TANYA CAUTHEN
Belmont Butchery, Richmond, Virginia
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Date: December 11, 2012
Location: Belmont Butchery, Richmond, Virginia
Interviewer: Sara Wood
Transcription: Shelley Chance, ProDocs
Length: 1:23
Project: Women, Work & Food in Richmond, Virginia

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Tanya Cauthen: If you don't want people to know don't say it.

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Sara Wood: Exactly; yeah it's all on the record unless you don't want to –

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TC: Yeah; that's fine.

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SW: Okay; so I just have to do this introduction. So I'm Sara Wood for the Southern Foodways Alliance and I'm sitting here with Tanya Cauthen and we're sitting out back in her office. We're in Carytown at the Belmont Butchery on Belmont Avenue. And it's December 11, 2012. And I'm going to have you introduce yourself and tell me who you are and what you're doing right now.

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TC: Yeah; hey, I'm Tanya Cauthen. I own Belmont Butchery. I started Belmont Butchery in October of 2006 and we are a full-service artisan butcher shop in that we cut everything to order for people. Our focus is on local farm-raised meats, but our broader focus is hormone-free, antibiotic-free humanely raised. If somebody wants it I will obviously get it for them but you know kind of—the conventional meats are not our focus.

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We make our own sausages. We do a lot of our own charcuterie. We definitely utilize my chef background in terms of utilization you know using bones for stocks. You know we don't throw things away if we can possibly avoid it. We're probably about 750 square-feet, which is why I also have a smoker out back, a refrigerator out back, my sort of outback office is a garden; so we're sitting in the garden – winter garden full of weeds.

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SW: And Tanya for the record, will you tell me your birth date?

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TC: July 19, 1969. The day they blasted off to the moon.

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SW: That's your birthday?

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TC: Yeah.

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SW: That's incredible.

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TC: Yeah which is why it was funny because I was an aerospace engineering major in college so the big kind of thing was you know it was pre-determined you know from my birth but now the big joke in the butcher shop is well it's not rocket science, so yeah kind of –

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SW: But it sort of is in a way. There's a connection there.

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TC: Yeah; my connection. It makes sense to me.

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SW: Can you just start by maybe talking a little bit about your background, where you're from originally and just you know your interest in food growing up, if you had an interest, just sort of your trajectory of how you got to Richmond?

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TC: Yeah; I'm – I'm a Navy brat. My mother is English; my father is – was an officer in the Navy. They met and married in London back in 1964.

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SW: And what are their names?

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TC: My dad is Hal [Cauthen] and my mother is Marlene [Cauthen]. Dad is a good ole Southern boy. His father was the town barber and he grew up on 200 acres with pigs and cows and all that kind of fun stuff.

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SW: Where was that?

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TC: In Alachua, Florida and it's actually – I was born in Alachua; the family kind of joke or comment is I was made in Japan, born in the USA, but the first place I ever lived was the Philippines. So you know little – little cross-cultural there. But yeah, growing up you know military brat; we moved ever two or three years, so I kind of describe myself as a gregarious introvert in that you can drop me anywhere and I can talk to anybody but when it comes down to it I'm not really a crowd people – you know person, you know kind of "being on" exhausts me

and I get kind of cranky a little bit. That's why I have a very charming husband who helps out with customer service, so when I get cranky he talks to people.

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SW: And what's his name?

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TC: Henry Reedy, yeah, kind of again he – he's a little upset that I didn't change my name but it's on too many pieces of paper. So it's going to be too hard. But yeah; so born in Florida, raised all over the place; when I was a kid, the summers that we moved I would spend with my grandparents on their farm in Florida, so I do really kind have a nice love of the land and tendency you know kind of towards small farms and you know kind of walking out in the field with the cows and kind of you know – kind of wandering through kind of pigs – it's just kind of a normal you know – something I had kind of a natural affinity towards as a kid. And then the summers we didn't move we spent in Europe traveling and eating and sort of learning more about kind of mom's background and – and exploring their interests.

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I was pretty lucky when I was in the – I guess sixth grade; we were living in Sonoma, California. My father was the commanding officer of a military base and my sixth grade teacher had a school-yard garden where we actually built the grow frames and started the seeds and then everybody took home kind of flats of vegetables to their house and had to grow a garden. And when I was a kid, Alice Waters came out and saw our school yard garden because this was probably a good 10-15 years before she did her school yard garden which was much more famous than ours. I didn't know who she was, didn't really care; I just liked gardening and I've always had a garden since, you know since I was in the sixth grade.

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And then we moved back to Virginia. My father was at the Pentagon and then I did high school in Fairfax, and my family has always kind of been food people. We've always traveled by food. My parents will tell you, you know lots of stories about me and you know kind of basically hanging steamship round and eating way too much beef when I was a little kid. So yeah; we've always kind of you know traveled by food as I would say.

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Fast-forward, I went to the University of Virginia as an aerospace engineering major, but I worked in restaurants as a cook as a way to make kind of beer money in college because I don't like people enough to be a waitress. When I decided to take some time off from school the guy who owned the restaurant suggested I join the apprenticeship program and – that would be my husband's truck in the background; his – his brakes – .

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So I worked in a bar as a cook and I joined the apprenticeship program – pause.

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SW: Okay; we were just taking a break because Henry –

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TC: Henry my husband just – my husband just showed up to work. He stopped at an antique store because he went antiquing, so fun – fun little Christmas presents. So I was saying I went to UVA for engineering and when I decided to take some time off from school I was working at a bar as a cook and the owner offered me an opportunity to be his apprentice because he ran the local Chef's Apprenticeship Program through the ACF.

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SW: What was the name of the place where you were working in the kitchen?

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TC: Yeah; it was called the Garrett Public House. I mean it was a dive bar.

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SW: It was in Charlottesville?

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TC: In Charlottesville; yeah in Charlottesville, sorry. So the plan was just to take a semester off from school but I ended up taking some more time and I completed the three-year apprenticeship program in two years because the local chefs decided that there was really no need to slow me down; that my personality was such that if they didn't sort of hurry me through the program I would not succeed. And at the end of the two years I was offered a position in Switzerland as a journeyman, so I moved to Switzerland. I want to say I was maybe 22 years old and –

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SW: What's a journeyman; can you explain that?

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TC: Yeah; so within the European apprenticeship system, an apprentice means that you are in school and you don't know much of anything. A journeyman means that you have sort of completed the school portion and you have basic knowledge, but you are very much still a learning practitioner. And then you have kind of basically within the culinary system kind of your culmese – would be kind of your journeymen but then you have your masters or your sous chef and your chef, so the people who sort of teaching and guiding you, so a journeyman is somebody that is expected to know how to do their job but they still have a lot to learn, so not the lowest on the totem pole but – but not very high up there either.

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So I moved to Switzerland as a journeyman and I don't speak German, French, Swiss; I'm horrible with languages. I was one of 60 cooks, the only American, one of two women and nobody else spoke English for the most part or they would refuse to speak English. So it was not the easiest task in the world. The restaurant where I worked was the Bern Bahnhofbuffet which is part of the Train Station but it's a conference center so the restaurant that I was assigned to we averaged probably about 3,000 covers at lunch and about 1,500 at dinner but the lunch entrée prices started around $30 a head so it was a very fine-dining, everything, a-la-minute, very European brigade where you sort of did a-single task and everything came together to make the plate.

