah, they usually answer. And it's also, I think I learned better that way. Like I was an okay student. I wasn't the best, but I'm, you know, I don't even know if I realized I was like 100% smart. I don't know if I believed it until Compass Rose worked because I wasn't And, you know, straight-A student, it turned out that like my way of learning was very hands-on in real life, which is why a restaurant is perfect for me. Like it's, it's, there's labor, like there's, it isn't like studying and, and producing a presentation the next day. But, um, there's something about it that helped and I learned through asking questions, like one-on-one contact was way better for me than like traditional book learning and test taking. So yeah, I definitely encourage people to take a, you know, ask as many questions as humanly possible.

**J****Jason Duff** 20:49

Yeah. And it's no secret that the restaurant industry is one of the harder business models to follow, right? As you're getting started. So what are some of those things like with your restaurant that maybe if someone is listening now, this is how I'm thinking about it and they're thinking about starting their own business. What are the— what were some of those learning curves for you that you would encourage people thinking about starting a restaurant to start planning for?

**R****Rose Previte** 21:15

It's the— well, one of my biggest challenges was, you know, the investment, asking for money, right? Because I didn't have it on my own. And at first, I just kept like approaching it like it was a favor or something. And some way, something, one day I'm like, Rose, you don't sound like you believe in yourself. So if you don't believe in yourself when you ask, why would anybody else believe in you? Wow. So like, start with believing in yourself and then realizing what you're asking them to take part in an opportunity. This isn't a donation or something. And I just, I had to really shift my, my good Ohio manners or something. Like, I don't know what it was, like something in me just like made it like we don't like to talk about money or whatever. And I had to overcome that. And I think once I started, I pulled off that bandaid and started asking people and being confident that I was gonna return it with interest, with, you know, with something and they're gonna make more than they gave me. That really changed course. So if you have a block towards asking for money, that one you should get, get used to really quick and really believe in yourself and that you will, you'll be giving it back and then some. And I think that that was one of my biggest challenges. I think there's also just like these things pop up that feel defeating. Like I had a huge neighborhood battle over getting a liquor license and in my business model we couldn't make it if we didn't sell alcohol. So the couple neighbors didn't want us there and I think were particularly hard on me because I was young and I was female. I know it was because they're all old men that were fighting me. And, um, they didn't fight any of the boys coming to the neighborhood, but just me. And they tried to stop me, and it looked grim on some days. But like, I just— I had to learn very quickly to, in the moment, in these public meetings where they would say mean things— I mean, they literally said at one point, like — and this is because Compass Rose isn't an old row house, by the way. So the bottom is the restaurant, and it's a mixed-use property. So David and I actually lived upstairs for the first 3 years. So this is like meaningful. And like, I was living in the building at the time that I was going to public meetings and fighting for my license and all this stuff. And one time one of these men said, oh, she's going to make it a brothel. I mean, like, these are horrible things. And I would bite my tongue.

**J****Jason Duff** 23:25

And don't even get started about social media these days because the people from afar that think that they can, you know, throw darts and, you know, nasty stuff. You got to, you got to power through that.

**R****Rose Previte** 23:35

We didn't. Yeah, well, this is to my face. Somebody like, I mean, it's really— when we're in the same room, I almost wished it could have been online at that point.

**J****Jason Duff** 23:42

No, I'm glad I didn't have to.

**R****Rose Previte** 23:44

But it was hard. And that was like, that was what I learned. Like, okay, focus on the endgame. If you're on a chat, like there were these instant reactions. I wanted to yell, I wanted to defend myself. And I focused on what I really wanted and how it was best to get it there. And I started to make those decisions. Like what's best for the business became a mantra. Like there's how I feel in this moment, but it's like I actually have to do what's appropriate for the business. And that really shifted my thinking. And like, I don't know, there was an immaturity there that I didn't have before that quickly my decision-making process was based on something else, which again, to your point, is like having a kid, right? All of a sudden you're not making a decision for yourself, you're making it for this other person. In this case, for me, it was the restaurant. And so yeah, I think that, and you know, I think don't use money— I'm gonna go back to me— as a reason not to do it. I did find it. I didn't have it all at the beginning. I started without having enough, and the money will almost always come, truly. Granted, it's very, very difficult and not every— it's not an equal playing field for everyone. It's harder for women. It's harder for people of color. It's, you know, it's definitely hard. But I just feel like it's so easy, especially with like the dream of opening a restaurant. You can find a million excuses not to do it. So it's really just talking yourself through it and be like, you know, if you really want it, don't listen to the voices I had. I don't know, probably twice a week people would say to me, Rose, Do you know that 9— Anthony Bourdain said 9 out of 10 restaurants fail. I'm like, oh, thank you, I had no idea. I don't know who made him this authority on everything, you know. And so, God rest his soul. But anyway, so, you know, as you do these voices of doubt, everyone thinking they're doing you a favor but actually terrifying you in the process. And it's like, block out the voices if you really want it. Block out the voices.

