

**Rodney Scott**  
**Scott's Bar-B-Que - Hemingway, SC**

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Interviewer: Rien Fertel

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Project: Southern BBQ Trail - South Carolina

**[Begin Rodney Scott — Scott's Bar-B-Que]**

**00:00:00**

**Rien Fertel:** All right; this is Rien Fertel with the Southern Foodways Alliance. It is June 21, 2012, about 10:30 in the morning, continuing on the Southern BBQ Trail in South Carolina. And we're sitting down with Mr. Rodney Scott of Scott's Bar-B-Que, 2734 Hemingway Highway in Hemingway, South Carolina. And I'm going to have Mr. Scott introduce himself, please.

**00:00:32**

**Rodney Scott:** I'm Rodney Scott, Scott's Bar-B-Que in Hemingway, South Carolina. I was born November 1, 1971 and I'm owner here at Scott's Bar-B-Que in Hemingway, South Carolina.

**00:00:44**

**RF:** Okay; usually I start off with history. I'm going to start off this interview the same way I started off only one other interview, that was with Mr. Sam Jones, and I'm going to ask you the same questions first.

**00:00:54**

**RS:** Sam Jones—

**00:00:56**

**RF:** So what is barbecue?

**00:00:58**

**RS:** To me barbecue is a calling of a reunion, a party for everybody to come and join in and enjoy each other's company and—and just a laid back event, as well as a business.

**00:01:12**

**RF:** But you didn't talk—you didn't say anything about food.

**00:01:14**

**RS:** Oh, it's great food. I mean no matter whether it's chicken, pork, or—or turkey, whatever—beef it's—it's great either way.

**00:01:23**

**RF:** Tell me more about the first thing you said. You said barbecue is about family, reunion, meeting, coming together; say more about that.

**00:01:30**

**RS:** Well, my personal opinion about barbecue is—is a gathering because you rarely find an event without a grill or somebody who is barbecuing or grilling. And that's why I always associate those types of events—reunions, parties—along with barbecue. And, of course, for us it's been a business as well but we still try to interact with our people in the community to kind of remind them that it's just a laid back type of thing, whenever you're barbecuing—gatherings, reunions, parties—that kind of thing. We—we always feel like it still touches bases on family.

**00:02:10**

**RF:** How do you do that? What sorts of events do you do?

**00:02:13**

**RS:** Well, we do an Easter picnic every year, which is free to the public, and not the barbecue, of course, but we do free food back every year to whoever comes out that Easter Saturday and it's just our way of saying thank you to the community for all—a year of business.

**00:02:29**

**RF:** And how many people do you get when it's the event?

**00:02:32**

**RS:** The event is every Easter Saturday and we average about 900 to 1,000 people and we—we have music, food, of course, and a lot of people from out of town visit and they—they just kind of commune—commune with each other and hang out, learn different names and faces, you know, different stories to share—everything, just like a reunion.

**00:02:55**

**RF:** How many years has this been going on?

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**RS:** It's been going on about sixteen years we've been doing it and we plan to continue doing it as much as we can, you know, regardless to weather or whatever. We're just going to keep on doing it every Easter Saturday. It's guaranteed to be a give-back to the community.

**00:03:09**

**RF:** And what kind of responses do you get from people who—who come every year?

**00:03:14**

**RS:** Well, we got a lot of responses of “Is it again next year?” Which is yes. “We enjoyed it; didn't know how long this was going on.” And then we get the big question of “Is it really free?” Which it is. And in—nowadays you rarely find a free meal anywhere, so we—we like to keep in touch with our roots and continue to pass that tradition on and hoping to inspire somebody else to do an event like that as well.

**00:03:40**

**RF:** So you've been doing for sixteen years. Does it replace something that was going on before that or does it continue another sort of gathering over food and either in—in your lifetime or your parents or family?

**00:03:55**

**RS:** Well, it doesn't take the place of any previous event. We just—you know, just our way of saying thank you because basically our business revolves around neighbors giving up trees for us, you know, wood that needs to be removed from their property that they're not able to move, we remove the wood and we use it for our business. And our way of saying thank you is to do this picnic. And, you know, we really, really hope that it inspires anybody if not everybody to— to pass the—the tradition along because it kind of—it keeps people closer together, everybody

seems to have a more relaxed attitude towards each other, and it'll be a good positive change for everybody in the United States—the world even.

**00:04:37**

**RF:** Well, yes; well say something more about that. I mean do you see—you said you want to encourage these types of gathering to happen other places. Has that happened?

**00:04:47**

**RS:** Not to my knowledge. But my group, the Fatback Collective, we—we strive to do that: to let people know that you can go back to your old roots of farming, growing fresh food, inspiring people who have dreams of cooking, if—if not anything else, to—to stay leveled with each other, to stay and—and connect with each other so that it doesn't turn into a competition style of thing. And you have a lot more fun that way. You know, that's my personal opinion but my group is all about inspiring people and teaching people on how to improve on sustainability as far as food and—and lifestyle.

**00:05:24**

**RF:** And do—what is—you said the response of the people is always about—you know, is this happening again? They want it to happen again. But have you seen other responses that might not be directly linked to what is going on or wish for it to happen again but something else like growing out of that happening in the community? Or are people acting different, talking to each other different? Does that make sense?

00:05:53

**RS:** Well yeah; you see a little change, little by little, you know. It—for example, the band that came and performed, the Dutch Band, they were happy and inspired when I saw them again about how much fun they had performing that day. And they continued to announce this thing even after it was over. They were saying, “Hey, next Easter this is what you do. This is where you need to go. This is what they do every year.” And—and that to me gave not only them a positive feel but they spread the word again to some more people hoping to give them a positive feel, so that everybody can say, “Oh, all right. It’s not that bad. We all can come together at some event somewhere and not necessarily Scott’s Bar-B-Que, but just any event anywhere and enjoy each other’s company over barbecue, food, or whatever you do.”

00:06:42

**RF:** Tell me—tell me a bit about Hemingway, where we are, what this place is about.

00:06:47

**RS:** Well, Hemingway, South Carolina is about an hour west of Myrtle Beach, two hours north of Charleston, a little small rural town, mostly known for farming back in the day. And, you know, here you have a lot of cooks, you know, a lot of “quiet cooks” I call them, cooks unknown. They—people with recipes from the best perlaw rice to the best sweet tea—that type of thing; you know, you’ll find that a lot in this area. And it’s not very big, so we chose to keep on cooking hogs the way people used to in this area because a lot of them got away from it, but we chose to keep on doing it over and over and over, which is a big thing for Hemingway, which is known on its website as the *Barbecue Capital of the World*. **[Laughs]**

**00:07:33**

**RF:** And what do you think about that? That's the city's website, right?

**00:07:35**

**RS:** That's the city's website that says the *Barbecue Capital of the World*. I love it; it's a big—it's a bit compliment to everybody in the area and especially the town. It's a small town but it speaks big volume.

**00:07:49**

**RF:** About these quiet cooks, I love that name; why do you think there's so many quiet cooks in the area? Is it—is it because of history? Is it—what is it?

**00:07:57**

**RS:** I think it's history, tradition, lessons taught from grandmas and—and grandfathers even because there are guys there that can cook—oh my goodness. It's—you can't describe it. We have—we have guys that could bake pie around here. We have guys that could do the rice perlaw or—then you have ladies that can do the potato salad, the eggs, the—the—the cured meats. You know, it's amazing that—the skills that a lot of people in this area have that the public just don't know about.

**00:08:28**

**RF:** And who are the quiet cooks in your family?



00:08:32

**RS:** Wow; that would be all my aunts [*Laughs*] and uncles. You know, we got one—my mom, she can do the macaroni. My Aunt Jackie can do the chicken salad—oh my goodness, the chicken salad. My Aunt Fannie with the potato salad, my Aunt Easter with the pies, my Uncle Sam with the ribs, you know, that type of thing, so it's always somebody in the family that has one particular dish that kind of fits well at our potlikkers and family gathers out in the country.

00:09:00

**RF:** You call them potlikkers or what do you call them?

00:09:02

**RS:** We just call them “food is at the house,” you know, no potlikker. It's just, “Hey, food is at this house today.” That's pretty much what it is for us.

00:09:10

**RF:** Is it for holidays, is it Sundays, family reunions?

00:09:13

**RS:** It's just word of mouth like what you doing Sunday? Sunday we're going to be at this house eating and it's just a—pretty much a message across. And—and everybody just kind of meets at that one place and maybe bring a little something and we—we just—we all share it.

00:09:26

**RF:** And what do you bring? Do you cook?

00:09:29

**RS:** I bring my appetite. I let them do the cooking on Sundays. [*Laughs*]

00:09:32

**RF:** [*Laughs*]

00:09:33

**RS:** I'm pretty much a grill guy but I'd rather do my thing on Sundays—well on—throughout the week and I let them have Sundays.

00:09:41

**RF:** Let's talk about the roots of the place where we are now, the—the restaurant, Scott's Bar-B-Que. When was it founded?