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It was not fun. I learned a lot but it was not fun. It was very much sort of the old-school, hazing, abuse system, you know but as a young person I – you know I figured it out and got along and – and sort of hung in there. And then I spent six months as a vagabond traveling through Europe – Eastern, Western, you know I went through the Baltics, Russia, you know pretty much if I could go I went. And then I had – when I was in France I stayed with Anne Willan and she told me when I was ready that she knew of a restaurant that was opening up in Richmond, Virginia and since I had done high school and college in different parts of Virginia, she figured that was close enough.

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So she recommended me for a job at the Frog and the Redneck when they first opened, so my sister having already moved to Richmond, I moved to Richmond and started working at the Frog and the Redneck; realized very quickly that it was not the place for me – lots of disagreements with the owner and Chef Jimmy Snead so since he's the chef and the owner I left because he wasn't going to.

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SW: And how long were you there for?

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TC: I was probably there for three months; you know enough that I met a lot of really great people. You know the thing I have to give Jimmy credit for in Richmond is he brought a lot of young talented culinary students and recent culinary grads to Richmond and introduced them all to each other and they have been – who have been kind of the next tier to start their own restaurants and kind of take the Richmond culinary scene to the next level. And the fact that we sort of all know each other and have sort of went through as everybody kind of calls it the Frog. We all have sort of a similar attitude about kind of having gone through that experience and it – and it definitely brings people together and builds camaraderie. So I ended up leaving and going to a place called the Red Oak Café where – where I opened it for the owners as executive chef at the ripe old age of I think 23 and a half. It was actually my second executive chef position. But you know my first one was at the ripe old age of 20 where I knew how to cook better than everybody else; that's why I was in charge.

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SW: And can you talk about the Frog and the Redneck and then the Red Oak, what kind of food it was? Was it particular to Richmond?

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TC: Yeah; the Frog and the Redneck at its time kind of in the early '90s was a unique concept in that when he opened the restaurant, Jimmy Snead's concept was the Frog was Jean-Louis Palladin, and the Redneck was sort of Jimmy's redneck, you know kind of background and kind of blending that French Nouvelle cuisine with his southern roots.

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Somewhere in the opening of it there was a falling with Jean-Louis so Jean-Louis was no longer sort of involved in it and it became just more his French culinary background with his

redneck roots. So it was kind of this very upscale Southern food and it was probably one of the – kind of the early runners in you know that style of dining and so he was a sort of celebrity in his own mind versus the Red Oak Café, was kind of outside or Richmond, out in Goochland, so much more of a rural area and I learned very quickly that I couldn't put fancy culinary terms on the menu because nobody would order it and they didn't understand it. So I could still make the food that I made but I had to dummy-down my descriptions and make it a little bit more country-fied. So it was more of just a country café that had high-quality food, you know everything from scratch; loved doing it. Worked myself to death; didn't stay for very long because the wife owner and I were the exact same age and she didn't particularly like me. But she and her husband got divorced six months later, so – kind of it was okay for me.

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SW: And how long were you at the Red Oak for?

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TC: I was there for less than a year, you know kind of because of their marital strife kind of – and being sort of stuck in the middle of all that – opening the restaurant. It was a little awkward. I went on to then open up Capers Catering with my sister, so she decided that she wanted to be Martha Stewart and if everybody was going to make me work too hard and not pay me enough she might as well be the one involved in that so we opened a – a high-end catering company. Again you know the key was just you know good solid cooking from scratch; it definitely had a more European flare to it but I would not say you know it was totally continental cuisine. I was sort of a locavore way before anybody knew what a locavore was in that even at that time I was dealing with local farmers and doing seasonal menus and refused to do asparagus in January. You know I just did food that I liked my way and since I was a catering company I could.

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We did that for three years; had a great time, great reputation, again kind of killed ourselves but because – because of being in business with your big sister it's not the healthiest thing in the world because apparently when you fight with your business partner and your sister you become 10-year olds. So we decided because we have such a small family meaning just my parents and my sister and I, we decided that it just wasn't the best working thing and that I could get a job somewhere else and so could she. So we did.

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But I kind of bounced around for the next 10 years working in different restaurants. I'm really good at opening restaurants, kind of helping conceptualize and really get the systems in place and then I have a tendency to get bored. So I kind of basically would kind of help somebody open a restaurant as a chef and then sort of step out and – and just kind of let the remaining staff kind of take care of the place.

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SW: How come?

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TC: I get bored. I get bored really easily. I – and I guess in some respects I have a little bit of a short attention span where I'm very, very intensive and very focused and sort of when I finish that task, like I just am ready to move on. And that's – I mean that's always sort of been my personality and somewhere along the way I had sort of friend advise me that I should embrace this about myself and stop fighting it because some people are meant to basically be sustainers. They're meant to be that you know that number one right-hand guy who they might – might not be the most creative but you know they're going to show up, you know that they care and you know that they're going to do a good job and then there are other people who it's their job to come up with the crazy idea and figure out how to make it work. And don't expect them to show up on time every day and sort of do the list. And trying to make that type of personality sort of be

inside the box it's only going to work for a few months at a time, maybe a year at a time; so I kind of learned early in my career that it was time to move, it was time to move and if I didn't I would be miserable and everyone around me would be miserable as well. So I learned pretty quickly to embrace the creative side of me and just really focus on you know helping to start new businesses and getting it to a level where I could then go onto the next project.

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And I also had the habit and I think this might be the military background of having moved every two years is that I would then go and travel for a while. **[*Laughs*]** You know so I would work really hard for maybe a year – year and a half and then I would go to Europe for a month and then I would come back and kind of say, "Now what?" But as – as a result I worked at lots of different types of restaurants. You know I've been a food writer, I've run a cooking school, I did kind of basically gourmet-prepared foods at a local natural foods market; you know I've had an opportunity to sort of reinvent different genres of culinary careers kind of all you know through my life. And you know just sort of learn new stuff. I've always been a learn-new-stuff-person; if I have to do the same thing day-to-day [*Laughs*] I – I'm not good.

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So again I was running a cooking – sort of fast-forward I guess it was 2003 – 2004, somewhere around there; I was running a cooking school. That was a very innovative cooking school in that we were 100-percent hands-on. So it wasn't a cooking school that you went to and you watched the chef make stuff. We had stations and the students actually prepared the meals themselves, so every two students had their own station and every – so we, at the end of the thing we would have *16 identical meals* even though nobody's was identical because everybody interprets recipes different which was what was so great about the cooking school is that you could see how with the same written word and the same instructor how much variation there was in the finished product.

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But because Sur La Table opened up literally about a mile and a half down the street this fledgling business just couldn't hold on so I advised the owners to close before we had to close and kind of having been burnt out and just felt horrible out of that situation I took six months and went to Australia and found – found a house sitter for my house and just left the country for a while because I had you know I had been working too much and was feeling just a little burnt out and needed to sort of shake all of that off. So I went to Australia and learned how to scuba dive and did a lot of hiking and ironically in retrospect I spent a lot of time going to butcher shops and hanging out in butcher shops in those travels and I spent six months in Australia and about a month and a half in New Zealand and ended up having to come home because a hurricane had hit Richmond and my house gotten flooded.

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SW: Which hurricane?