**J****Jason Duff** 25:31

Yeah, I love that perspective. Can you speak to— you talked about places and the neighborhoods that you chose and the types of properties and the importance of that. But we also spend a lot of time in the podcast talking about people. And can you share a little bit about along the way, as you set out and created your vision and you built kind of the values and the culture for your first restaurant, as you moved into the second restaurant, who were some of the people that had joined— that joined you along the way that has helped you build and grow and scale your company?

**R****Rose Previte** 26:02

Yeah, I think my, um, lots, lots of people, because you definitely realize it's not— you can absolutely cannot do any of this without a team, right? It started out just me and David My old boss who became, you know, who really taught me business on the first, you know, small business on Compass. I brought chefs in along the way who helped really formulate things. I didn't do all that by myself. Like, I had a base of what I wanted. Compass was going to be international street food. It was going to be reminiscent of the whole world. Maydan, the second restaurant, was going to be very much my story of culture and Middle Eastern food, doing it on fire and like the most ancient way that you can cook. Like, that was my base. But I brought in folks to travel with me and learn the food and help me make the menus. And then, you know, I have now managers. The only way I can be in two cities is because I have an amazing team back in Washington. And my director of operations is like my right arm, and I couldn't do it without her. And it took us time. It took trust. It took— we're really working together for mutual trust to evolve to the point that I could really step away and say, this is going to be okay without me here every single day. But those folks The chefs, the managers, it could never be done without them. And not to mention then the people that support you. If we, all my restaurants survived COVID, which is crazy because they're small, but it was the people in the neighborhood and the community that came out for us. And at the base of every day, that's, that's who we're doing it for, but that's who kept us alive in that horrible time.

**J****Jason Duff** 27:28

All right. At this time, we're going to take a quick break to hear a word from our sponsors. Come check out 600 Downtown Pizzeria in downtown Bellefontaine, where they cherish the art of making the most authentic, unique, and delicious world-famous and award-winning pizzas. Their team hand spins each pizza the old-fashioned way and only uses the freshest of ingredients. Come see why they were featured on the Food Network. If you are looking for a dynamic workspace in the heart of Bellefontaine, look no further. Build Coworking Space is your destination for creativity and collaboration. With state-of-the-art facilities and a thriving community, this is where innovation happens. Join them today for as low as \$99 a month and build your success at Build Coworking Space. Rose, the, the statement, people come into your life for a season, a reason, or a lifetime. Do you resonate with that statement? And have you had life experience about that as you built your companies?

**R****Rose Previte** 28:22

Oh yeah. Oh, like, I like a big amen. I don't know what to tell you. I'm— yeah, it, it's, it is for sure. There is not— they're not a lot that go with you on the whole journey, and that's okay.

**J****Jason Duff** 28:34

And that's okay.

**R****Rose Previte** 28:35

Knowing it's okay. And some of them hurt more than others, right? But I really do believe that there's— when they're supposed to go. In my case, I've been told I hold on sometimes to folks too long, and usually the universe comes in and is like, nope, they got to move on. Kind of dramatic, has to happen.

**J****Jason Duff** 28:53

You know, I talk to people in the restaurant industry because it is— you kind of start out as a family, um, and you got to be careful about that definition of of family and company, and this is more self-serving to me because I struggle with it, because, you know, when they do depart, you know, and sometimes they're in violent ways where, um, it could be a theft in your organization, it could be a violation of your trust, it could be abuse of drugs and alcohol. Like, you just— I wish everyone, you could do like the Spock mind meld to like share, this is a journey. But when you reflect and work through the emotions of it, you're just so thankful for those people that maybe were there for a month or two that got you through that, that problem, um, and now they're off doing bigger and better things, and, and your organization may be better because of it too.