00:09:48

**RS:** My dad opened up here in 1972. I was born in '71. I grew up in the business and this place—a lot of history from the 70s on up until now. Started out a little convenience store, a little gas station and we did barbecue on the side. And the demand for the flavor and—and the barbecue just kept on growing, so we eventually increased our volume in—in cooking whole hogs.

00:10:12

**RF:** So at one point did he start doing the barbecue or was it right away or almost right away?

**00:10:15**

**RS:** He started it around 1972 for one day out of the week and, you know, it—it just grew to this point. And it's still growing, which is great, you know, and we—we enjoy doing it. It's a lot of work but we really enjoy doing it and it—it brings a lot of people together in the community.

**00:10:34**

**RF:** And let's talk more about your father. What's his name, first?

**00:10:38**

**RS:** My father's name is Roosevelt Scott.

**00:10:39**

**RF:** And he goes by—?

**00:10:41**

**RS:** Rosie.

**00:10:42**

**RF:** And where was he born?

**00:10:44**

**RS:** He was born here in Hemingway, South Carolina, a little community called St. Martin and he grew up in that area which is about seven miles from here.

**00:10:53**

**RF:** Okay; and did he—what did he do before 1971 or 1972?

**00:10:59**

**RS:** He told me he worked on the road and then he came here and he was doing a little bit of farming along with the business, so he was pretty much a farmer, you know, helped with tobacco companies on the road and stuff like that.

**00:11:12**

**RF:** What did his parents do?

**00:11:13**

**RS:** I don't know. His parents, I didn't know.

**00:11:16**

**RF:** And has he ever said anything about them?

**00:11:19**

**RS:** Not much; my dad is a man of few words. *[Laughs]*

**00:11:22**

**RF:** Why is he a man of few words? I met him yesterday and—

**00:11:25**

**RS:** I don't know. I mean, from what I see he always says, "It's better to be slow to speak and quick to listen." So I don't know; that's his motto. *[Laughs]*

**00:11:35**

**RF:** How is your relationship with your father?

**00:11:36**

**RS:** Oh, we're close; we—we work together pretty much every day, you know. I see him every day and him and my mom as well. Every day we go out and cut wood together and—and we're back, so we're—we're pretty tight.

**00:11:47**

**RF:** And—and let's talk about your mom. What's her name?

**00:11:52**

**RS:** My mom's name is Ella Scott.

**00:11:53**

**RF:** And is she from here, too?

**00:11:54**

**RS:** She's from a little area called Nesmith which is about ten miles from here, so everybody is pretty much from the area. I'm the only one born in Philly and moved back down South.

**00:12:02**

**RF:** Okay; so you were born in Philadelphia. How so?

**00:12:05**

**RS:** I was born in Philadelphia in '71 and my mom said the moved back home in '72.

**00:12:11**

**RF:** Okay; so what were they doing up in Philadelphia?

**00:12:13**

**RS:** I think my mom worked in sewing plants and my dad he was moving furniture around at the time and had an old furniture truck and hauling junk and that kind of thing. So that's what they told me; that's what I know. [*Laughs*]

**00:12:26**

**RF:** Do they—how long were they in Philadelphia and—do you know?

**00:12:30**

**RS:** I'm not sure how long they were before I was born but I'm glad they got me out of there, you know, and gave me a chance to see the country style of growing up and get a feel for the country. It kind of makes it easy when you go back to Philly to visit, you know, you can—you can appreciate your hard works.

00:12:46

**RF:** Do you have family up there?

00:12:47

**RS:** We have some family members still in Philly. Most of our family is in Rochester, New York, so, you know, we—we tend to go back to the foot—the football games usually, big football fan—

00:12:58

**RF:** The Eagles?

00:12:58

**RS:** —Eagles; yes.

00:13:01

**RF:** And do they have any fond memories at all of Philadelphia, your parents?

00:13:04

**RS:** If there are they don't share them much. [*Laughs*]

00:13:08

**RF:** So—is your mom; talk about your mom. Describe your mom. Is she as quiet as her husband?

**00:13:14**

**RS:** No; my mom is not as quiet as my dad. She's—she's more of the little wit—little wit to her, a little—little snappy every now and again, a little feisty, I should say. But it's not a bad thing.

**00:13:26**

**RF:** And what is her role here?

**00:13:29**

**RS:** She pulls the pork and runs the cash register mostly. And she kind of oversees everything. I guess she would be the manager.

**00:13:37**

**RF:** So when did you start working here and when do you—when did you—what's your earliest memories of—of this place?

**00:13:46**

**RS:** Wow; six—seven years old, whatever you could do. If it was to pick up paper, push a broom, you know, that type of thing; from here to the farm, I worked back and forth. And as far as cooking the hogs I was eleven when we did the first one, so, you know, I kind of grew up doing whatever you could do at whatever age you were. So it was from the farm back to the business—back and forth.

**00:14:10**

**RF:** So you were eleven when you did your first hog?



**00:14:13**

**RS:** My first hog.

**00:14:13**

**RF:** Can you tell that story?

**00:14:15**

**RS:** Well my dad gave me an option if wanted to go to this basketball game that was that day that I had to cook the hog first. And he had the hog set up for me and he left, not—not knowing that somebody was actually, you know, watching over what I was doing. And he told me what to do and I kept everything going all day. And when they flipped the hog over it was just where it needed to be—perfect.

**00:14:39**

**RF:** And so you had watched him for years or—?

**00:14:43**

**RS:** Yeah; I always watched him and would be—wherever he was pretty much I was. You know, whatever the—because it was always labor. And if it was cooking the hog or working the farm, whatever it was, I was pretty much by his side the whole time.

**00:14:55**

**RF:** And who—you said someone was watching you; who was watching you that day?

00:15:00

**RS:** There was a guy named Buster that helps my dad—helped my dad back in the day cook hogs. And he wasn't—not right around me but he was close by enough to kind of keep an eye on it to make sure I didn't screw anything up.

00:15:11

**RF:** So was that the only hog being cooked that day?

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**RS:** Yes; it was the only one.

00:15:16

**RF:** So that was kind of make or break for the weekend, right?

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**RS:** Yes; it was a make or break. [*Laughs*] I'm glad I made it.

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**RF:** So we know he's a man of few words, but did he say anything? What did he say to you when he came back?

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**RS:** I pretty much asked him did I do it right and he was like, “Yeah. That's the way it needs to be done.” That was it.

**00:15:37**

**RF:** And—and then after that, did you cook hogs more often?

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**RS:** Well not—not to that level but, you know, every now and again I was always helping, assisting, you know, adding fire here or there, and, you know, just kind of still learning the ropes, you know. It wasn't too a point where I would still cook one all by myself but I was always in on it, whether it was just adding some sauce to it or just adding some coals to it.

**00:16:02**

**RF:** At what point did you feel completely comfortable that you knew this was—you were able to do this?

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**RS:** I was seventeen. And I was absolutely positive no matter where I went that I could do that whole hog with no problem.

**00:16:17**

**RF:** Were you still in high school? Were you out of high school?

**00:16:19**

**RS:** I just graduated high school. And I was here all the time and, you know, I pretty much knew what to do and how to do it to a positive level without question of, “Ah, should I put this on here, should I put that on there.” But, you know, that's when I felt fully positive about what I do.

**00:16:36**

**RF:** And was there a moment? Was there a spark? Did you say something to yourself? What— what happened?

**00:16:42**

**RS:** I—once I got it I was like, “I know every end now. I know how to make it from start to finish.” You know, from cutting the wood all the way to taking the hog off the fire. So I was pretty positive with that.

**00:16:52**

**RF:** So when you were in high school were you working here at nights, just during the summers —? How much time did you spend here?

**00:17:01**

**RS:** Well, it was always work. Like I said, between the farm and here if it was a regular school year I would work after school helping cut wood or go to the farm and if it was a weekend, say Friday night, I would hang out and help either until it got late or I would spend the night out here. So it—it kind of varied back and forth, but most of my duties were throughout the day or school afternoon—after school throughout the afternoon.

**00:17:30**

**RF:** And who are some of the early guys that helped your father, maybe specifically some who aren't here anymore, if there are any?

00:17:41

**RS:** Wow; my dad's Uncle Thomas, you know, got him started into it. There was a cousin, Piccolo—that's what we called him, Piccolo [*Laughs*]—

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**RF:** Why did you call him that?

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**RS:** I have no idea. [*Laughs*] There was—

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**RF:** What was his name?

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**RS:** I really don't know. I always knew Piccolo. And then there was his—he had another cousin named Johnny Mitchell. There was Buster Hayward—Buster Wilson, I'm sorry, Buster Wilson, a guy named Eddie Bell. These were just some of the guys that came along. Fish Man, we called him; his name was Laurie Cooper. You know, it was kind of like, you know, a crew of guys that would always lend a hand if they weren't working here full-time.