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TC: That was Gaston. And so I had to come back and kind of deal with the flooding in my house and it was time to come back to reality because I was kind of broke at that point. So I was working as a food writer because I had been doing that before I left so I kind of just fell back into it for *Richmond Magazine* and was basically just being a freelance chef; you know at this point a bunch of my friends owned their own catering companies or owned their own restaurants so picking up kind of holiday work was pretty easy to help pay the bills, yet give me flexibility to sort of do what I wanted to do and deal with fixing the house. And I was – it was in the spring, I guess late spring or early summer I was working on an article and it was like I don't like two or three in the morning because I'm really bad at deadlines so I was already past the deadline and I had promised I would have it in the next morning. And I'm a TV person and not a radio person so I had the TV on in the background and it was kind of my white noise and I had the *Food*

Network on and Alton Brown said, "Just ask your local butcher to – ." And I turned around to the TV and said, "Oh fuck you."

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And a light bulb went off and literally kind of in that moment I minimized my document and opened up a new one and started banging out a business plan for a butcher shop.

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SW: I want to ask you why – why did you say f-you to Alton Brown?

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TC: Well we don't – there was no butchers in Richmond and there was no you know you watch all these kind of cooking shows and cooking channel things or this was before the *Cooking Channel*; this was *Food Network* – and they're always kind of showing off things that are available in New York or you know LA or some – you know someplace where they have either old-school butchers or they had markets in a way that Richmond, Virginia didn't. So you know it was kind of irritating to have Alton say you know kind of, "Ask your butcher to," where in Richmond you know in the grocery stores they didn't have butchers; they had meat cutters and even if you asked them to cut something they would sort of look at you funny like, "Why are you asking me? That's not what we do."

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And part of it again was because I was working as a food writer it was the first time in a long time I was actually cooking for myself because I always – I wasn't always at a restaurant where I was cooking restaurant food, so I was – you know I was going shopping and was discovering like that a normal person just can't get the same ingredients that a chef has access to. And at least as a chef I could go to another friend's different restaurant and sort of get you know the products I wanted and people just couldn't do that. So I started asking, you know, "Well how do you buy stuff?" And people would say, "Oh, you order online or you go up to DC." And I just

– that – that seemed ridiculous to me. You know so literally sort of in that moment, I – you know I banged out this business plan and then I realized you know it was like five or six in the morning and so I better hurry up and finish the other document that I had promised. So I you know finished that one out and saved everything and went to bed, you know and woke up around noon, you know and went and saw the business plan on the computer and went, "You know that doesn't really suck." And at that point I started you know doing a lot of informational interviews and trying to figure out the viability you know and that was probably like May – June of 2006.

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A friend of mine who owns a catering company was looking for a space to move her catering company and she looked at the space that I'm now in and had decided it wasn't going to work for her. So I asked her if I could take a look that I had an idea, so I took a look and just instantly knew that it was the right place, just it was. So from that moment it was a matter of you know finding funding, you know securing a lease and sort of everything that you've got to do that I wasn't really sure what that everything was. You know I had always helped other people build businesses and even though I had owned a catering company we had never had our own space. We had always used other people's spaces. So a lot of this was very foreign and very new and I guess it was right around my birthday in July of 2006 I actually went to a beach house with a friend for the weekend and kind of had this – you know sort of secondary – it wasn't an epiphany; it was just this little determination. I was reading Julia Child's like biography and realized that she didn't learn how to cook until she was 37 and went onto become a culinary icon.

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I had been cooking for 15 years and that was my 37th birthday and I just wanted to open a butcher shop. So I figured if Julia could become a culinary icon I could open a little butcher shop. And it kind of just gave me that extra little oomph that I needed to kind of say you know, "You can do this." So from there, you know I – I secured money.

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SW: And how did you do that?

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TC: [*Laughs*] I asked anybody and everybody who would listen to me. I mean I literally went around and you know anybody who was a business owner or successful businessperson I asked for the opportunity to do my pitch and basically said, "You may not be interested in investing in me but maybe you know somebody who will so sort of let me tell you my plan and if it sounds interesting tell your friends."

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SW: And how did people react to you when you were telling them this – this plan?

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TC: Once they – once they realized that I truly wasn't necessarily soliciting money from them I got a lot of – early on I got a lot of, "You're crazy." And then when – as people realized that I was serious and I had really kind of done my homework they became very encouraging and were like, "Wow; Richmond could use this. This would be really cool, like I could be your customer."

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And there was a lady – there was a lady, Doctor Hardwig who she actually has opened several businesses and I'm not sure exactly what her background is and she said, "I don't have money for you but I'm going to make an appointment at the bank that I bank with that I have borrowed money from and tell the bank president he should talk to you." So it turns – so you know I go to the appointment and it turns out that he had eaten my food at a restaurant I had been a consultant at a year earlier and loved my food. So he was more than delighted to sit down and meet with me. And he – you know he was very encouraging but at the same time you know played devil's advocate and really kind of what I considered to be – put me through the wringer. I also went through kind of you know – I went to the SBA [Small Business Association]. The

problem with that is they wanted me to completely change my business plan to fit their formula and their model and the things that I was going to have to promise to do in my opinion changed what I wanted to do, so I basically just kind of said you know the SBA might be great but they're definitely not the right fit for me. You know I'll just kind of find money on my own.

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So it happens that the Bank of Deutchland actually offered me a loan which shocked me because I had been told that banks just don't do that.

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SW: They just don't give money to people who – ?

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TC: To small businesses; basically the risk and the – and the you know lack of security and the fact that you know I would have – I would have to put my house up as you know basically you know security for the loan but you know I – what they offered me was contrary to everything I had been told which was why I had never really pursued a bank as a – as a potential path. But what that enabled me is because a bank was willing to take the risk and they offered me terms I was able – it enabled me to negotiate with a private investor that said, "Okay, if a bank is willing to take that risk if you're willing to put up sort of the same securities I will give you a – you know basically a better interest rate." So I decided that – that was sort of the better route to go because at least with a private investor there was more negotiating kind of ability that if – if there was a problem I could negotiate my way versus with a bank they have rules and if things went bad rules were rules.

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So literally in a manner of a few weeks you know I had space, I had a co-signor, I had money and I literally sat in my car and just cried because it was going to happen. And I – I guess in my heart of hearts I didn't think that kind of the stars and the moon were going to align

you know; it just – all of the sudden it did and there I was. And the days that I got the key to the – to the space I started measuring it and the sketches that I had sketched out for the space I had walked the building from the outside and the space was physically seven feet shorter than I had guestimated. And I couldn't figure out where my walk-in was going to go because my walk-in was going to be seven-feet side and I literally just sort of you know kind of shook my head and said, "You know, if you can't figure this out you don't deserve this."

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And my build-out was nine weeks long. I was my own general contractor. So I worked as sort of like a handyman for my plumber, for my electrician. I pulled all my own permits.

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SW: Is that typical?

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TC: No; that is completely not typical. I had – because of the engineering school I've always liked to build stuff. You know I'm definitely sort of a fix-it person. You know in college I built loft beds for you know kind of college roommates and stuff. You know I don't like shoes; I like tools so that was kind of again you know growing up when I would get upset I would go build and/or destroy something versus my sister would go shopping for shoes. So I had actually built an addition on my house after Gaston kind of – I had time, but not money so I just decided to build something so I again pulled the permits and – and at that point I was thinking about being a food writer full-time. So I turned my old porch into an office, but I – I framed it, I sheathed it, I insulated it; I put in in-floor heat, I you know installed the windows, the doors, I dry-walled it. The only thing I didn't do myself was I hired a brick mason to brick the front because I don't know to lay brick. Everything else I – I figured out how to do and it's – it's a pretty – it's a nice room. You know not necessarily square and straight but it's pretty and it works and it's safe.