**R****Rose Previte** 29:41

Yeah, I think, and I also contribute this to coming from a very tight family unit but also being a little sheltered in my very kind town. I don't know if I was prepared for the city the way I maybe should have been, so I didn't have the boundaries the kids talk about. I will say it was probably how, you know, day one it was all family to me too, to the point that they were in my literal house every day and I thought that was normal. And, you know, I, um, things have changed. I also don't let anyone use the term family, and I had to learn that, Jason. I like to say it's summer camp. Um, you're here, you're gonna get real tight for a while, it's going to be real special, but then you're probably gonna go, you know, at some point with that, you know, and that's okay. So I try to— that is my comparison. I try to avoid the family because you bring that dysfunction. Like, families dysfunction. We don't want your dysfunction. It's work. We got to separate it. But I 100% understand. I learned all of that the hard way. And I will say, in particular, the, the manager I was telling you about, she, she came from years of rougher restaurants than mine— larger, tougher staffs. And she really taught me how to like keep that closeness but also keep the distance that is, is healthy and necessary. So she came in to teach me that too.

**J****Jason Duff** 30:52

I love that. And, uh, with Maidan, I, I want to share, um, I absolutely I really love your book. Um, if you guys can't see this, for those that are listening, I'm holding up this beautiful hardbound book that when you open it up, I, I just wanna share the photography of the kitchen to the menus and also to the travel adventures that you and David and your team have taken. And then it really to, to show how much you care about food. Food, you go into the recipes of actually how to prepare this. It's just a really awesome book for those people that really are wanting to explore and learn more about Lebanon and unique kinds of food. But it's like an adventure. So tell us, what was the inspiration behind the book? And then also, I'd like you— we have hosted Adam Witty on the podcast that is a publisher of Forbes Books. And on that podcast episode, he mentioned of how powerful a book can be as your business card to leverage PR, to leverage speaking opportunities, and to take your business to a whole level. And I'm curious if you have seen and experienced some of that as well.

**R****Rose Previte** 32:09

Yes. I mean, it was a game changer. It definitely, you know, it just came out last year. So November of '23. So we're at our like 1-year birthday and it had been definitely a bucket list thing for me to do. I grew up with my dad. It's funny, I talk a lot about my mom because she's the Lebanese one and a lot of the recipes in the book lean towards the Middle East. But I did cook a lot with my dad and— but he was more as a pharmacist, scientific. So he liked recipes. My mom doesn't like recipes. She just wants to go from heart and memory. And so I had these two like opposing but yet complementary ways of learning to cook. And Dad and I used to pour through, through gourmet magazine cookbooks and French cookbooks, and they exposed me to something and food that was far away from Ada, right? Things I couldn't, that I wouldn't experience there, but I knew existed out in the world, and it inspired me to go out in the world. So I, I wanted to create something that hopefully would speak to someone in that way, right? Like, here you can be a small-town girl and, you know, dream of going these places, and maybe you will go those places and, you know, bring the, bring these things back. But I also know not everybody can do that. Um, we had a big family, we didn't travel internationally. It was way too expensive. My parents didn't even think about taking us back to Lebanon or Italy or anything. So a lot of people are in that situation. And what I also hope the book does is kind of transport you for a minute to one of these places, or, you know, makes you almost feel like when you come in the restaurants that you're not in DC or LA anymore, that you're actually someplace a little bit more exotic and far afield. So that's what the recipes and the food is meant to do. Um, and really it got to be a travelogue and a little bit of a biography. And I was really grateful the publisher let me tell so many stories stories, but to me, the, the food and the stories are intertwined, and I would be doing a disservice if I didn't tell you who had given me the recipe, why I was there, and what they taught me in the process. And that's what a lot of what you'll see in the book is. And so yeah, I'd say it's a great PR. I connected with people nationally who had never been to the restaurants. Um, I also learned as a very practical tool, restaurant cookbooks do not sell well. So the publisher was very big that this is not a restaurant cookbook. This is a home cookbook. Those, those— because I guess they're saying like, if you're in the middle of Nebraska, there's a good chance you've never been to Maidan, so you're not going to pick that book up if you think that's a restaurant that you've never been to. But if it's actually restaurant recipes but designed for a home cook, then it'll sell. So that was just like a bit the business side of it. But it was cool for me because I got to take the restaurant recipes and make them accessible. But then I also got to record the family recipes that I was telling you my mom refused to write down all these years. And I went in and did like the oral history with them and actually recorded it. So family can thank me for the rest of their lives that I got my mother to actually put measurements on things, and my aunts, um, and now we have a family history as well. So it is just like, yeah, you can meet me and know a lot about me, but just by reading that book, but also then it's all reflected in the businesses. So if you get to come to the restaurant, you'll be like, oh, she talked about that, there it is, I see it, you know.