00:18:29

**RF:** And where did your father learn how to barbecue?

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**RS:** My Uncle Thomas taught him.

**00:18:36**

**RF:** Say some more about Uncle Thomas? Who was he?

**00:18:39**

**RS:** Uncle Thomas was—well actually my dad's uncle and he was very instrumental on helping my dad getting started with the hogs, the whole hog, you know, with the sauce and all that stuff, showing him how to get it going.

**00:18:54**

**RF:** Was he a farmer?

**00:18:54**

**RS:** I'm not sure. I was—I was kind of young when Uncle Thomas was around. I must have been no more than five or six. But, you know, he—he, you know, played a very big part in helping out.

**00:19:05**

**RF:** And he's passed away?

**00:19:07**

**RS:** Yes; yes, he's passed away.

**00:19:08**

**RF:** When did he—when did he pass away?

**00:19:10**

**RS:** Years ago; it's a long time ago. I was still very young, so I knew it was a while back.

**00:19:15**

**RF:** So those first pigs, where did they come from?

**00:19:19**

**RS:** Most pigs came from the farm, my dad's farm and Lee Smith. He raised a few hogs and the ones we raised we would take them and have them slaughtered and bring them in and cook them here.

**00:19:30**

**RF:** Was he slaughtering them himself?

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**RS:** No; he would take them to the Locker Plant, yeah.

**00:19:36**

**RF:** So it was still—it was dealing with the USDA from the start?

**00:19:38**

**RS:** Yes; yes very much so, take them to the Locker Plant and the trailer and drop them off in the back and next thing, you know, they're coming out the front all split up and ready a couple days later. You grab them and take them and cook them.

**00:19:49**

**RF:** And then continuing on a bit, so you really started working here when you were seventeen? I mean really kind of taking over?

**00:19:58**

**RS:** Yes; well after high school I got full-time and I had a lot of hands-on and everything from cutting the wood to getting the hogs, picking them up, you know, that kind of thing and we went from there, you know, pretty much at that pace until last year, 2011, when I fully took over the whole entire business.

**00:20:21**

**RF:** So your father was working the pits until then?

**00:20:22**

**RS:** Well, he worked the pits until 2001; yeah. I think it was 2001—he worked the pits and he had a stroke so that left—that left it all up to us to continue on with the pits.

**00:20:34**

**RF:** So what do you mean you took over in 2011?



00:20:37

**RS:** 2011, I took over as the owner and proprietor of Scott's Bar-B-Que.

00:20:43

**RF:** And why 2011? What—what made now the time?

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**RS:** Well, pretty much I guess it was a—that—that point where you graduate, you know. It's kind of like a graduation where you've reached the peak of maturity where you're able to go ahead and take on this challenge of running a business and—and I met the challenge obviously. And—and I've been on it, still learning a lot, still trying to create new things to—to bring in attention for the business.

00:21:14

**RF:** Was there ever a point in your young life where you didn't think you'd be a part of this or you didn't want to or you rebelled against it?

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**RS:** Sure; that was—man, all my teen years. The work was [*Laughs*]*—is intense, you know, you're cutting wood all summer long and you're cooking when you're not cutting wood, so it was pretty hot, and you would want to get out and find you a nice office job or whatever, which vice-versa now I would hate to be locked up in an office. I would have to be outside with nature, you know, doing something physical to kind of—kind of stay in shape.*

**00:21:46**

**RF:** And at what point did you, you know, reconsider or say that you—you want to be here?

**00:21:52**

**RS:** When I saw that no matter what the economy does you're going to eat and I was like, "You know what? The food business is not a bad thing. I'm going to stick by this." You see everything go up and down but with food it's—it's all—it's automatic. It's going to be breakfast, lunch, and dinner every day.

**00:22:12**

**RF:** And so I was talking about the economy last night with your Uncle Sam. A lot of barbecue places I've spoke to over the past two years they talk a lot about the economy and how it's hurt them. Tell how the economy has or has not affected Scott's.

**00:22:30**

**RS:** Well, I can't say that it's hurt, you know. I'm an optimistic type of individual, so I always say it's just a challenging moment and of course, you know, there's a plant here, Tupperware that when they laid off it—it, you know, cut back a lot of our business, but, I think, thanks to the word of mouth and a lot of travelers coming through here, you know, we do pretty good. So I can't say that the economy has actually hurt us. You know, it's just been a couple of challenges here and there but overall we've been all right.

**00:23:02**

I feel like whenever we don't miss a meal and you go to bed and you had something to eat that day it's been a positive day. So I can't say it's been any bad moments with the economy.

00:23:13

**RF:** And do people eat more or less barbecue nowadays?

00:23:16

**RS:** In the summer it's more; usually a lot of people wait until November, Thanksgiving to Christmas, to start eating more barbecue but lately it's been more and more in the summer that they're picking up and eating it for reunions and weddings, different parties and stuff like that.

00:23:35

**RF:** So you're saying people are eating more barbecue in the summer now than they were in the past?

00:23:39

**RS:** Exactly; more people are eating more barbecue now in the summer than they have been in—in the past.

00:23:44

**RF:** And why do you think that is?

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**RS:** I don't know. I think pork is the new beef. **[Laughs]** I don't know. People are falling in love with pork and they're learning that, you know, it doesn't have to be cool temperatures to enjoy it. So, you know, they're—they're kind of just starting to really appreciate pork.

00:24:00

**RF:** Um, what do you think about that? What do you think about pork being, you know, advertised as—? I mean it's been advertised as the other white meat for a long time, for a couple decades. What do you think about the promotion of pork?

00:24:18

**RS:** I love it. *[Laughs]* I mean it's my field and—and it's like everybody has finally caught onto the fact that it's not bad. Pork is not a bad thing at all. You know, what you put on pork makes a difference, but pork itself is—is pretty good meat. And I think they're starting to discover that and they're starting to appreciate the different options of pork, you know, baking, pulled pork, chopped pork; you know, that kind of thing. They're starting to realize it and appreciate it.

00:24:45

**RF:** And let's talk about the food and let's talk about the pork. You do whole-hog barbecue here. Why—why is whole hog important?

00:24:56

**RS:** *[Laughs]* Why not? I mean, well, whole hog for me personally if you got all the shoulders the backbones and the rib bones all together everything kind of corresponds with flavor while they're smoking on the fire. I mean you can do shoulders yourself—their self and—and hams by themselves; it's still good. But it—me personally, I prefer the whole hog to be intact. It—it tends to taste better and, for the way that we prepare it, it holds the sauce better when we're finishing it up.

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**RF:** And do customers get to select what part of the hog they—they order?

00:25:30

**RS:** Not necessarily because once we pull it we kind of mix it all together and—which is a good thing because you get some dry with some juicy and, you know, you get some tender with a little toughness. You know, you—you get like a—like a chunk of meat with a belly piece of meat, just kind of a—a mixture. So, you know, it's kind of a blend, a perfect blend. You get a little bit of every bite of the hog.

00:25:52

**RF:** Do you—you know, I've talked to a couple whole hog—people who only do whole hog and they say those pit masters, those barbecue people, that don't do whole hog that that's not barbecue. What's your thoughts on that?

00:26:10

**RS:** To each his own. *[Laughs]* You know, good barbecue is good barbecue. You know, if you—if you prefer not to do whole hog that's your—that's your thing. And I hold—I don't hold that against anybody because maybe your grill is not big enough for a whole hog. You know, and a lot of people are so appreciative of the fact that they know how to barbecue that what they barbecue is—is—it's a big thing.

00:26:29

So, you know, I never knock anybody for cooking a quarter hog or half a hog—whatever; you know, to each his own. But me, I prefer the whole hog.

00:26:41

**RF:** And let's talk about the cooking process. How does your week start or the week at Scott's start?

00:26:48

**RS:** The week at Scott's starts with getting the chainsaw, opening the hood, sharpen the chainsaw up [*Laughs*] and then you go and cut your wood. And then once you get your wood in you bring it back and we'll dump it on the yard and we'll split it and then after that we'll go pick up our hogs. Get them in here; butterfly them down—of course the fire is already going by that time. And once we butterfly them and lay them on the pit, we'll go ahead and take the hot coals and start cooking them.

00:27:14

We'll do them twelve sides—twelve hours with the meat side down and then we'll flip them over for another twenty-five minutes to do the—the meat side up adding our seasonings, our sauce, kind of spreading the love all over it before we serve it.

00:27:30

**RF:** So I want to break down this process little by little. And we'll start with the wood. You started with the trees and the chain saw. The back of some of the shirts some of the guys wear says *It's all wood*. So what's the importance of wood? Why is it all wood?