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So being my own general contractor again that just made sense to me because I am a bit of a control freak when it has to do with my things. I wanted it done my way on my timeline with no bullshit and no excuses. But doing that from the day I got the keys to the day I opened the door was nine weeks – again very unheard of in any business. But I don't think if it – if it happened quickly I don't think it would have ever happened. Again it was one of those things sort of when it came down to it, it was like, "Okay. You know once I open those doors this is the rest of my life," you know. You have to show up to unlock the door on time, which I'm not necessarily real good at. [*Laughs*]

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And we – we opened up at three o'clock on a Friday afternoon and my closing time is seven and we did more business from seven to eight that night than we did kind of waiting for people to show up. But if people were coming through the door, you know how could I say no? And on that Saturday you know we just sort of stood there waiting and a lot of my – you know my employees were like, "Well how do we do this and how do we do that?" And I'm like, "Yeah; I don't know. I haven't done it yet."

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So I had – I had a great group who believed in me when we started and they rolled with the punches and helped me create the systems you know that we've refined you know kind of now six years later, kind of – . And I'm lucky that you know two of the three people who started with me, one worked for me for four years and one worked for four and a half years. You know know I watched one young man go from high school all the way through graduating college and then he left for a year and then came back for last Christmas to work with us.

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So I've – you know it's been delightful to not only grow a business but to also watch some young people grow kind of you know in my tutelage in the process.

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But yeah; I mean I was very realistic that when we opened I was a chef who liked meat and was willing to learn. And somewhere along the way through getting carcasses and reading books and talking to people and just figuring it out you know somewhere in that kind of year two to year three we realized that we had kind of become butchers. I was lucky to host a fifth generation butcher from San Miniato from Tuscany in Italy where one of my guys went over there for a month and then the son came over here. And having him over here sort of made us sort of look around at each other and go, "We're kind of butchers now; we're not just meat cutters," you know because we were as competent if not more so than he was and he had grown up doing this his whole life.

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You know the thing that was fun having Andrea [Falaschi] here was that when you go to Italy and you go to his butcher shop and you say you know what kind of sausage do you have, they say, "Sausage." They have one type of sausage and it doesn't dawn on them that there's any other type of sausage; whereas we do over 30 different varieties, one of which is based on their recipe.

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And he was just thrilled and amazed we could put other stuff in sausage and he had never done that before. So he loved America because there were no rules and especially in our butcher shop because my comment was if it sounds like a good idea and we can sell it let's try. You know worst case scenario it became a staff meal for the next day.

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So yeah; it—you know the one thing I'm proud of is I do feel like we really created something special, being a chef, and being interested in doing whole carcasses, you know we did a lot of charcuterie and we made a lot of pates. It was about utilizing everything because it all cost money so throwing things away was not an option and wasting things was not an option. And that definitely is you know attributed to the chefs that I trained under kind of in the—you know in a very European style—you utilize everything.

00:34:06

So I translated that to the butcher shop, so I do think early on sort of the charcuterie aspect of the butcher shop was very, very unique. You know going back 10 years, 15 years now as a young chef I was on the academic advisory board for J. Sergeant Reynolds Culinary Arts Program and they were voting to eliminate the one week garde manger section of their curriculum and—

00:33:38

SW: Sorry.

00:34:38

TC: No you're fine, and garde manger—basically charcuterie would be one—one element of what you learn in a charcuterie class or a garde manger class and my kind of big thing was it's only one week and if a young chef in training only ever sees how to make a pate or how to make a sausage you know or how a trine is made in school at least they've been exposed to the techniques even if they've never utilized them. And I was told that's old guard. Nobody is ever going to care.

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The same gentlemen who told me that have since apologized and they're reinstated not only the garde manger program but now they have a one-month long charcuterie program at that same school.

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SW: And is that here in Richmond?

00:35:26

TC: That is here in Richmond. It's just kind of with the local community college. It's a two-year program. It's pretty solid. I kind of laugh because the guy who teaches the class doesn't really know what the heck he's doing so I get most of the kids in his class coming in and asking us questions and buying things and making stuff at home.

00:35:44

But at least they've put it back in because right now charcuterie is trendy. You know everybody is trying to make their own bacon at home. Everybody is you know kind of—well anybody who is a cook at some point whether it's making a homemade sausage or making their own bacon or trying to make a pate, you know they're definitely delving in you know to see well how hard is it and—and sort of what's involved.

00:36:09

You know people are now familiar with the terminology versus 10 years ago you know if —if you asked the average foodie 10 years ago and just gave them you know the word "charcuterie" written on a piece of paper they couldn't have pronounced it and they couldn't have told you what it meant, whereas now you know that's what it's all about you know books left, right, and center; You Tube videos, which is great. You know it's kind of funny but it's—but it's great because those were the things I was told six years ago, "Nobody is going to want to buy that. Nobody is interested in that. Why are you doing that?" You know so I was trendy before my own time; I don't know.

00:36:51

SW: Now I want to go back a little bit. What—what was the reception like? You talked about the first day opening at three o'clock and most of the traffic came in—you did the most business from seven to eight but can you talk about the reception of people in Richmond to this butchery?

00:37:05

TC: Yeah; I mean again I was very lucky in that sense. I had been a food writer previous to opening the butcher shop. I understand how free press worked, so I was able to control a certain amount of media and make sure that all the local media sources knew about me and were writing something about the shop, about the same time we opened. So one, Richmond was flooded with "Belmont Butchery Opens"; I mean just flooded. You know I figured out the first week that I actually couldn't help customers because so many people wanted to talk to me that I never actually had time to cut a steak. So I spent more time that first week working as cashier simply because everybody wanted to talk to me. And to help the customers best it was easier to have sort of my staff kind of cut the steaks and be more of the face, which was hard because that wasn't what I wanted to do. But it was sort of what the business demanded that I do. So I would spend most of my day talking to the customers and ringing them up and the moment we would close the doors I would you know prep all the meats for the next day and you know make the sausages and do everything at night because it was the only time I could do that.

00:38:27

You know we—we cut everything to order so we don't have like trays of steaks. We cut it for you; there's a whole little conversation that goes on. Richmond was so excited but so skeptical. Richmond is very used to big flashy openings and then things fizzle and change where all the cool things that make you special you don't have in six months. So it was really kind of fun and funny in the beginning to watch customers load up on pancetta and foie gras. And you know sort of things that you just typically couldn't get in Richmond and they would buy like crazy amounts of stuff. And I would say, "Well, ma'am you know we're going to be open next week." And they'd say, "Well I've been to openings in Richmond. You're not going to have this in six months so I better buy it now." And I'd say, "Well no, ma'am; hopefully I have cooler stuff in six months because you my customer demand that I carry cool stuff. So if you keep on coming back I'll have this." And it really—that I think added to—shocked Richmond because I'm not from Richmond, you know and Richmond does tend to settle for a lot of mediocrity in the fact

that I wanted to do more and try harder and feed people—I think they were excited about it but also didn't really know how to take it. And since I tend to be very forthright and a little bit more —I am who I am and say whatever I think, again they didn't quite know how to take that but they found it sort of charming but curious.