**J****Jason Duff** 35:11

Super cool. Well, congratulations on that. It's a really, really nice piece, very beautiful. But there's another part in your story that I also want to touch on, um, So you started with your first restaurant, you expanded into 4 more, and you got to the point where you actually, one of your restaurants had earned a Michelin star. So I kind of want to hear what that experience was like for that.

**R****Rose Previte** 35:32

Oh, you guys, that one's hard for me because I'm not, I didn't go to culinary school, right? So I wasn't expecting, that wasn't like a life's goal at all. It was very surprising. We first got the call in 2019. So it was kind of like for the next year. We held it for almost 5 years. And so it's a huge accomplishment. Accomplishment. We're the first Middle Eastern-starred restaurant in the U.S., and I think that's probably the thing I'm most proud of, is that there are people that now come in and try Middle Eastern food because it's a Michelin-starred restaurant, and then they're, they're exposed to food that they would not have tried otherwise. I think it gets a bad rep for being a kebab shop or like really cheap casual food, and so by putting it in a really beautiful space and by getting the star, people are like, oh, wait a second, this is elevated. There is a lot of technique. There are really cool ingredients, and it's really meant to be educational. So yeah, that was that. You know, a lot of people in my life don't even know what the Michelin star is. So it was, you know, definitely unexpected and but very much validating for like what we do.

**J****Jason Duff** 36:34

Yeah, very cool. You know, it's, it's nice to be recognized. Not that the awards or the television or reality television like We've got some entrepreneurs that have been on the Food Network, and all of that is great PR. But there's this idea about the imposter syndrome, like, did I really earn that, or is this marketing or PR? But hearing your story, and it's an important reminder, and I share this with other entrepreneurs, it's important to look in the mirror to say to yourself, I have arrived. And I even hear in your voice, it's like, well, I'm not classically trained as a chef. Well, obviously, you have skills. Somebody thinks you're good. Yeah, and that's the thing. I think to remind to everyday people is just because you didn't have that traditional path or pedigree doesn't mean that you can't do it. Mm-hmm.

**R****Rose Previte** 37:21

Yeah. Yeah. Oh, absolutely not. That's it. There's no script, right? Like, that goes back to, like, the limiting things you can tell yourself. Like, I don't have enough money. I don't know how to do it. I didn't go to culinary school. And you just got to blow through those, those self-doubts if you really truly believe that it's what you're supposed to be doing. 100%.

**J****Jason Duff** 37:37

And then You've got a few other restaurant concepts. I want to get through them to tell us and describe what's unique or how you iterated these new concepts. So we've got Medina and then the Kirby Club. Can you share a little bit more about those?

**R****Rose Previte** 37:52

Yeah, well, Medina is the newest, and it's right across the alley. So Maydan is on a little alley, okay, no cars, kind of pedestrian. You walk right out the door of Maydan, you can walk right in the door of Medina. Medina means city in Arabic, Arabic, and it's a very popular way of saying, like, you know, place of commerce in North Africa. So I discovered the word in Morocco. They also use it in Tunisia, Algeria. It's very popular. I just wanted— I love this idea of just people coming together again to buy food, to eat food. Usually the medinas have a marketplace where you're buying vegetables and meat, but you're also buying falafel or shawarmas. And, you know, it's all kind of this cacophony of, like, life and sound. And that's just really what I always want all my places to feel like. So Medina was appropriate. The menu there as a little bit more North African. And then, um, it's cocktail focused, so it's also a little bit more relaxed because of the Michelin star. Maydan can feel a little fancy and stuff, but Medina is a very relaxed, um, it's really, it's small and, um, hopefully very comfortable for people. So it was a nice little addition to Maydan, whereas Kirby Club is a suburban concept. It's actually in Virginia, so you travel about 40 minutes from Maydan's front door, um, 30-40 minutes, and you arrive there. There's actually huge immigrant populations in DC suburbs curbs. It, it's amazing. The food— like, there's Eden Center in Arlington, Virginia. It is an all-Vietnamese mini mall of restaurants and stores. And, you know, but it's all outside the city limits, so when you actually get out there, diverse food is not as hard to find. And so it seemed like a good fit for us. And Kirby Club is more kebab-focused and more of my American-Lebanese experience. Like, Maidan is so traditional, it's like very by where at Kirby Club we do fun things like shawarma sliders. You know, like you have like a, what looks like a little hamburger, but it's actually like shawarma meat with these like spices that you wouldn't get in a regular slider, right? And the base is lamb instead of beef. So we do fun things like that because it's a little bit more my experience as an Arab American. So yeah, so those are there though. Compass was the first and LA will be again a slightly different but a little bit the same concept.

