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Listening Part 4

Key

- | | | | |
|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| 1 B | 3 B | 5 C | 7 B |
| 2 A | 4 C | 6 A | |

Audioscript

Interviewer This afternoon we have in the studio John Reginald, who after many years of serving as a diplomat on behalf of the British government in a large number of countries has decided to retire and devote himself to full-time writing. His first book, which has just been published, is autobiographical and has the title *A strong stomach*. Why this title?

John Reginald Well, food really can be a tricky issue. Obviously, as a diplomat you attend many official dinners and you have to learn to negotiate your way through the minefield of rules of etiquette which must be adhered to. As I'm sure you know every country's culture is different – and what is acceptable in one country or culture can be quite inappropriate in another. But the main thing I discovered very early on in the job is that basically **you really have to be prepared to eat whatever is set in front of you**, and eat it with enthusiasm too. Believe me, that does sometimes necessitate having a strong stomach, hence the title.

Interviewer Can you give us some examples?

John Reginald One that springs to mind, and which I've written about in the book, happened at my first official dinner when I was in my first post, in the Middle East. The main dish was a sheep's head and unfortunately as the guest of honour I was presented with the eyeball, which is regarded over there as a delicacy.

Interviewer Oh, dear! Did you manage to eat it?

John Reginald I didn't really have much choice. If I hadn't eaten it, **I would have offended my hosts**. As simple as that.

Interviewer Hmm, I don't think I could have coped with that even if a diplomatic incident

had happened as a result. So was that the worst thing you've ever been served?

John Reginald It was pretty disgusting yes, and among the worst certainly. But there have been many others, I do assure you, that can go into that category. Bat – I had dried bat once when I was in the Pacific Islands – that wasn't very nice either – a bit dry! – needed some gravy – and a bit leathery! It wasn't so much the taste, which was bad enough, but the fact that it was almost impossible to swallow. I seemed to be chewing on it for hours.

But I think top of the list is probably snake blood, which was served to me at a meal in Thailand. It can be served as a cocktail or just on its own. It might not have been so bad as a cocktail, mixed with something else to disguise the taste.

Interviewer What makes something repulsive to eat?

John Reginald **If I can see what it actually is, it's worse**. If I am obviously eating a part of an animal which is recognisable as such then that makes it harder to eat. If what is on your plate is an eyeball then you can't pretend that you are eating something else. For some people smell is the most important factor but I don't have a very good sense of smell, which has been something of a blessing, and yes, taste is important as well. I'm thinking of the raw turtle eggs I ate in Nicaragua. They were fishy, in an extremely unpleasant way.

Interviewer So what advice would you give to someone in a situation where something is put in front of them that they don't want to eat?

John Reginald I'd say: one, don't not eat it. You need to be polite. It could be one of their national dishes. Two, take it easy; eat too fast and you might find that you get some more and, three, **pretend you're eating something you like**.

Interviewer The book is doing very well, I believe. I understand it's come in at number twenty on the bestsellers list. You must be very pleased.

John Reginald I'm absolutely delighted.

Interviewer **I have to say that I found it very amusing**. From the title I thought it was going to be some sort of medical textbook, so I was pleasantly surprised. Is there another book in the pipeline?

John Reginald Yes, but the next one will be totally different. My editor wanted me to do a follow-up to this one – again based on my experiences – things that went wrong and almost led to diplomatic incidents.

And I had thought about doing a sort of guide book for businessmen who travel abroad – etiquette in different countries – there's a definite market for that especially with the growth of China. **But I've recently become very interested in the origins and rationale behind the consumption of food in different countries so that's what it'll be about**. Did you know that ...

Vocabulary p69

Lead in

1 Key

- a It is unacceptable not to finish your serving of rice.

Confusing words

2 Key

- dishes* (*plates* is the crockery that food is served in)
pair (*pair* is used to talk about two things which are specifically used together, e.g. a left and right shoe make a pair; *couple* simply means two of something)
raises (*rises* means to get higher, rather than move something up)

3 Key

- a recipe
b fast
c junk
d tap, still
e savoury
f cook
g menu, list