00:39:56

But yeah; in the beginning you know I was just very realistic that I left a lot of wiggle room and a lot of freedom for my customers to tell me what they wanted from me. You know we learned very early, sausages were actually something that people wanted and they liked something beyond a bratwurst and they liked something beyond a hot Italian—the whole idea of having flavors in sausages that were less familiar were interesting especially going more European doing a lamb merguez and doing a veal chipolata. All of those things they found very exotic and very interesting and it reminded them of their trip to Tuscany. And Richmonders enjoyed that. You know they enjoyed the fact that they could actually get you know a high-end pancetta that reminded them of that thing they saw in Italy versus you know what was available in—in a deli.

00:40:46

And the fact that I actually listened and I added you know things and I talked to people and got feedback I think they were a little bit shocked by that. You know and my parents kind of commented that the feel of the place was very much like my father's—my grandfather's butcher [*Interview's note: Tanya meant to say "barber shop"*] shop from when I was a little kid in that it was sort of that—you know that old town, everybody knew everybody, everybody chatted, you know you shared stories, and to this day it's pretty normal you know that people bump into the you know—each other in the butcher shop that they haven't seen each other in weeks or months or years. And when you end up on a Saturday morning with this kind of odd little group in the front just yacking and then it's like, "Oh wait. We should buy our meat," so I like kind of bringing back that neighborhood feel and you know our customers tell us when they're going on

vacation and you know I have people constantly you know apologizing. “We—you know we got a new job; we’re moving.”

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You know I recently had a customer after being with me for five years and being like a once a week customer for five years you know I watched them have their second child and watched their oldest you know go from a baby to being you know a little boy and going to school —they got a job in Seattle. And they said you know one of the things that when they were looking for a new house is they looked for a neighborhood that had a butcher shop and it has to carry sustainable meats. And they wanted to thank me for you know kind of being a part of their family and you know I—I said, “Well when you get settled in you know take a picture and post it on my Facebook page so that I know you guys are okay.”

00:42:20

You know it’s not unusual to get Facebook messages from you know customers who have moved to other parts of the country and we get postcards from customers on vacation in Europe and you know wherever and usually they are kind of butcher shop or meat-oriented pictures, you know. I get text messages from customers that you know—at restaurants where they just take a picture of whatever they’re eating to let me know it’s – . You know to me that’s just great. You know that is part of what I wanted to create was that sense of community. You know and I’m—and I’m kind of—to that end I’m—I feel like I succeeded. It doesn’t mean we don’t screw up and we don’t make mistakes, but you know we’re—we’re only human and we try the best and then sometimes there’s just things we can't do.

00:43:08

SW: I have a couple questions. Are you doing all right? Are you warm enough out here?

00:43:11

TC: Yeah.

00:43:12

SW: It's nice out here.

00:43:13

TC: Are you okay?

00:43:14

SW: Yeah; I'm fine. I'm from Michigan; this is – . Your grandfather had a butcher shop?

00:43:18

TC: Sorry no; a barbershop. Yeah; granddad—my granddad was the town barber and literally the town that my father grew up in Alachua, when I was a kid there was not even a traffic light. So when we ran around as little kids in the summer, we didn't need money. We would just go into like the grocery store and they would just put it on my grand-dad's tab. Everybody knew who my granddad was. Our school photos were up in the—in the barber shop and everybody knew who we were. But yeah; he was the town barber. When he retired after 60 years they unbolted his chair and put it on a flatbed truck and had a parade.

00:43:55

You know and like that was my favorite thing when I was little is I would spend—I would go to work with granddad and just hang out and just see all the men sitting around and talking and you know—because I didn't grow up in a small town and we moved a lot there was something about special that time with my granddad of being on the farm. You know I have a memory that we've kind of figured out I was probably about eight years old where it was probably Thanksgiving and—no, it had to have been Easter because it was spring—one of my granddad's heifer was having a problem birthing a calf. And he had her in the near field, you know and something was going wrong and you know he yells to my dad and my dad sort of rolls

his eyes and is like okay. And he takes off his shirt, so he's just in you know jeans and his undershirt and you know I asked to go along and my dad said, "You can come but when I tell you to go you have to go to the house."

00:44:55

And they go out there and my dad ends up rubbing Vaseline all over his arms and he sticks his arm up into this cow. And you know I'm horrified; you know my—my dad is a Naval officer and my dad doesn't stick his arm up a cow. You know and he turns to my granddad and just says you know, "We're going to need a change. We're going to have to pull it out," you know. And they're kind of looking at me and I'm kind of going, "What—what do you mean?" And he goes, "I think you should go up to the house now." And I'm like, "Nope, not going." And he goes, "Okay; well at any point you can go up to the house." And I said, "Okay." And they literally got a tow chain and greased it up with like big old tubs of Vaseline and in this tow chain goes with my dad and he basically tied it around the legs of this calf and they pulled it out. You know and on one hand I was horrified but on the other hand my dad was the biggest hero.

00:45:50

It happens that the—the calf was dead and there was nothing he could do about that but at that point it was about saving the heifer's life and you know that to me was kind of one of those like that's life you know you have to respect it. It is what it is. You know so to me with the butcher shop you know those experiences are definitely meaningful. You know one of the things I try to do—you know I've kind of gone through several incarnations of staff where every couple years things change; I take everybody to an on-farm slaughter were they have to meet the animal and then we actually you know kind of slaughter it by hand and you know gut it and skin it and then you know we'll bring it back and age it if—if proper or cut it up or whatever. And then you know kind of cook a roast part of it and eat it for dinner as a staff.

00:46:44

And I feel like because they are handling meat day in and day out to go from life to death makes them realize how—that it is a life and they need to be respectful of that life and therefore

every single little bit that gets thrown in the trash can is disrespectful. So how can they learn more about how to do their jobs in a way that is the most respectful to that animal and to that life? And it definitely you know everybody who has done that with me you know has said you know right after—they're not necessarily thrilled about the experience but once they've had a chance to process it and go through it they basically say it's kind of one of the more meaningful things that they've done especially in the context of what they do for a job.

00:47:28

You know and not everybody who works for me are going to be career butchers, you know. Most of them I expect are not going to be. But if you know if I can help teach them sort of you know that little bit about life and death you know kind of that they take forward with them, you know that's a good thing.

00:47:49

SW: How do you—I want to ask you a couple questions about—you had talked about I guess first since we're on that track how—how have you started and developed and how do you pick relationships with farmers? How did that happen?

00:48:05

TC: Yeah; I mean when I first opened the butcher shop nobody knew how to sell me a side of beef or a pig. Mainstream—well even meat specialty distributors no longer did—sold carcasses, at least not in Virginia. You know so nobody when they were like, "Well, why would you want that; you know it comes in a box. Just tell me what cut you want." And I was like, "Well no; I want a side. I want—you know I want to dry-age it. I want to do all this," and they literally thought I was insane. They just could not fathom one, why a butcher shop would want to do that when you didn't have to, and two, why a girl would want to do that.

00:48:41

I was already in the previous restaurant I was working—working and kind of had consulted on and then worked until I found a chef for them—a place called Edible Garden. Everything was farm to table and this was again way before farm to table had been coined. So I had—here in Richmond; yeah. Well actually outside of town but in the Richmond area.

00:49:01

So I had already developed a certain number of farmer relationships in that generally what I would do is I would go to the farmers' market and I would basically just buy stuff that looked good and then I would bring it back to the restaurant and kind of lay it out in piles and kind of say well this goes with this and this goes with this and that would be my creative process for writing the menu was just what made sense.