**J****Jason Duff** 40:00

Very cool. And you tell us about the LA concept, uh, a little bit. I know you're sharing a little bit with us before the show, but I'd love for our listeners to hear a little bit about that too.

**R****Rose Previte** 40:09

Well, if you get to LA, I hope you guys will all visit. It should open in February of next year, almost here, and it is a 10,000-square-foot warehouse. And in addition to putting a second Mite On in it with a large live fire, we are also bringing in a few small LA businesses, food businesses. Um, one of them is a Oaxacan, so a Mexican-American, um,, business that until now did not have a brick and mortar space. They were cooking only on Friday nights in a, in outside. And I wanted the space to be a little bit incubator, but more than anything, just kind of creating a little village under one big roof where small businesses can share resources. And hopefully it lowers the barrier to entry for businesses like Poncho's, where it can be very hard to navigate not only raising capital, but dealing with the permitting system and the government and liquor licenses and all these things. And I knew how hard it was for me. And what I fear is, as the price of living and doing business in cities raises, that businesses like mine will be extinct. And so my lesson from COVID was, if we band together, um, we'll maybe survive. And so I'm putting a bunch of us under one roof. It's going to be kind of like a little bit dorm, you know, we're all going to share space. Um, the idea is that we all help each other, and that will hopefully, um, be a great addition to a central part of Los Angeles. So, you know, here it's like East Side, West Side, there's like a lot of drama about like visiting friends across town. This is actually like in the middle, so I hope it becomes a meeting place for people all over the city.

**J****Jason Duff** 41:36

And, you know, LA traditionally, uh, has not been the— the downtown itself has not been a destination for a lot of what I would say, um, tourism. Uh, now if you get out to the suburbs, and, you know, of course we were talking earlier about, um, some of the waterfront areas and, and that— how did you kind of arrive at your location? Because finding the right, you know, real estate. And it sounds like— and maybe that's in general of a lot of your markets. It's like location, location, location, and then getting the right concept in that particular location.

**R****Rose Previte** 42:08

Yeah, that was— and that's also another thing that could stop you from doing it right. Not knowing how to find the real estate. I didn't have— I didn't know who to go to at the beginning when I found Compass. It was very serendipitous that I found the real estate broker that I did and managed to find a mixed-use house, which was like completely unexpected. Now I do understand a little bit more about developers and real estate, and I had a developer from DC approach me about their businesses, these buildings that they bought here in LA. This is like, oh, we know your work, but now we know you also live in LA. Would you look at this space? And then I feel very— I'm big on the space. Like, it has to have an energy, it has to have a vibe. Typically I do old spaces and make them restaurants, months. Yes. And it takes longer, it's more expensive, but it, it's very special to me. I like bringing the old into the new. So that is definitely a value that I just have, like design and space mean a lot. There's some like fancy chefs that like, they don't care what the rest are like, it can be white, they don't care. My restaurant group is called No White Plates because I literally want to make that all go away. I think the atmosphere, what you're eating on, what you're looking at really matters to the whole experience, not just what's on plates. So I have a very big platform about that. But, um, yeah, the, the other thing about the neighbor is my places are meant to be neighborhood. And so this West Adams neighborhood in LA, it's very residential behind the commercial street that I'm on. So it's like one big street, West Jefferson, former factories, very industrial, but behind it tons of like single-family homes and people who just want a place to come together and gather with their kids and their dogs and their neighbors. And they don't have a lot of that right now because this neighborhood hasn't been as developed as like Beverly Hills or Santa Monica. But it reminds me of 14th Street in Washington where Compass Rose is. Same, very similar vibe. And I just feel like it's the right place for us. I'm really excited.

**J****Jason Duff** 43:57

I— that's great and excited. I'm actually getting hungry just thinking about all these places.