00:27:46

**RS:** I mean it comes from nature of course, so it's all natural. There's no—nothing added, no charcoal, no—no gas, none of that and to—to us that's as pure as you can get. You know, if it's

all wood you got you a nice smoke flavor in there, you got your nice wood flavor going through it without, you know, compromising the fact that—who made this stuff? You know, charcoal—if you ask somebody where charcoal comes from they might call the company and say, and not know what's in it or where it came from, as opposed to a tree that was standing, you cut it down. You cut it up. You burned it. You know exactly what's going on. You know that that's a tree that came from a—the road by the—the big oak tree, you know. Turn by the big oak and go cut down the other oak. You know what you got, what you're using and it's no questions of what's in it.

**00:28:41**

**RF:** Where does the wood come from?

**00:28:44**

**RS:** Most of our wood comes from the neighborhood, which would be folks who—if a storm came through for example or somebody's adding property, or adding an addition to their house on their property, and they want a tree removed we'll go get the wood. Example, a good friend of ours, his tree, live oak tree split. He didn't have any way of getting it off the property. And he called us up and we go cut the tree and he gets his property cleaned and we get our fuel for our barbecue for the week. So it's like a hand-in-hand thing that works out pretty good.

**00:29:18**

**RF:** Do you ever have to purchase wood?

**00:29:21**

**RS:** We have purchased wood. We don't necessarily have to but, you know, it's nice to at times when you're running a little low and you don't have time to go get it we may purchase like a load or maybe two here and there. Usually around holidays—

**00:29:37**

**RF:** And what sorts of wood do you—do you pick up? You mentioned a—is there a range of other trees?

**00:29:43**

**RS:** Yes; we—we like to use oak, hickory, and a little pecan—pecan [**pronounced both ways**], wherever you're from—and—and we like to blend—blend all three together. The pecan wood gets hot quick. The hickory wood stays hot a little longer. And the live oak—the oak tree stays chunkier, thicker, nice smoke flavor to it, so, you know, out of those three you got your instant heat, your steady heat, and then your big flavorful coals are all in the bottom.

**00:30:13**

**RF:** So the coals are actually mixed together?

**00:30:15**

**RS:** Yes.



**00:30:17**

**RF:** We were here yesterday and we were watching the guys and they were selecting from three piles. Is that what they were doing—or multiple piles?

**00:30:22**

**RS:** Pretty much mixing through; you want to get a little bit of each and you want to go and get some pieces that are not too big so that you can keep the fire going. And all of it's going to fall through in the burn barrel. And you take it and scoop it up and spread it under the hogs.

**00:30:36**

**RF:** Okay; so is it more—it sounds like it's more—tell me if I'm right or wrong—it sounds like it's more—this mix of wood has more to do with—with heat and how it's heating rather than flavor?

**00:30:48**

**RS:** Mostly heat and one of them mostly flavor.

**00:30:52**

**RF:** So it is a mix even that way, okay.

**00:30:55**

**RS:** Yes.

**00:30:55**

**RF:** All right; so we've got our wood down. Where do the pigs come from? Where's the provenance of the pigs?

**00:31:02**

**RS:** The pigs come from the local area up near Laurens, South Carolina, which is about an hour from here and they provide some of the best meats for us. You know, their—their pigs are all meaty, they're not bruised or damaged or anything like that when we get them, and it's good to know the guy that feeds them too. He—he's old school; he believes in getting up early, getting out there, checking on them, feeding them up and he even brings them—brings—brings them by when they're still alive and shows them to you, so you can see pretty much what you got. So that's always good to know.

**00:31:36**

**RF:** And what variety of pigs is it?

**00:31:38**

**RS:** Mostly the York, Yorkshire

**00:31:42**

**RF:** And do you consider this local or—does that play in or where are these pigs grown?

**00:31:52**

**RS:** Locally; yeah they're all local, within State, yes.

**00:31:57**

**RF:** And how big of a farm is he? How big of a farmer?

**00:31:59**

**RS:** He's pretty good sized, not huge, but he—I don't know how many hogs he has on his farm, but I know he can—he can afford to bring seventy-five—eighty out at a time and not be short on hogs. So he's—he's a pretty good sized farmer.

**00:32:15**

**RF:** And he could bring you seventy-five—eighty carcasses you're saying?

**00:32:18**

**RS:** Well, seventy-five—eighty he'll bring by and take to the processing plant to get them ready.

**00:32:24**

**RF:** Have hogs changed over time from when you were younger to now either fat content or—  
or taste?

**00:32:34**

**RS:** From what I remember, a little bit. You know, I mean, back in the day a lot of people raised their own hogs their way, you know, with stuff that's grown in their garden, vegetables, and stuff they'll feed the hog. And a lot of times now, you got a lot of guys that feed them commercial stuff, you know, stuff to make them grow fast. But, you know, it's—from lately I'm noticing that they're starting to get that old natural look back, you know, that natural look meaning the flavor

is back, the meat is back, the mean has nice color, texture to it and everything, and you're not getting some fat greasy, you know, pig that just doesn't produce a lot of meat.

**00:33:15**

**RF:** And why is that? Is that the—is he—is the farmer doing that? Is he breeding his pigs a certain way again?

**00:33:21**

**RS:** The farmer, he pretty much feeds them—well the average farmer wasn't feeding them real good. They were just throwing that stuff out there and getting them fed and letting them grow just real quick. These—you know, these guys are getting back to the slow process of free-range and letting them roam around and not be cluttered into some iron pen all day long, sweating, panting, you know. But these pigs are—are ranging all over the place.

**00:33:46**

**RF:** And this is even the guy who raises your hogs?

**00:33:47**

**RS:** The guy that raises my hog is—his pigs range, you know, all over the place; they just kind of move around, which is good.

**00:33:56**

**RF:** And what's his name again?

00:33:57

**RS:** This guy, we call him Rabon—that's it. [*Laughs*]

00:33:58

**RF:** How do you spell that?

00:34:00

**RS:** R-a-b-o-n. Yeah; Rabon Farms, yeah.

00:34:04

**RF:** Rabon Farms, and so has—is he changing his processes, like is—you said they're more free-ranging; are they more free-ranging at his farm now than they were a decade ago?

00:34:14

**RS:** Well he's basically been old-school. It's very old-school. That's what I like about this guy. You know, he's old-school; he's not into all of that changing up and to—to catch up with technology and all that stuff. And—and that's what makes his meat good, I think.

00:34:30

**RF:** So it sounds—I mean we're using words like *local*, *sustainable*, *free-ranging*; these are words you see every day on TV, in the media, in every food magazine. What do you think about that, because it sounds like Rabon has been doing this for a long time? You said he—he does things old-school. Your father has been doing it for a long time. And it continues. What do you think about this wave of these words going—?

**00:35:01**

**RS:** Again, the world has finally woke up. You know, I mean we—we—at one point we weren't dealing with Rabon and you could see the difference in hogs. You could see the difference in the—in the yield. And once we got back to him and knew that we were getting our hogs from him, you know, it was a big difference in the yield. Everything is a whole lot better; a lot of compliments on the barbecue, you know, as opposed to back then.

**00:35:29**

**RF:** So people could taste a difference?

**00:35:32**

**RS:** Yes; yes, obviously so. And you can—we can see the difference and taste the difference in the hogs.

**00:35:38**

**RF:** So you're talking textural? You can see a texture difference?

**00:35:40**

**RS:** Texture difference, meat difference; you know, you got a ham that's really a ham. It's nice meat content on it, nice color, nice flavor, all that good stuff.

**00:35:52**

**RF:** And for those who have been following you recently we know that you—and you mentioned this earlier that you—you work with this kind of all-star team called the Fatback Collective.

**00:36:04**

**RS:** Fatback Collective, right.

**00:36:06**

**RF:** And so you're using sometimes these heritage breed hogs.

**00:36:10**

**RS:** Yeah.

**00:36:11**

**RF:** What do you think about those?

**00:36:13**

**RS:** The heritage breed is—my first time cooking with heritage breeds was last year. We did the Mangalitsa, aka the Wooley Pig, and it's—it's a—a heritage pig from Spain that's been brought back to America. His fat content is—is very thick and his—his meat color is dark. It's a great-tasting pig; I mean, you can pretty much roast him by his self and he's—you can—he's tasty by his self, no sauce, no anything.

**00:36:43**

**RF:** And did you roast it the same way, barbecue it the same way?

**00:36:47**

**RS:** Yeah; we did one the same way. Mostly the Fatback Collective we change our style up and do four hours down and—and we finished him on his back for roughly sixteen hours. But just having him belly down like we do here has—has been pretty good as well. You know, he—you have to of course peel some of the fat out because we do open pits, but other than that he's a great pig, great flavor.

**00:37:14**

**RF:** So I mean it sounds like, you know, I've talked heritage breed pigs with other barbecue guys, and sometimes they welcome the idea but it sounds like you're already kind of happy with the hogs you get.

**00:37:28**

**RS:** Yeah; and—and we—we've done several hogs like that and it's been great. You know, the—the—the flavor whether you rub it or do it the way we do with a sauce has just been great, great pig. And, you know, it's indescribably different than what the average pig you see will be. He's more of a large pig around the shoulders and a little smaller around the—the hind legs. But he—he's a great pig.