00:49:22

And then ultimately what was on the menu was what could I get done by five o'clock when the doors opened? It was a small place and I was—you know I had a high school kid dishwasher who came in and helped me at night and that was it for the first couple months. So I had a few farmer relationships from that and I had sought out you know kind of when I decided to open a butcher shop I started doing a lot more research to find farmers, but again this was way before most farmers' markets and people selling meat at farmers' markets, I mean this was around—it was almost exactly the time that *Omnivore's Dilemma* came out. And the book *Heat* had just come out so people were kind of clueless to where their food came from and blissfully so.

00:50:03

So I was trying to buy carcasses when people were going, "What do you mean that's what a chicken house is?" You know kind of—so farmers were much more open to me because they just thought it was kind of cool, but again they didn't really know how to sell to me so all of that was just a matter of if they had the desire and I liked them and I liked their product, we just sort of figured it out. And then once I opened and kind of farmers would tell their neighbor and

tell their neighbor you know then I had farmers kind of showing up saying, "You know I hear you buy from farmers. You know this is what I grow. Do you want some?"

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And some stuff was good and some stuff was horrible and some stuff was really expensive. You know so it was definitely ever farmer I worked with I worked with in a slightly different manner. And it really just depends on how their operation is set up and therefore what works best for both of us. You know I'm lucky I'm now in the position where people come to me for the most part and say, "I want to sell to you." But just because they want to sell to me doesn't mean they have a product that I want to sell. So again there's a lot of being delicate to—to not tell somebody that their stuff sucks. But to basically let them know that I'm not interested and for a lot of—you know a lot of it might be price. You know it's real easy when their price is too expensive and their stuff sucks. You know or I'll let farmers know, "Hey I'm looking for—do you know someone?" And again, very quickly kind of it gets through you know kind of a community. Recently I was—because it's—we've had kind of an early onset winter and the weather has been a little bit colder and chickens who just clamped down and are not laying eggs in the manner that they normally do because we normally have mild winters. So all of my egg producers have just not had product— [*Tanya checks time*]

00:51:54

SW: Okay; you let me know when you—

00:51:55

TC: Yeah; yeah and—because I have to go to the Farmers' Market.

00:51:58

SW: What time do you need to – ?

00:51:59

TC: Oh I'm fine right now. So I went to the feed store because we moved—I've lived in the city for 17 years about five blocks—five minutes from the butcher shop. This past spring my husband and I bought 10 acres out in the county kind of—basically we bought like a baby farm with a pond. It's—

00:52:19

SW: In Richmond County?

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TC: No; we're in Hanover County so we're West Hanover so we're—it's we're almost in Louisa so we're like halfway to Charlottesville, but a little bit further north. So I went to the local feed store and basically just you know kind of said, "You know hey, you know all my chicken producers are having—you know or egg producers are having a really hard time. Do you know anybody?" You know and he immediately got on the phone you know with a half dozen people and kind of said, "You know hey that butcher lady is looking for some eggs. You got any?" You know and then you know wrote down a bunch of phone numbers and said, "You know I can't promise but here's some numbers—try." And I ended up finding a farmer who said he had eggs. They were a little bit more expensive but he also knew somebody else I knew and was like you know, "Yeah I was trying to sell you eggs a couple weeks ago." And I said, "Yeah; they're too expensive. But I need eggs, so you know if that's what I got to pay that's what I'll play but you're—you're my stop gap. I can't use as a regular supplier because you're expensive."

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But I again—maybe this is wrong being a businessperson, I would rather have eggs for my customers and make no profit as long as I don't lose money than to not have eggs for my customers. You know people don't really understand that chickens turn daylight into eggs, so they don't get when the days are shorter and when it gets cold and when a chicken gets

discombobulated she stops laying. That's the way chickens are. You know even though I lived in the city we had chickens for two years, so I learned intimately about how silly chickens are. And how the slightest little thing will kind of disrupt their laying cycle, so again part of it is explaining to customers you know that that's just nature. And they sort of have to roll with the punches but when it comes down to it, customers want their eggs and if you don't have their eggs they're going to go somewhere else. So in order to not lose that customer to somebody else you know if I got to buy eggs from an expensive farmer for a little while, while the chickens kind of get back into production that's what I'm going to do. I'm going to make my customers happy.

00:54:25

But yeah; so I went to the feed store [*Laughs*] and kind of got—got my lead from there. You know they don't know my name but they know I'm the butcher lady. And I like to play with the little gray kitten that's there. But—but yeah; I mean so that's again for a lot of stuff you know I was on the phone with a chef earlier who he was calling me because he was looking for something and even though I couldn't help him, he ended up saying, "Well in the meantime I actually found somebody. Do you know want the name of the farm that I found some stuff with?" And I was like, "Yeah; that would be great." You know so when you—when you're building relationships half of it is not focusing on the monetary aspect of it but focusing on the true relationship because that's where you're going to find the next farmer. That's where you're going to find the next chef that maybe you can help with something. And to me if you do it right and you charge fairly for what you're doing hopefully you will earn a living in doing it.

00:55:23

SW: Can we talk about because this is all about women and food, this project in regard to that butcher lady, can you talk about what it's like to be a woman in this particular industry?

00:55:36

TC: Yeah; I mean I guess I've always chosen male-dominated fields you know. When I was a little kid all my friends were guys; we were you know climbing trees and riding bikes. You know I went to engineering school so again very male-dominated. I like to build things. So for me I—I personally tend to get along better with guys. You know you can yell at each other and then buy each other a beer at the end of the day and a guy will sort of get over it versus girls tend to harbor ill will and will bring it up sometime obscure later. So I mean I've always worked generally with guys; I knew that sort of you know when I went to Switzerland I was you know one of two woman in a—in a kitchen of 60. It was definitely easy. You know there was more hazing and—and you had to try harder and be better than the guys.

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You know if you were a true culinary professional and not just a restaurant worker you're always going to get hazed. You're going to have to work harder; you know being a chef has changed so much from when I started 20 years ago. You know it was before *Food Network* and you know sort of all these TV shows that glamorized the chef's position. Back then you know my parents assumed I was throwing my life away because one, they didn't really know what a chef was, they didn't really know what a chef did, you know they thought I would sort of just be you know cooking at some little restaurant for the rest of—you know the rest of my life. They didn't—they didn't realize that there is a hierarchy and there are sort of executives and—and to be honest I didn't either. I just knew that it was something that I—I liked and I was good at and people were paying me money to do it, so why not explore the opportunity while I enjoyed it?

00:57:24

And from that I learned about you know sort of the brigade and sort of the hierarchy and—and all the possibilities and again, you know in the 20 years I've been cooking, America has learned how to cook. You know Julia started something but it has blossomed to so much more; you know I laugh about you know kind of young people who are always looking for advice and it's like, "Well, no, when you get out of culinary school you're not a chef. You're a culinary

school grad who can cook—maybe. You need to earn your stripes; you need to basically start as a line cook and work your way up and be a sous chef you know." It's just like a college graduate who thinks that they're going to you know graduate and become middle management. It's a lot harder than that and if that's what you think you're doing it for the wrong reasons. You know so being a woman has definitely been more challenging. I mean we're not as physically strong, so you know within this industry strength definitely makes a difference.