**R****Rose Previte** 44:02

So looking into the crystal ball, can I say one quick thing about real estate, though? Be very careful who your landlord is. I will say that. And anyone that went through COVID knows that. But even without COVID, Who you work with, who's— if you can afford to buy the building, which I don't own any of my buildings yet, but that is one of my goals because it's very hard. Leases are very scary, and especially in cities, they are like— D.C. and L.A. can be very vicious with like if something goes wrong, not having any recourse that could like financially level you. And so I cannot emphasize enough, if you are looking into a space, especially for a restaurant, be very careful who you, who you sign with.

**J****Jason Duff** 44:37

Great advice. So we're coming to the end of the year and a lot of businesses are working on goal planning and they're also looking at trends and innovations they want to incorporate into their business in the future. As you're thinking about your restaurant operations and in food, beverage, and hospitality, what are some of the trending things that are on your mind that you're thinking about for your group as you look into the future?

**R****Rose Previte** 45:03

I'm thinking of diversifying a little bit more. I love the restaurants and I think I've created some strong brands, so we're starting to think about how can we expand the brand that's not just another restaurant, right? So starting to get into CPG, into commercial packaged goods, um, doing some of the products that we use that are hard to find, or we've found a very good resource, but like an average person couldn't get it without a restaurant distributor. So I use products like tahini, Lebanese olive oil, pomegranate molasses. These are not as common ingredients in the grocery store.. So I'm starting to look into packaging my own and then selling them in the restaurant, but maybe selling them online, maybe selling them in grocery stores. So it's still like food adjacent, but it's not just another brick and mortar restaurant. So, and then more people can access the things that they love when they can't get to the restaurant too. So looking into that, and there's a lot of brands that after they have a few units do start to look into this. A lot of people wanna be in Whole Foods or grocery stores as well. So looking into getting some of like our dips and spreads breads, some things that are refrigerated like hummus and baba ghanoush and muhammara, things that could be like dips and stuff in the, in the cold section, trying to get that into local grocery stores. So stuff like that. One of the trends that we're seeing a lot of is, you know, low alcohol content or NA beverages becoming very cool and a great alternative that they weren't in the past. Like if you weren't drinking at a restaurant wine or beer, like your option was like soda or water, right? We are so far past that and it's been really cool. I'm really proud of our nonalcoholic beverage programs and I think that's a trend I hope we keep seeing into the future. I think we will. So those are a couple of things that jump to mind.

**J****Jason Duff** 46:45

Yeah, those are great. And in fact, one episode, probably about 5 or 6 episodes, we hosted John Lowe. John was the former CEO of Jeni's Ice Cream and he really unpacked how his new company is helping entrepreneurs like you commercialize some of their technology and their products to get them into places like Whole Foods and so on. So I— that's another great episode if you're interested in doing that, to refer back to John. Yeah, yeah, great recommendation. We're coming up here on our time a little bit, so I'm going to move us on into just a fun show segment here. We call it a rapid-fire Q&A, just some fun questions to get to know you better as a person. But the first one is, are you right or left-handed? Left-handed, right-handed, right-handed. Second one is, outside of your own, give us one restaurant recommendation for LA and then one for DC.

**R****Rose Previte** 47:38

Hard when there's so many.

**J****Jason Duff** 47:39

I know, I know, that's why I said one.

**R****Rose Previte** 47:42

In DC, there's a place called Anju. A-N-J-U. Is Korean. It is in, um, sort of Dupont Circle-ish, Adams Morgan. Amazing. If you're in DC, try it. And then in LA our neighborhood is so great because I live in Venice Beach. I would say a classic neighborhood spot is Gelina. And if you're— especially if you're in Venice for the first time, you can't like not go. And it is— while it is like a staple, it is solid every single time. Delicious, like small plates Italian. It's really, really good.

**J****Jason Duff** 48:15

Great. Yeah, thanks for the recommendations. If you live near those areas or, uh, are traveling to the area, go check them out. But— and then the last fun question here is, if you weren't doing this kind of work, what kind of work would you would you be doing?

**R****Rose Previte** 48:26

Oh, I would just travel. And maybe like, I don't even know if I would just travel. I would just be on airplanes all the time. Maybe I would fund it by like bringing a few people and calling it a tour so I can afford it. That would be my work.

