



How Eddie Huang Mastered The Art Of Chill

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Whether you live in the United States or Uruguay, cultures across the globe continue to find beauty, excitement, and common ground through the joy of food. As our obsession with documenting and sharing images of the food we eat grows, even a meager New York City hot dog can be styled to look like a page out of Bon Appétit Magazine if the light is just right.

Connecting with like-minded (hungry) individuals online over the latest food craze is one thing, but social media has also paved the way for a cultural culinary exchange unlike any other in history. The exchange of culture and food, and the visceral experiences that come from these exchanges, have been at the heart of Eddie Huang's mission since day one. As a restaurateur, author, and television host Huang has amassed a following that look to him not only as a source of entertainment, but also as a source of information. He's passionate, outspoken, and funny, and with the return of his VICELAND series *Huang's World*, he's ready to show us more of the world—warts and all. [Read our exclusive interview with Huang below, and catch up on *Huang's World* Season One before June 28th when Season Two in its entirety will be available for streaming.](#)

How will Season Two differ from Season One? Do you feel like the show has evolved?

Well, I think the core of what I try to do with *Huang's World* will always be to show people that, we may look different, we may have different skin tones, and we may have different approaches to culture, but at the core we have a lot more in common than we think. That's always the underlying message that I'm trying to teach in the show, and I think that TV is the best medium for me to make that case. I cook, I write, I do all kinds of things, but there's something about the food travel genre, especially international travel, that allows me to hit on this point.

In Season Two, what we did differently, and where I think we've improved is I really think I became more confident as a human being, and in turn as a host. I also think that for Season Two, there's a lot more coming directly from the guests featured in each episode. I ask a lot more questions. Of course I'm always going to have my opinions, but I definitely pass the baton a lot more, and I think I give over a lot more of the stage to the guests. I learned a lot more that way and I enjoyed it more—I also think it made for a better show. As a creator, you have to remove yourself at times to create negative space, and that was a real intention this season.

How much research do you usually do before you travel to a new place? What are some of your go-to resources?

I read everything I can get my hands on. People's Tumblr, Instagram, and Twitter feeds. Me and the crew will dive into the local papers. I really like the local papers! We draw from everywhere, but we definitely learn the most from people. I always tell the story producer and the associate producer on the show, "Spend the first week reading the internet. Then, after the first week, throw it away. Get on the phone. Get on the fucking phones and call people. And also read books. Read the cookbooks, read the memoirs, read the seminal books that pertain or came from that culture."

For instance, when we did our New York episode this season we read *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* by Jane Jacobs. We read old *New York Times* reviews of our guests. And we had to read Hemingway! There are some weird parallels between Hemingway's Paris and our downtown New York.

We switch gears when we're about twelve days out from production—at that point we just do calls. We gotta get on the phones, and talk to the people in the cities—the people who become our guests on the show are usually insane sources of information. We always want to do right by the people, and I never want to force a story that the people are not already telling. I try to magnify and amplify the feelings and the stories that are already being told.

This collaborative process between yourself and the other folks that work on the show, did you feel that working on Season 1 together greased the wheels and made the process for Season 2 smoother?

Oh absolutely, but it's been a process for sure—we built a team and you gotta remember this show started online. There are a lot of people that helped make the process run better, but I also think I changed. When we first started it felt like we were fighting this new TV machine that we'd been placed into. I learned to compromise, I learned to accept certain boundaries, and I learned to not fight the act breaks, and the commercial times, and things like that. And I needed to learn that. I think boundaries sometimes bring out the best in you.

For Season Two, I came back in a lot more mature—not looking to fight, instead looking to solve problems, and to be a part of the solution. I already had about 80% of a team that rolled with me through all the hard times, and then my original showrunner from the online days, David Laven, came back and that was a huge. It was incredible to have David back because we had come up with the idea for the show on a park bench in 2012, right outside my apartment on First Avenue!

Throughout your travels, where do you feel like you've encountered the most resistance as a Westerner? And on the flip side, where do you feel like you've been most welcomed?