00:58:19

I have to work smarter and not harder. You know there's some things that I'm just never going to be able to lift the same what a guy can. It doesn't mean I can't do it; I just have to think about it more and work to my strengths and not just use strength. You know being a female butcher you know we've definitely had a couple interesting experiences with the butcher shop you know early on kind of—you know kind of talking about those producer relationships. I had negotiated a side of beef from a farmer. It was going to be this beautiful Piedmontese and you know she gave me the cut sheet to send to the slaughterhouse. And I basically kind of you know in—with a Sharpie I just put a big X through the whole cut sheet and said, "Side of beef, four primal(s), do not trim. Want as is; if you have questions call," and I put down my cell phone number.

00:59:15

When I went to pick it up I have never yelled so much. They had cut it into five-pound cubes. They literally took the carcass and cut it into chunks. I mean rib-eye, New York strip, chunked it; one why they chose to cut it the way they chose it actually makes no sense from any chef, meat-cutting, slaughterhouse—anything. And the guy at the other side when I started pitching a fit said you know—you know kind of, Yeah some little girl ordered and she didn't know what she was talking about and this is what" – . And I said, "Well I'm that little girl and excuse me; I'm not paying your cut fee. I'm not paying 65-cents a pound for you guys to

basically disrespect this animal. I asked for it this way and I said specifically if you have questions call me."

01:00:11

"If you disagreed with me why didn't you just call me?" And he was like, "Well it was obvious that she – ." And I basically said, "Well sir; I can break down a carcass at least as well as you can." And he was like you know—he immediately was like, "Well I – ." And I said, you know I just refused to pay them. You know kind of literally I you know—I paid the farmer because it was you know not their fault, the fact that this slaughterhouse did a horrible job, but you know I literally paid them the kill feel because he had killed it and you know – . I have only dealt with that slaughterhouse once since then and you know basically then he—you know he apologized to me like two years later. And just said you know, "Well, you know we had never had anybody ask for that and you know we just figured you didn't know what you were talking about." And I—I was like, "How hard is it to pick up the phone and say we're confused. Why would you want that?"

01:01:02

You know I have over—in the first couple of years had slaughterhouses argue with me, "Well no, you don't want that." You know and I've been called by kind of Bubba's Slaughterhouse people you know, "Well little girl; let me just explain to you or little miss." And I kind of said, "You know no disrespect," you know and I've said, "You know old fat dude," back in their faces you know or, "Mister redneck I want it this way. I'm paying you to do it this way. I don't know why you're arguing with me. If I'm wrong isn't that my problem?" You know and ultimately sure of at that point they will sort of just say, "Fine; you don't know what you're talking about and I'll give it to you that way ha, ha, ha." You know and I'll be like, "Yeah; that's exactly what I want." You know and now they sort of know who I am and kind of go, "Well I guess we sort of guess wrong on that one."

01:01:53

But yeah; I've had a couple instances you know with slaughterhouses specifically where you know they just assumed because I was a girl I didn't know what I was talking about and because I asked for it differently than most of their farmers they just couldn't conceptualize why. You know and then within—within the retail space of the butcher shop again it was like our first week that we were opened and it was hilarious because I was working the register because everybody just wanted to talk to me. And I had an old customer from my catering company come in and she had heard about the place but didn't—hadn't read the news. She had just heard about this new butcher shop so she had come in. and she literally patted me on the shoulder and said, "Oh you poor dear; you're a cashier now." And I said, "Well no, ma'am; I own the place but it seems like everybody wants to talk to me so I'm running the register to make sure that one, we're ringing everybody up correctly, but so that way I can talk to every single person for at least two minutes."

01:02:55

You know when I lock the doors I'll be busy making sausage and doing things. And she was just sort of like, "You own the butcher shop?" Like she couldn't connect that because I had been a chef and I had owned a catering company that somehow this could be a different transition of my career. It has worked to my advantage when it comes to solicitations from sales reps because again in the early days I had a guy who was older than me working for me and now with my husband when people are not familiar with the butcher shop and they walk in they automatically go to the oldest male and assume he's the head butcher. Which means they do their little song and dance and spiel and I can dutifully ignore them and kind of listen you know to kind of what's going on and you know when the time comes my husband will say, "I'm not the owner. I just work here. She's the owner," and they'll point to me and then you know kind of—and frequently the sales rep will have come up to me and asked you know sort of, "Who is in charge?" or you know they'll sort of look at me and—and then just bypass. So it's kind of fun to sort of—you know that my staff will sort of throw it back at them in terms of like, "I don't know

why you just went through that song and dance to me, like I don't—I'm not the owner." They just assume; they don't ask.

01:04:13

So that's kind of fun you know if—if sales reps haven't done enough homework to realize that I'm the owner I generally don't give them you know too much time you know. I'm just like you know, "You can leave your business card. I'm not interested; thank you, good-bye." So it's definitely interesting, you know being sort of the lady butcher. On one hand it's awesome because from a marketing standpoint it is something unique and different and therefore I do utilize it but at the same time it's you know it's kind of embarrassing because it's not really a good way to promote yourself just because you're a girl. You know I'm doing—I'm doing the same thing any guy would do in—in the same situation so I want to utilize it to my advantage but not in a way that—that it bothers me.

01:05:06

But yeah you know I just do my job. It doesn't—you know I tell young people all the time, you know I have two nieces and I'm like, "It doesn't really matter what sex you are. Just do your job and do it well," you know? Because fortunately in this day and age a lot of stereotypes and sort of male roles and female roles are diminishing even though people are still prejudiced. And it will always be that way. You know in the future hopefully less so but you know hopefully I'm kind of at least breaking some—some of those you know barriers for my nieces so they if they realize they want to be a butcher they can be a butcher too. Auntie can teach them.

01:05:49

SW: I saw the note from one of your nieces on the wall that you have in the shop. I have two more questions for you. Do you have time?

01:05:56

TC: Yeah; I mean in need to hit the farmers' market. I need to leave probably in the next 15 minutes.

01:06:01

SW: Okay; I can wrap it up.

01:06:03

TC: I'm good at rambling so this is my fault.

01:06:04

SW: This is perfect. This is what oral history is all about. I'm wondering in terms of because this—this project is also focusing on Richmond, from your experience throughout the years having this butchery and also being a chef in different capacities around this place, is there something—is there some commonalities or are there any striking narratives that you see between women and food particularly in Richmond in terms of support or—or anything of that nature?

01:06:37

TC: I guess sort of. I mean I—I am a member even though I'm not an active member of sort of —we started off like the Fem-Foodies and then it kind of—we became a branch of the WCR, the Women Chefs and Restaurateurs. Women in food have always had a harder and different path because it is hard to balance the needs of a family and if you get pregnant and kids with restaurant work. So women are unique I think in the food world in that we have recreated jobs to suit where we are in our lives. So you might start as a restaurant chef but because of family obligations, go to catering, you know or food writing or teaching. But the great thing is people are so interested in food that there's those opportunities to—to shift.

01:07:21

In Richmond again because there is not necessarily a ton of female food entrepreneurs we all tend to know each other and have probably worked with each other in the past. So there's definitely camaraderie in terms of being able to bitch about things or, "Hey, I need an extra pair of hands; can you help me?" And I don't think it's necessarily any less you know friendly with the guys; it's just you know because we're female we have some unique you know circumstances that are different you know like one of my friends, she owns a cooking school and she has twins. You know well when she found out she was pregnant with twins, you know everybody realized that—we realized that was going to be a little bit different than just having a kid. You know so at least in the early days of when she had two babies and running the cooking school you know a lot of us pitched in and taught some extra classes and you know kind of picked up a couple things so she could make that adjustment.