**00:37:58**

**RF:** Rabon; did—when you started buying your pigs from him did your price point go up? Did it change for those pigs because it sounds like they're—they're better farmed pigs? Are they more expensive pigs?

**00:38:09**

**RS:** Not necessarily more expensive but, you know, like I said he's old-school so he's not into all of that hype about this, that, and the other. And he—he grows his pig the way people used to grow them back around here. And—and like I said, it's obvious because you can see it in the meat. And some other commercial farmers that we have dealt with, you know, we get their hogs and it's dry or it's not enough meat, the ribs just kind of disappear, you know; it's just different.

**00:38:37**

**RF:** Okay; so we have our—we have our wood, we have our, you know, our trees cut up, we have our hogs slaughtered. And let's talk about starting a—a day. So which is the—what day is the first day you start a fire or you fire pigs here?

**00:38:54**

**RS:** The first day we start a fire will be Tuesday evening, which will be pretty much late, around 9:00 at night and then we'll roast until—for Wednesday morning. And we're open on Wednesday until 6:00 p.m. And we'll start again Wednesday afternoon around four o'clock for Thursday morning and again Thursday morning—Thursday night for Friday. So, we start pretty much on Tuesday evening and the fire doesn't go out until Saturday afternoon.

**00:39:22**

**RF:** And how often do you fire the hogs once they're on the grill?

**00:39:26**

**RS:** Every ten—fifteen minutes according to the weight on the hog and how hot the pit is when we start them. It's usually every ten to fifteen minutes on average.

**00:39:37**

**RF:** And have you talked to other pit masters either on your Fatback Collective team or other pit masters you've—you've met along the way? Have you talked about the differences in firing a pig?

**00:39:50**

**RS:** We have talked about it, but it's never been a serious discussion because we feel like everybody can hold their own as far as how they do their pigs. And, you know, what you do is what you do and what, you know, is pretty much what, you know. And we share ideas, but other than that it's never been a major discussion, just a kind of a mention.

**00:40:10**

**RF:** So every—every fifteen minutes, and which is—is more often than a lot of places we visit—do you shovel—do you know is it—or how many shovelfuls of coal about do you put under a pig or—?

**00:40:25**

**RS:** Well, we never really count the shovelful of coals [*Laughs*] and we're more of a touchy-feely type of cook, you know, with—with open fire. So what we'll do is we'll fire them up and kind of check them, hold our hands over the fire to make sure that it's not too hot or it's not—it needs more heat, so it's—it's not an accurate count on how many shovels. It's just a—a touchy-feely type of thing.

**00:40:50**

**RF:** Okay; and is there a technique of shoveling? Is there a certain way you scatter the coals or placement?

**00:40:57**

**RS:** Yes; first of all stay away from the burn barrel because it gets hot and you want to put it under the shoulders and the hams only, and you do that for twelve hours.

**00:41:06**

**RF:** And do you—so there's no really technique of scattering and just dumping the shovel?

**00:41:14**

**RS:** Pretty much taking it and you want to scatter it. You want—you want to let—make sure it's leveled across the ham and the shoulders. And—and that's pretty much the overall technique. You don't want to put any in the middle because that's the most tender part of the pig, so all the heat that penetrates from the back and the front meets in the middle of the hog without burning the tender parts like the ribs and the belly.

**00:41:35**

**RF:** And last night we saw a gentleman, he had a large flashlight and he'd get kind of under the pit and—and check. What was he checking for?

**00:41:43**

**RS:** He was double-checking the belly and the ribs to make sure they weren't too dark because this is something you want to do after about four hours. You want to kind of keep a good eye on what you're doing because you start them hot, and because you start them so hot that you—again you don't want any heat under the ribs, any heat under the belly area, because that heat is going to penetrate into the middle and kind of start to cook that are by itself, without putting anything under it.

**00:42:09**

**RF:** What does it do? Does it—I mean it gets—the meat gets too tough, too dry?

**00:42:12**

**RS:** Well the meat can get burnt, a little charred where you can't eat it, and we like to give it a little color, a little char, but not burn it.

**00:42:22**

**RF:** And we're talking about burning and—and fire. I was very surprised to learn that you've never had a major pit fire, which everyone—I've been to dozens of places and done these interviews and every single place has. Why?

00:42:47

**RS:** We have had our share of pit fires.

00:42:49

**RF:** Oh, you have. Oh, someone said the place has never lost the place—you have had a fire?

00:42:52

**RS:** Yes; we have. We have had pit fires. And we—we've learned to kind of coat the walls with metal. That slows down in the—in the beginning of a pit fire. We've also learned to kind of keep an eye on our hogs when we're firing them. And, of course, keep a safe extinguisher close by, in our case it's vinegar. Plain vinegar and it will take a fire right out without chances of an extra blaze or anything. So wherever you see that fire starting to pick up you can take a little vinegar and shake over that fire. This way you don't ruin your pig. You still get a chance to—to eat this pig if you save it, as opposed to dusting it with an extinguisher and it's ruined and you can't eat it. So we—we take the safe route first with vinegar and keep a close eye. *[Laughs]*

00:43:40

**RF:** But have you ever lost a building or a group of pigs cooking at once?

00:43:46

**RS:** We've lost three buildings total and we—we rebuilt it back. The first time it burnt it took us a week. We lost it again. The last time it burnt we cleaned it up and we had the framework up that day—same day. It burnt that morning early and we were right back on it having the framework up but before dark.

00:44:05

**RF:** All right; yeah. Someone knocked on wood and said it's never happened, so—. [*Laughs*]

00:44:08

**RS:** You can't—you can't get past it until you've had a fire.

00:44:11

**RF:** Okay.

00:44:12

**RS:** It's like riding a motorcycle. Once you fall, you know, you can ride. Once you burn a building down you know you can cook a hog. [*Laughs*]

00:44:19

**RF:** And tell me about the pits. How—you kind of have two areas. You have an area behind the fire pits which is kind of an L-shaped and then you have a full building structure. Which one is older?

00:44:33

**RS:** The building structure is older. We did those—well we reconstruct our pits every few years. The pits are well over thirty years old and we—they're made out of brick—I mean mortar and cinderblock. And we have—the pits are dug out in the bottom and filled with sand and covered with tin so that the grease absorbs into the sand, and every so many years we dig those out and

redo them and reapply sand to them. So they're basically cinderblock, a little brick in the bottom, and sand.

**00:45:07**

**RF:** Okay; and so how old are the pits behind that building?

**00:45:10**

**RS:** The pits behind that building are approximately—they have to be at least fifteen years old. They're more of a metal and used mostly in overflow, overflow meaning Christmas holidays, Thanksgiving, any holidays where we need to cook more than fourteen hogs. Then we would move onto the pits that you see out back in the L-shape.

**00:45:31**

**RF:** So how many hogs did you do for today's service which is—we're about two weeks from July 4<sup>th</sup>, so kind of building up to the summer months? How many hogs did you do today?

**00:45:42**

**RS:** Today, we did eight hogs for today's service. And we did—we do eight on an average usually throughout the run of a week, to the next day we may do ten; it all depends on our orders as well as somebody is asking for a whole hog and wants to purchase a whole hog. So on an average it's about eight.

**00:46:05**

**RF:** And during the holidays how much does that change?

**00:46:06**

**RS:** It changes quite a bit. It may average fourteen to twenty-five a day; it all depends on which holiday and how much demand is, you know, requested through an order.

**00:46:16**

**RF:** Twenty-five hogs a day.

**00:46:18**

**RS:** Twenty five at the most; yeah.

**00:46:20**

**RF:** Okay; so how many can you do in a Christmas week? And I looked it up; Christmas Day is Tuesday this year—25<sup>th</sup> is Christmas Day. So I asked your Uncle Sam what that means and—you tell me what that means.

**00:46:34**

**RS:** Nothing; we don't—

**00:46:38**

**RF:** How many hog will you do that week, the week leading up to Christmas?

**00:46:40**

**RS:** The week leading up to Christmas we average about 125, so that's about an average. You know, we've done as many as over 200, so it's hard to say. That Christmas week may be 100—



125 and Christmas and New Year's we may go up as far as 210, total for the week. It all depends, you know, sales and—and orders.

**00:47:07**

**RF:** Okay; so we've—we have the wood, we have the hogs, we've talked about the cooking process. When a hog is done what do you do?

**00:47:15**

**RS:** You feel it.

**00:47:16**

**RF:** How do you feel it? What do you feel?

**00:47:18**

**RS:** You take your hand and you touch the ham—

**00:47:20**

**RF:** Bare hand or with the glove?

**00:47:22**

**RS:** Bare hand if you can stand it; bare is better but usually a glove is—if you're sensitive, and you can touch the back and if the skin separates from the meat you'll get a little flex in the skin. You touch it, it'll—it'll flex in and it'll flex right back out and then it's like a pucker to it. And

that's when you know that meat is done. A lot of folks like to take the—the knuckle on the end of the leg and twist it around and if that bone twists around it's done.