Hands down, the most antagonistic place I've ever gone is Cape Cod. Even though we were American, they looked at us like we were aliens. The dominant culture there was so strong, that we were put down continuously like we were less than. People were just disgusted by us. I had never been treated like that. I had never had people literally spit in our faces, yell at us, tell us we were fucking losers, "get the fuck out, fuck you, we'll kill you." It was wild. It was very wild.

Okay, so the flip side of that. A place where people welcomed you with open arms?

The flip side is interesting, because it's Provincetown! On the same island, but a totally different experience. Provincetown has a huge gay, LGBT, trans community, and the people there were so welcoming. It was almost like a refuge! We escaped from Hyannis to Provincetown, and then went to Martha's Vineyard. You know, Martha's Vineyard is traditionally Native American and black, and it was really refreshing to go there and see that just a few miles away there are people who have a different experience and are much more inclusive, and haven't forgotten where they came from. That was really nice.

After so many trips across the globe, are there any lessons you've learned along the way that have really stuck with you?

I used to get angry when I saw things. I got angry when I saw the white supremacists in Sicily. I got angry when I saw the tear gas at the gay pride march in Istanbul. I got angry in Cape Cod. You know what... I didn't get angry in Cape Cod. What happened to me in Cape Cod was I just felt broken. It was the first time doing the show that my spirit was really broken. I was like, "Damn, these guys really don't consider me American." And they'll kill me for it. It really was a bottom point in the making of the show. But that experience made us realize what we were up against.

It's not going to be easy to tell this story. It's not going to be easy to change people's opinions. But we have to. We have to. And we realized that we just had to take that one on the chin. I learned from Cape Cod, you don't always have to fight back in the way they want you to fight back. Sometimes you can absorb their energy and send it back to them in another way. It reminded me of Bruce Lee and all the old Chinese sayings like, "You can't hurt the water, the water moves with you." And in Judo, where you learn to use other people's energy against them.

That's when I really started to embrace that ethos. Don't get angry. Absorb it. Find out where the weakness in their argument is, and use their energy against them. If you just let it go, and you don't feel like you need to control this country, that it doesn't need to look a certain way you realize we're all humans, and regardless of religion or race, our parents all teach us some version of the golden rule: treat others the way you'd like to be treated.

What are some highlights of Season Two that audiences can look forward to?

I think the first episode, the D.C. episode, is really powerful. I like politics, I'm interested in them, and I always have an opinion. There are a lot of people involved in the show, whether they're on the team or they're executives that are like, "You're so funny. Can you just talk about the food and the culture—be the culture guy?" And I'm like, "But sometimes culture and politics go hand in hand, and you cannot separate the two."

D.C. was that moment where everyone at VICE, at the network, in the office, and on the team were on the same page—we were goin' in. This is the show and this is the tool, that's going to highlight what's going on for a lot of people watching. The country was very divided, and I think food, family, and culture is what we needed. Less legalese. Less politics. Less fighting. It was more about healing and solidarity, and I really feel like we were blessed to be in the right place at the right time for that D.C. episode.

We saw the election unfolding, we picked D.C. as a city to focus on. We decided we'd go to the inauguration no matter who won. And then when we went, all hell broke loose. A lot of those shots you saw on CNN, MSNBC, on the news—where that town car was on fire—our crew was the first one there. Our crew was in the center of it, right there, and who would have thought it would be a food show that would capture all of this footage! Once we had the footage, I talked to David [Laven] and was like, "Listen man, I know we have our plan of what we're gonna do, this cultural food show, but it's time to pivot." I told him, "We don't always get to pick the story, sometimes the story picks us." To everybody's credit on the team, they saw the moment and we went after it. So, D.C.'s a very special episode.

To me, the New York episode is one that I've always wanted to do. We did it online, but we never had the proper resources and we didn't get to tell the entire story of New York—the science of New York. I think a lot of what makes New York, New York is the sheer luck of the urban planning. It's the grid, it's the train, it's people like Jane Jacobs fighting for the neighborhood, it's small business owners. I really feel like New York has a lot to teach the world in terms of a successful ecosystem. So we looked at the city as an urban ecosystem, and told its story through the actions and stories of downtown New Yorkers like me. So truly for me my favorite episode is New York. It hits home, and I feel like if I never do another episode, that's my episode. That's the story I've always wanted to tell.

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