**J****Jason Duff** 48:38

Is there any bucket list places that I do at work? Is there any bucket list places that you've not been that you're like, I, uh, I want to go there and I'm— this is like the next trip I want to do?

**R****Rose Previte** 48:52

I've been to 70 countries, but I have not been to India, and I am ashamed of that. India, okay. And it bothers me every single day. Okay. India, top of the list.

**J****Jason Duff** 49:00

Okay, awesome. Super cool. Great, just a couple closing questions here for you, and the first one is, what is a professional development resource that was impactful for you along your professional career?

**R****Rose Previte** 49:13

There are, The Restaurant Association in DC, great resource. And I ended up— I became a board member for a number of years. Yeah. Um, it is a resource for all things, and most towns and cities have one, right? It almost becomes like a lobbying wing. So I got to do a little bit of my policy with them too, um, in the government affairs division. So, um, the Restaurant Association of Washington, DC, there's a version of that here in LA that I'm starting to get involved with, but I would do that. And then, you know You know, business-wise, I think for all industries, I have always been a fan of Zingerman's, um, business programs out of Ann Arbor. If you know, they, um, started as a Jewish deli right by University of Michigan. I know you guys are Ohio-based.

**J****Jason Duff** 49:56

Yeah, we don't— we try to avoid talking about that.

**R****Rose Previte** 49:58

If you can pass that part, forget that it's in Ann Arbor. Forget that it's in Ann Arbor. Um, there's two guys that have owned it for many, many years. They have a business philosophy. They've never opened out of state, but they have sort of mail order, um, and a bunch of other businesses. But they have some really cool management philosophies that I have bought the books for all my staff. Um, I keep meaning to get there for like one of their actual workshops, but a lot of it's online now. So it's just kind of like Zingerman's books and, um, small business educational resources. They're very practical, they're very Midwestern, like down-to-earth stuff. Um, that doesn't make you feel like you're going for like an MBA. It's like real stuff you're going to use. And, um, yeah, so I highly recommend Zingerman's.

**J****Jason Duff** 50:38

Great resource. And I appreciate you bringing up the Restaurant Association. We had the the president of the Ohio Restaurant Association on the show as well. Great resource. And if you want to learn more, I highly encourage you to listen to that episode. But last question I have for you here is where can people follow you and all your businesses? I'll answer for you real quick. Everything's going to be linked in the show notes or the description of the video, from her book to all the restaurants if you want to check those out. But where are you online if people wanted to follow you and learn more?

**R****Rose Previte** 51:07

Thank you. I'm pretty good at Instagram. Pretty good. It definitely could be better, but it's just Rose Previtt. I'm the only one. Most other Rose Previtts are like 90, so they're not really on Instagram. It's like a very old lady Italian name. So like, we don't have to worry about that. So you can easily find me and you can link to all my restaurants from there. I should give a little shout out. I also have a little wine company called Go There Wines, which is all direct to consumer. It was a little project David and I did together during COVID so I should give it a shout out. So if you're online, please look it up. Up. That means you can get some of these cool wines that are only served at my restaurants, but you can get them mailed to you, and they ship to Ohio. There's like 4 states that you still can't ship wine to, but Ohio is not one of them.

**J****Jason Duff** 51:46

Great job, right up Jason's alley. Yes, I, I will be looking that up. So, uh, thanks for mentioning that. Um, well, Rose, we— I can't believe we filled in almost an entire hour here of great content.

**R****Rose Previte** 51:58

Your story— we keep talking, you guys are great.

J**Jason Duff** 52:01

Your story is so inspiring sharing, um, the restaurants, the, the, the places that you've chosen, the people that you've curated and taken along with your journey. Um, just thanks for, for sharing with us. I'm gonna give one more plug— this beautiful book, *Maidan*. Um, all the local booksellers that you shop and buy at, and available on Amazon, um, go get the book. Uh, it is really beautiful. It's a great journey. It's a lot of fun, and I think it'll inspire, um, those entrepreneurs that are listening, maybe on the sidelines. You've been thinking moving from that food truck to that restaurant, or you know someone in your life that like is, is really passionate about food and cooking and people, listen to this episode, buy the book, and, and go out and make a really positive impact in your neighborhood. Thanks for joining the show.

R**Rose Previte** 52:46

I hope to see you in the restaurant soon.

J**Jason Duff** 52:48

Yes, absolutely. Thank you.

E**Ethan DeLeon** 52:50

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