**00:47:50**

So, you have the—that technique which is the one that we use—just touchy-feely, and then after it's done we flip it over. Once we flip it over we apply a little more heat to it and we start to add our dry seasonings, our salt, peppers, and our sauce and we let it sit there for fifteen—twenty minutes and then we kind of move on and let it sit for a few minutes, take it off, and we start serving.

**00:48:16**

**RF:** And at one point—I watched this process—at one point you—you kind of—you take a spoon right and tell me what you do with that.

**00:48:25**

**RS:** We take the spoon and kind of break it up to kind of let the sauce work its way all the way through to the skin. We—we prefer to let it go through and marinade real good so that all the meat on the hog is flavored as opposed to some guys who don't break it up at all, and all your seasoning is going to do is sit on the top. So instead of just that meat on the top with the flavor we like for the sauce to work its way through and go all the way down to the skin.

**00:48:51**

**RF:** And is this—the way you're doing barbecue—is it a certain style? Is it your style? Is it a regional style? It's certainly not a State style, because there's many styles in the State. So how would you describe it?

**00:49:04**

**RS:** Well, I wouldn't say it's my style. Growing up in this area I've seen quite a few guys cook it the same way that we do so I would have to say that this area's style of barbecue, which is whole hog over wood coals. And I—I can't personally claim it to say it's my style but it's—it's the style that I've grown and—and I like.

**00:49:27**

**RF:** And that—well how big is this area that you see this?

**00:49:30**

**RS:** This area is not very big. I haven't heard the last census but somebody said it was about thirty people in the town but I doubt that; it's bigger than that, you know. But we—we—we're a pretty small area but kind of widespread.

**00:49:47**

**RF:** And the style that you said you've seen other guys do it, is it they also break up the meat, they also—? Do they have a similar sauce? Do they not chop the meat? Do they do kind of the same things you do? I mean this is—people doing this at home I'm guessing.

**00:50:01**

**RS:** The ones I've seen, they pretty much will add their sauce to it. Some guys prefer just to pour it on and then you got some guys that will kind of sop it on like we do with a mop. And, you know, I haven't seen a lot of guys cooking it one-on-one but that's about the average style that they use in this area, just—just kind of mopping it on. They might break it up just a little bit but most of the time they pour it right across the top.

**00:50:27**

**RF:** And is the way you do it—is it the exact same way your father did it, the way you learned?

**00:50:30**

**RS:** The exact same way; yes.

**00:50:33**

**RF:** His uncle taught him?

**00:50:35**

**RS:** Exactly; same—same exact way that my uncle taught my dad and my dad showed me.

**00:50:40**

**RF:** Have you ever made any just the slightest of variations in cooking or anything?

**00:50:47**

**RS:** No; the only one thing I did to speed up the process where we would season one hog at a time, I kind of sped it up to four at a time, so I have like two on each side of me that I kind of keep up with and I'll do two here and two there. And that's usually when I'm very busy around the holidays. Other than that it averages two at a time that I do and that's just to make sure that the production is on time and you don't lose track and burn anything.

**00:51:15**

**RF:** And let's talk about the sauce. We know you mop the hogs with the sauce. How would you describe the sauce? And tell me about flavor profile. Tell me about the color of the sauce; you know, without telling me everything in the sauce, but tell me about the sauce.

**00:51:29**

**RS:** The sauce is vinegar and pepper based which is pretty common here in the South Carolina Pee Dee region and we use ground red pepper in it, vinegar, love, lemons, some more love, and we put it on the stove and stir the love. *[Laughs]*

**00:51:50**

**RF:** Okay; you know, I've watched a couple people in the process of making the sauce today. What are they looking for? I mean they were stirring it over an open flame. What do they look for—color, thickness, consistency; when is the sauce done?

**00:52:09**

**RS:** Well, [*Laughs*] that's a little secret because the technique is part of our secret and we—we—we were stirring it just to make sure that every—the pepper doesn't stick in the bottom, so the stir is pretty much necessary and, you know, it's done pretty much after a little while—let's just say a little while.

**00:52:30**

**RF:** And what are the spice levels in that sauce?

**00:52:33**

**RS:** It's a little spicy; it has a little kick to it, just a little—not too hot but hot enough to know that you had it. You know, you can get it hot if you want, but on an average it's just a little mild and a little tiny kick to it. I think it's a little kick. A lot of people think it's kind of hot. But it's pretty good.

**00:52:53**

**RF:** Okay; so what did you mean you can get it hot? You can actually make it hotter?

**00:52:58**

**RS:** If—because it's pepper based, you know, if it sits and settles the pepper is going to be out of your way when you dip it off the top, as opposed to if you stir it up real, real good you'll get all of those peppers in with that sauce and it'll be a little thicker and it'll make your food a little hotter.

**00:53:15**

**RF:** And it's the only—the only time the sauce is put on the meat is when it was still on the grill in the cavity?

**00:53:22**

**RS:** Exactly; and afterwards if we're pulling it and putting it together on the table that's when we tend to add a little bit more just to keep it nice and moist.

**00:53:34**

**RF:** And so in what ways is the barbecue served here? How can you order it?

**00:53:38**

**RS:** You can order it by the sandwich. You can order it by the pound. You can order it by the half hog, whole hog; those are pretty much average ways that we order it here.

**00:53:46**

**RF:** And who—who is your customer base? Wait; do we need to take a break? Tell me about your customer base; who—who comes in here?

**00:54:00**

**RS:** We get everybody from the local farmer to tourists. We get a lot of visitors from the Myrtle Beach area, North Charleston, Charleston area, North Carolina; a lot of passer-byers who have heard word of mouth of what we do. And we—it's—it's a wide variety of people. You know, we

get Hispanics here. We get blacks here. We get whites, you know. They—they just basically flow in to just to taste whatever we're doing here.

**00:54:33**

**RF:** And we've been hanging out here for over twelve hours—fifteen, eighteen hours here. And we've seen a lot of people just stop by even when there was no barbecue available, they'd stop by and talk. Tell me about that. It seems to be this kind of meeting place, this rallying point. Tell me about Scott's Bar-B-Que as a place.

**00:54:55**

**RS:** Well, Scott's Bar-B-Que a place: it's a business as well as a little place that a lot of our friends and customers tend to stop by if it's just to ask for barbecue or some just come just to hang out, especially in the wintertime. When you have a big fire in the back, you know, you get a little bit company that comes through to warm by the fire, and, you know, we get a lot of people going to work. They'll just stop just to say hello. A lot of people come by just to kick it with us to tell stories; ninety-percent of them might not be true, but, you know, we share stories. And it's just that—it's just been that kind of place for years. Even with the bench up front they'll just come up and take a seat and—and just watch the cars and tell stories.

**00:55:39**

**RF:** And there's also—I mean you're selling fruits and vegetables here too on—on the front—on the front porch. Tell me about that. Where do these—where does this produce come from?



**00:55:50**

**RS:** Well most—some of it comes from our garden that—that we can grow. And some from the local Farmers Market which in Florence. And we—we—it's mostly a variety in the beginning of the season of the Farmers Market along with some of our stuff. But later on in the year our watermelons start to grow and we sell our own watermelons and butter beans and stuff like that grow—we grow in our garden right across the street. And we tend to—you know, if we harvest enough we tend to sell it.

**00:56:20**

**RF:** And who—who does the gardening? Is there a main gardener?

**00:56:23**

**RS:** My dad. [*Laughs*] I do not have a green thumb. But my dad and my son helps him, Dominic, and, you know, he—he may get one or two people to help him out in the garden, like Ray Field will help him plant, you know, hoe, or—or plow the garden, that kind of thing.

**00:56:42**

**RF:** Is—is gardening a big passion for your father—farming and gardening?

**00:56:45**

**RS:** Yes; very much so. Gardening is a big passion for my dad and he loves to do it.

**00:56:55**

**RF:** Okay; so we're talking about your customers and business. You were featured in *The New York Times* in 2009. And then you were—you were—you got—you were featured in a lot of places after that. You get invited to places. You just got to cook in New York. What has changed? What—tell me how you feel about that?

**00:57:18**

**RS:** Well, the only thing that's changed is we got a few more customers that come through. We're basically still the same, same old country attitude, same old country style of cooking. We—we pretty much try to acknowledge everybody that comes in to—to kind of say, "Hello, glad to have you." But overall we're basically the same. And—and of course our hog count kind of increased a little bit, so that's a good thing, but other than that it's been the same place.

**00:57:47**

**RF:** And by a few more customers you mean a lot more customers, right? I mean is—

**00:57:50**

**RS:** Right. *[Laughs]* Quite a few more customers have came; yeah.

**00:57:54**

**RF:** I mean when did it change from cooking? I mean you said when you started out, and your uncle told us this too, when you started out it was one pig. And you'd only be open or selling barbecue once a week, right?

