(Music and sound of space shuttle liftoff)

Elmo: Hi Mr. Leland!

Astronaut Leland Melvin: Hello, Mr. Elmo! How you doing?

Elmo: Oh, Elmo's great! Mr. Leland, how many times have you been into space?

Melvin: Let's see. I've been to space two times, in 2008 and 2009, on space shuttle Atlantis.

Elmo: Really?

Melvin: Yeah. And the space shuttle looks like this.

The space shuttle looks like an airplane, but it's got

Melvin: It goes up in the air and it has two solid rocket boosters

and three engines below it, and then you have this huge orange tank which has liquid oxygen and liquid hydrogen in it, to act as the fuel for the three main engines.

Elmo: Really?
Melvin: Isn't that cool?

Elmo: That's really cool! Hahaha!

Melvin: Yeah! And so this thing takes off. It shakes and launches and goes up.

And at about two-and-a-half minutes, these two white solid rocket boosters come off because all the fuel is used up.

Elmo: Well then what happens with that big orange thing in the middle?

Melvin: Well the big orange thing, when we get to space, the big orange thing comes off, and then it goes into the atmosphere and burns up.

And maybe a few pieces land in the ocean, but most of it burns up in the atmosphere.

Elmo: Wow that's cool.

Melvin: Isn't that cool? So that's how we get to space.

Elmo: That's cool. Mr. Leland, what does space food look like?

Melvin: Space food. Let's see. Well, look, I have some right here. Look at that.

Elmo: Wait a minute! You saying that's space food? (Laughs)
Melvin: That is space food -- in plastic, though.

Elmo: Really?

Melvin: Yeah. All right, look at this. Cream...But it doesn't look very edible. See? (Laughs)

Melvin: Well, but you do this. This is creamed spinach.

You take a needle and you put water into this, and it expands.

And then you put it in a heater and heat it up for about five to 10 minutes.

See, it says two ounces of hot water, five to 10 minutes,

and after 10 minutes you're ready to eat it.

Elmo: But where does it come from?

Melvin: It comes from. We have a food lab at Johnson Space Center.

Elmo: Oh, so you make it there?

Melvin: They make it there. They make it nutritious, they make it healthy,
Elmo: But does it taste the same?

Melvin: Some of it does. Some of it tastes the same, some of it doesn't, because when you go to space, your taste buds don't work the same like they do.

Elmo: They don't?

Melvin: No. But mine did.

Elmo: Really?

Melvin: Yeah.

Elmo: Well good for you!

Melvin: Good for me, right.

Elmo: Well how do you eat it?

Melvin: So you take the scissors and you cut it. And you get your spoon, and you dip it down, and you put it in your mouth and you eat it. Isn't that cool?

Elmo: Really? Well Mr. Leland, what's your favorite food?

Melvin: My favorite food?

Elmo: Yeah, your favorite food.
Melvin: Okay. Here's some green beans and mushrooms.

Elmo: That's your favorite food?

Melvin: You've got to be healthy in space, okay? But let me tell you something about my favorite food. (Whispering) It's a chocolate pudding cake.

Elmo: That's what's in there!

Melvin: That's what's in here! Chocolate pudding cake.

If I cut this open, you'll see chocolate cake and pudding, and you can push it out and push it up in space and (chomp).

Elmo: And you can jump for it, huh.

Melvin: And you can go get it. (Laughing)

Elmo: That's cool!

Melvin: Isn't that cool?

Elmo: But that's a sometime food.

Melvin: That's a sometime food. Also a sometime food is candy-coated peanuts.
Elmo: Yeah, Elmo loves them too.

Melvin: You like these? You like sometime food?

Melvin: You have to eat healthy food because you want to have strong bones and strong muscles, because you have to do spacewalks, you have to do so many things in space that require good nutrition.

Elmo: Cool. Well thank you, Mr. Leland, for telling Elmo what kind of foods you eat in space. Thank you.

Melvin: You're welcome, Elmo. Thank you.