**00:58:08**

**RS:** Right.

**00:58:10**

**RF:** When did it change from one pig to eight pigs, three or four times a weekend?

**00:58:17**

**RS:** Well um, I'd have to say it had to have been in the '80s, the mid-'80s when things started to change and we would do anywhere from two to four—four to six and, you know, it just kept on increasing as the years went. And up to the point now where it averages eight to ten a night.

**00:58:37**

**RF:** And is it part of—why is that or is it a bunch of factors?

**00:58:42**

**RS:** Well—

**00:58:43**

**RF:** That steady increase?

**00:58:47**

**RS:** The steady increase has been pretty much—well, my personal belief is a lot of folks in this area don't stay in this area because it's so small and it's not a lot of jobs here. But you have family that comes home and takes barbecue back to stranger areas and—and they tend to like

what they taste, which would push the demand for ever whoever brought it to them to come back and get more. So that one person that took a pound back to their job in DC and shared it with some workers and that worker said well, bring me a pound back, it may be three—four pounds out of that one person that's going back. So when you—when you get that four or five times it totals up to another whole hog before you know it.

**00:59:25**

And I'm thinking that because nobody stays here and they take this pork—this pork back to these strange areas, they enjoy it so much they send for it. And we get a lot of people saying I got to take nine pounds to my workers, four pounds to my—my nurse and her staff, you know, that kind of thing. So, I'm thinking that kind of led to some of the increase.

**00:59:48**

**RF:** I mean in many ways Scott's Bar-B-Que has put Hemingway on the map, at least to me. Do you agree with that?

**00:59:59**

**RS:** Yes. *[Laughs]*

**01:00:00**

**RF:** Okay; and how do you feel about that? I mean this is a very small town. I mean I did look up the—the demographics yesterday and Wikipedia listed it as just over 500 people; that was in the 2000 census. So I mean this is a place on the map, people know where Hemingway, South

Carolina is and there's, you know, a lot less than 1,000 people here. How does that—how do you feel about that?

**01:00:21**

**RS:** I feel great, you know, to let everybody know that this town is not forgotten. This town is not some little small hick town that you just stop to get gas and take a bathroom break. You know, it's kind of like—it's a football team and I have the ball and I'm getting ready to score for this whole area which is—Hemingway is the team and, you know, I feel proud about telling people where I'm from when I go places and let them know that Hemingway does exist. You know, it's not forgotten. It's not like I said an oasis for you to stop and get gas. You know, this is an actual town that wants to grow and be known again.

**01:00:58**

**RF:** And how—I mean you've called the food old school; you've called it old Southern cooking but recently you've been sharing pits and kitchens with people who have gone to cooking schools, who win James Beard Awards, who own restaurants where a plate of food costs \$40. How do you feel about sharing not just a stage, but you're actually sharing a kitchen right or you're sharing a workspace with these people? How—how does that make you feel?

**01:01:36**

**RS:** Great; I mean because once again most of them are in my group the Fatback Collective and you have the—the kitchen chefs and culinary students mixing with pitmasters and again my group is all about teaching and—and inspiring. And for somebody in the kitchen to let you know

that, you know, if you take your pork and do it this way; it may taste a little better and see what you think as opposed to you telling them again, “Hey, what if you take it and put—take that and put it on the grill and try it.” You know, we—we learn from each other and we teach each other; it’s an ongoing process. It’s no big egos. There’s no “I’m better than you.” There’s always a hand pulling somebody up and never putting anybody down. And that’s a big plus mixing with guys who—guys and girls who have been to culinary school. They teach you how to portion your stuff out, things that I never knew and they—and then they teach you how—they learn from us how to do a whole hog, things that they never really experienced. So we go hand-in-hand on learning and making the food world better.

**01:02:35**

**RF:** And I want to ask a question about—your son works here; tell me his name and age.

**01:02:44**

**RS:** Dominic, he’s seventeen and he’s my oldest son. I have one more, Jordan that’s nine. He lives in Atlanta, but whenever they’re here they help out as much as possible. You know, him being a teenager you know how that goes; they tend to work a little bit, be lazy a little bit, but, you know, he’s been showing up pretty good lately.

**01:03:03**

**RF:** So he—I mean, he’s seventeen; he’s at the age exactly when you kind of knew this was your place, you knew what you were doing, and felt really comfortable as you described it. What

—or how was he—is he being groomed, is he being encouraged to participate more? What is his role both now and in the future?

**01:03:24**

**RS:** Well, you know, he pretty much grew up into the business, so, you know, he knows a lot of what's—what goes on—on an average and, you know, for the future I've been pretty much letting him know that, you know, this is—he has other dreams like playing basketball, professional basketball. And I told him, you know, “Go for it; there's nothing you can't do.” And, you know, “In between, if you're not playing basketball and say you're in the off-season,” you know, “come on back and let's smoke some hogs and do what we got to do,” you know. “Kind of push this product out there.”

**01:03:54**

**RF:** And tell me; we've met—you know, I've met almost everyone who has worked here over the past two days. A lot of them are family. What is the importance of that?

**01:04:03**

**RS:** Well that's how it started because that's pretty much what we could afford. And, you know, with everything going in a positive way we kind of stuck to it. You know, we—we—you know, if it ain't broke don't fix it, so we kind of—instead of trying to change up everything, we discipline—we tried to discipline our acts and our behaviors to a point where we can, you know, advance the business further. So, it's tough dealing with family but we all kind of get along well enough

to—to give everybody that small critique on keeping everything in order and going along smoothly.

**01:04:35**

**RF:** And, I mean, everyone seems to—it works very fluidly. I mean, there's no one—we were here last night and there was no one telling anyone what to do. I mean, I know everyone has been doing this for a long time, but it was very fluid. It was—it seemed to work really well even without, you know, a boss, you know.

**01:04:55**

**RS:** Yeah.

**01:04:56**

**RF:** Why; how? And I say this because I'm interested in families running restaurants. You know, that's my background and it didn't work. Why—how does it work here; why does it work?

**01:05:07**

**RS:** Well everybody pretty much knows their role and everybody knows if you go ahead and do your work it'll be done. So, you know, we get—we get a little lazy every now and again and but ninety-percent of the time everybody knows what to do. They know what's next. They kind of keep things going and then they see that goes over smoothly—smoother that way so they kind of stick to it. So, you know, it—it works out pretty good thank goodness because it can be hard dealing with family in a business.



**01:05:34**

**RF:** We—maybe just a few more questions; what—why is barbecue important? Why is it important, maybe not to this community, but historically? You've been—and—and culturally and for America, because you have been cooking your barbecue in more and more places, which is really interesting. Why is barbecue important? What does barbecue mean?

**01:06:06**

**RS:** Barbecue means a lot to me and I think it's obvious that it means a lot to a lot of people because, you know, how many decks can you find without a barbecue grill on it? You know, how many places can you go in a park and not see a barbecue grill? And how many parties that you go to that doesn't have a barbecue grill? So barbecue kind of plays an important part in again, parties, reunions, weddings, gatherings; if it's just a Super Bowl party, you know, there's something on the grill and you just—it's just indescribably one of those things that touch mostly in families and—and block parties, communities, things like that. It's always usually centered around a grill, which they're barbecuing or grilling. You know, overall for me it's barbecue. Grilling, barbecuing—the same difference for me, but I think that barbecue is very important because it brings people together. And that's been my, you know—my thought from the start and it's—it's never changed.

**01:07:10**

**RF:** So is there hope in barbecue?

**01:07:12**

**RS:** A whole lot of hope in barbecue. It's not going anywhere. I'm starting to see things like Barbecue Nation, Barbecue Season, you know, Barbecue Remixes on Underground CDs, you know, you see this kind of thing and—and people are saying more and more about barbecue. And if you go to your local hardware store, chances are there's a barbecue grill somewhere out front for sale. And it's all over the place. You can't—can't live without it.

**01:07:38**

**RF:** So, I mean we know barbecue is not going anywhere but is there—is there a—can barbecue do more now or can it do more in the future than it does now? Can—can barbecue be like a—a greater thing, a bigger hope? Does that make sense?

**01:07:58**

**RS:** Yeah; I think so. It can—it can because here—here are those folks that don't eat fried food, example, but they want—they love their chicken. They don't have to necessarily crank up the oven. They can go outside and barbecue it on the grill or whatever. And I feel like with these health conscious people that don't want fried food that will be another option for them to barbecue. So I feel like it's going to continuously go on and on and on, you know, nonstop.

**01:08:25**

**RF:** I'm struck with—I mean the way you talk about barbecue it reminds me of the way people talk about art or education that it is—or family and religion for sure is that it does—it unites

people. Tell me about that. Where is barbecue's place in, you know, what we do, who we are, what we make of ourselves?

**01:08:50**

**RS:** Smack dab in the middle [*Laughs*]; smack dab in the middle, because, you know, for me with the traveling of—of doing barbecue and going places and doing different barbecues in different regions, you know, like I said, it's all centered right there in the middle. You cannot know who this person is; if he sees your grill smoking he's coming over there maybe to ask a question or somebody is going to know what's going on. So I feel like it's right in the center of everything.

**01:09:19**

**RF:** And maybe I want to bring this back to community. We started with—started this conversation with community talking about the Easter Saturday celebration here and about your family working here. But also your—your definition of barbecue wasn't about food; it was about communion.

**01:09:38**

**RS:** Yeah; right.

**01:09:41**

**RF:** So how—maybe I just want you to say more; how does food do that? How does barbecue do that maybe on a deeper level, how do you think because I don't know or what do you think

—? You're participating in more and more organizations centered around food too. But you've also been doing this all your life, right, so before you were a member of the Southern Foodways, who we both represent, right, and I work for, you were doing very Southern Foodways Alliance type events in your own backyard, across the street. What is the importance of food on a bigger level?

**01:10:20**

**RS:** Wow; food is very important and food is very necessary. I mean, you know, you—you got to eat throughout the day and, you know, be it whatever you choose—if it's a burger or whatever, you know, it's your choice, but food is very important to me. And—and like I said, my whole life has been barbecue. I grew up doing it, you know, hanging around it, and hanging around other people that do it. And there's just, to me, no other way to bring people in quicker. I mean you can—you can throw a pizza on the table and bring in some folks as well but you—when you got that barbecue, you know, there's more than just a few slices there, you know, that's an example of —“There's quite a bit of poundage of meat there on that whole hog. “Oh, we can go over there and I'm pretty sure we can get a taste.” And—and the aroma, oh my goodness; the aroma of barbecue is indescribably good. And—and it strikes the curiosity of whoever smells it to once again meet somebody and join in and kind of see what they're doing. It's like a beacon sign; it just draws them right in there.

**01:11:27**

**RF:** A couple people I've talked to doubt—some people don't doubt, but a few doubt that whole-hog barbecue will continue to exist. They think that barbecue will be around forever in the

United States, but that whole hog barbecue, because of a host of reasons, like it's just damn hard work, the economics of it, that it might disappear. What are your feelings on that?

**01:11:52**

**RS:** In the words of Sam Jones, "Everybody has a right to be wrong." [*Laughs*]

**01:11:59**

**RF:** So, you talk about this with someone like Sam who does the exact or does whole-hog barbecue in different ways but he does barbecue over wood.

**01:12:05**

**RS:** Yes, exactly. And—and it's going to stick around. It's been here this long and it—and it's not necessarily necessary but it's interesting. It's an interest for a lot of people to see a whole hog on a fire, so I'm sure it's going to be around for a while.

**01:12:23**

**RF:** So when you get together with someone like Sam Jones and the others and you're having a beer, I don't know if Sam drinks but when you're having a drink with them or hanging out what do you all talk about?

**01:12:33**

**RS:** [*Laughs*] Oh man, a lot of stuff.

**01:12:38**

**RF:** Do you talk about this? Do you talk about—do you talk about barbecue?

**01:12:42**

**RS:** Not—not to a real deep conversation, but we do talk about barbecue pretty much what event we're at and how we're going to prepare it and our suggestions on whether or not we should add more heat right now or should we just let it simmer, you know, to take it off or close to the time we want it off. But as far as a deep discussion or debate, you know, none of that; yeah, none of that.

**01:13:06**

**RF:** And one more question I want to ask. You said Hemingway City promotes or Town promotes itself as *Barbecue Capital of the World*. Well is—were there other barbecue restaurants in the area or are there?

**01:13:16**

**RS:** Yes; there was Kenny's Barbecue, which is still here. Big D's is still here. And then, you know, there were a few locals here and there that were doing barbecue on the side, you know. I can't remember some of the names but it was quite a few of them, but right now in the town that I know of there's Kenny's, there's Big D's, and then there's us, Scott's.

**01:13:41**

**RF:** And Kenny's and Big D's do what you do?

**01:13:45**

**RS:** I think they don't. I'm not positive on exactly how they cook it but, you know, I haven't seen a burn barrel in their backyard, you know, just—just compared to what we do. You know, we're cutting wood all over the place and if they're using wood I don't see it. You know, maybe they are and I just can't see it from where I am, but, you know, here out of the three we're the only place that has wood stacked around it, you know, a burn barrel, and a fire going open wide open that you can see it from the road. So if they are I'm not sure.

**01:14:21**

**RF:** All right; and I want to ask—can we go a little longer? Okay; I want to ask a question and we can totally redact this when it appears. It won't appear online until September or October on the SFA's website or we could just shut off if you don't want to talk about it, but you're about to make a move, a major move. Can we talk about that? Can I ask you about that—your feelings on that?

**01:14:46**

**RS:** Well, I feel pretty good about it.

**01:14:48**

**RF:** Can you say what it is?

**01:14:50**

**RS:** Well, we're in the process now of trying to open another Scott's Bar-B-Que, Rodney Scott's Bar-B-Que, down in Charleston with the hopes that this would convene some of the Charleston

travelers to get a chance to taste the love that we provide to this community and to let them experience our wood burning and the way that we do barbecue here in this region. And we get a lot of visitors from Charleston and we would rather, you know, them not travel so far to taste it if we could. And the opportunity pretty much presented itself and we decided to take a crack at it.

**01:15:26**

**RF:** And what is the importance of keeping things exactly the same?

**01:15:28**

**RS:** Driving everything down there, taking our wood down there, we're going to cook our hogs the same way down there. It's exactly the same as what we're shooting for. Of course there's has —there's going to have to be some changes in dining maybe and maybe beer or something may be served at that particular one. But overall we're going to try to stick with the same pit style, same wood style, and hopefully set it up to where folks can see us flipping a hog from their dining table, you know, that type of thing—more of a barbecue joint, you know, instead of the roadside setup like what we got here.

**01:16:09**

**RF:** And what is your hope to do to or for Charleston people and community?

**01:16:15**

**RS:** Influence them to enjoy it all over again, because my whole attitude around barbecue is to relax and forget about everything throughout the day and relax and enjoy yourself. And I hope to



influence them to do that and for them to understand that this is a place that you can come. You don't have to have on your jacket, your tie; you can come and sit in and enjoy some barbecue and good conversation, friends, and—and a beer maybe, you know, that kind of thing.

**01:16:39**

We—we hope to let them see that. You don't have go quite as far, all the way to Hemingway like you used to and—and hopefully that we can let everybody in the community learn something new about how we split our woods, the types of wood we use, how the wood flavors the barbecue, you know, that kind of thing.

**01:17:00**

**RF:** You just called barbecue relaxing. Is it relaxing to—it's relaxing to eat, I know; is it relaxing to prepare, the process?

**01:17:08**

**RS:** Oh no, no relaxing in preparing; you know, you—it's all hard work. You got to cut the wood, get it in, and chop it up but, you know, that—leave that to us. We'll put that hard work in so that you can relax and enjoy it once you get your hands on our barbecue.

**01:17:22**

**RF:** So maybe we'll wrap up on this. The hard work, we've—we've seen it but I'll never know what it actually feels like even though—

**01:17:34**

**RS:** It hurts; it hurts. *[Laughs]*

**01:17:36**

**RF:** Right; so how—it hurts. What makes it all worth, if it hurts, if all the sweat and pain, 100-degree temperatures, what makes it all worth it in the end?

**01:17:46**

**RS:** Repeat customer, to see that same customer come back again and—and say that the first time was great and they want some more, you know, that's a sign that you did your thing. You did your part. You know, it's like winning that big award. I always say, you know, it's bigger than anything to see that repeat customer come back.

**01:18:10**

**RF:** Do you think your father—do you think your father thought that you'd be where you are now?

**01:18:18**

**RS:** I don't think so. I don't think so.

**01:18:20**

**RF:** If he was not such a silent man what do you think he would say?

**01:18:25**

**RS:** *[Laughs]* I don't know; it's kind of hard to say. I don't know; I mean, he seems to be enjoying everything that's going on. You know, we're continuing at it and doing the best we can and keep up with the demand and—and the customers.

01:18:37

**RF:** And what do you think—you're forty-one now?

01:18:40

**RS:** Forty.

01:18:40

**RF:** You're forty; what would you say to your seventeen year old son?

01:18:46

**RS:** Wow. "If you can carry it on," you know. "Let's—let's take this thing from this point as far as we can." You know, "Whole hog is something unique; it's—it's a good add to a"—like I said, "a group." So, you know, "Continue as much as you can with it—if you choose to."

01:19:08

**RF:** Would you—would you encourage someone to go into this business?

01:19:10

**RS:** Yes; if you want [*Laughs*]*—*if you want to work hard, yeah, definitely. But if you're not too into physical labor or a lot of heat this is not your thing.

01:19:22

**RF:** Okay; I think that's a good place to end. So I want to thank you.

**01:19:25**

**RS:** Thank you.

**01:19:26**

**RF:** Thank you, sir.

**01:19:30**

**[End Rodney Scott — Scott's Bar-B-Que]**