01:08:12

Guys don't do that; their wives take care of the kids generally. You know so it's just—it's different obligations and—and different ways of looking at it. So I do think that the women in Richmond that are in food have been incredibly supportive of each other especially on an entrepreneurial level. You know when somebody—you know I have a friend who was you know looking to start a catering company but she didn't know how to get a kitchen. You know so I gave her some advice from having owned my own catering company. You know and she was able to apply some of the same things and she found a church kitchen that she negotiated a deal to use their kitchen.

01:08:49

Women tend to be better at thinking outside the box. Guys tend to be very linear and—and sort of this is the way you do it, whereas a woman kind of says well, "I can't do it that way but I still want to do it so how can I make that happen?" And I do think that that's you know a particular you know female thing is you know let's just figure out how to make it happen. You know and again, [*Laughs*] I guess it was like the week before I opened and I was doing

something; I was washing some dishes in here and it was like eleven o'clock at night and something shifted on the drying rack and basically a pan came down and hit me in the face and split my nose open. And because I didn't have any idea how bad it was all I knew I was basically woozy and nauseous and I didn't know if I had a concussion you know. I called my sister she doesn't answer the phone; she never answers the phone. I called the guy I was dating and he owns his own restaurant and he was busy. He you know couldn't leave the restaurant. You know I called Ellie [Basch]; she's a chef. Even though I knew she was an early to bed person you know she answered the phone and I was like, "I'm bleeding." You know she came over you know; it was way past her bedtime. She you know basically pulled on—pulled on jeans over her PJs and came over and iced my face and kind of said, "Nah, I think you don't need stitches but I'm glad you called somebody," like you know and she sort of sat with me and kind of you know made sure I was okay to the point where you know we realized I was probably okay to drive.

01:10:16

You know she's kind of one of the major leaders in—in this kind of female chefs-group. You know it's—it's nice to have somebody like that you know and I think because of that we became better friends whereas more we were acquainted before that.

01:10:33

SW: Is that Ellie Basch?

01:10:34

TC: Yeah; Ellie Basch, yeah. Yeah and that's you know when you and I were first talking about this project I was saying you know of your list of women to talk to you know I know almost everybody on the list you know. Richmond is a relatively small place. Food knows food. Good food especially knows good food. So you know of the women on your list I haven't worked with everybody but I've worked with a lot of—a lot of them. And the fun thing is—and I'm sure you will discover this—is we're kind of cool chicks. You know there's—there's not a whole lot of

frail, afraid women in that crowd. You know we are all definitely very confident and forthright in our own ways. You know some—some more outspoken than others, but I think—but I think any female entrepreneur that is one of the elements whether it's food or not is you know whether it's cockiness or confidence but—but a certain you know go for broke you know, "I'm going to do it" attitude.

01:11:33

You know when we're told no we look at it as a challenge and not an obstacle. You know and I'm lucky that you know there's some cool chicks in Richmond. You know again Ellie has been great. You know two years ago you know one of my butcher boys, his grandmother died two days before Christmas and you know he was really close to her so he went to spend time with his family which meant I was one man down you know meat-cutting. It's not Ellie's strength but she was in here basically doing whatever I needed her to do. You know and—and it wasn't really—I didn't have to ask. She just kind of said you know, "What time do I show up?" You know and she was here. You know it was great because that year I actually had four chef friends, who basically you know kind of heard I had the need and they just showed up with—with a knife and said, "Okay. You know what do I need to do to get you through this," you know? I mean I paid them, but you know they—they didn't have to do it. You know that was totally a—you know they—they came and bailed me out and you know I don't know that I can ever repay that but I definitely appreciated it.

01:12:37

SW: I have some numbers questions for you just to go back. How many employees did you have when you first opened the butcher shop and—and has that changed six years later?

01:12:45

TC: Yeah; that's definitely changed. When I first opened I had four part-time employees. The whole idea of having a full-time employee that I was responsible for scared the crap out of me.

So everybody I hired was part-time because then I wasn't responsible for their rent. Pretty quickly I hired my—one of those guys became full-time because of the need, his aptitude and his skill and how—how well we got along. So pretty quickly that went to one full-time employee and then probably within six months I had two full-time employees and two or three part-time people. I've never gone below two full-time people but I have been as high as four full-time people.

01:13:30

It's kind of you know again it kind of ebbs and flows based on the time of the year and what's going on, you know and—and what sales dictate. You know a lot of what we do is very, very labor intensive and very specialized so it's not like I can just sort of bring any person in. You know it takes you know three to six months before they really even have the ability to do more than be a cashier or dishwasher. Just there's so much specialized learning and even now like when I first opened I had a chef buddy who would pick up shifts who you know was a chef at Morton's and went through kind of the Morton's you know steak school. And you know when I first opened we were doing much more basic high-end restaurant cuts and less carcass work. We're doing more carcass work. You know he comes in the butcher shop now and says, "You know yeah there's some stuff I'm not really sure what you're doing there." He's like, "Yes; I could cut steaks for customers and I could help them but there's a lot of stuff that you're doing that I don't even know how to approach," versus in the beginning he was like, "Yeah, I was totally comfortable. Everything you were doing was sort of no big deal to me."

01:14:33

So we've definitely evolved in terms of uniqueness of what our—of the product that we make and how we handle stuff. But yeah; my staff kind of ebbs and flows you know kind of between two and eight full-time, part-time, you know. Right now it's kind of an interesting experience that my husband works with me. I've been married for two and a half years so he was a really cute customer who came into the shop and he actually owned a wine shop when he

introduced himself to me. And once met we realized we knew all these people in common and we were both dating other people, but sort of fast-forward you know when he ended up single I happened to be single and that was four years ago, so – .

01:15:19

SW: What was—does he still—does he have a wine shop still or – ?

01:15:23

TC: No; he sold the wine shop about a year and a half ago.

01:15:25

SW: What was it?

01:15:26

TC: Strawberry Street Vineyard so he was over in the Fan and again kind of you know it's Richmond. I had a young lady who worked for me at Edible Garden as a dishwasher who came to work for me here at the butcher shop when she was in college and then she did a semester abroad. So when she came back she demanded that I fire her replacement. And I kind of explained that the real world doesn't work that way. And even though she's a princess I wasn't going to do that. But I said, "Well this guy I'm dating owns a wine shop and you're 21 now so you drink and I know your family is about to plant like 10 acres of grapevines on one of your properties so why don't you go work Christmas at a wine shop? And if it works out you might have a job and if it doesn't work out it's holiday work—whatever."

01:16:16

Well she bought the wine shop a year and a half ago from him. You know so it's kind of nice that you know here's a young person that I knew who was sort of—had no direction, you know just a really fun, smart person, and with this economy you know she—there was nothing—

she would have had to go to grad school to figure out something to do. But because of her interest in food and her family already owns one business so her mother does the books for the wine shop it was kind of a natural fit. And she's young enough that she can do it for 10 years and still have a whole other career ahead of her.

01:16:50

But yeah; my husband owned the wine shop for 12 years and has now been here with me for about a year and a half.

01:16:57

SW: And before I forget; could you tell me the name of your sister and the name of the cooking school that you – ?

01:17:03

TC: Yeah; the cooking school that I ran was a place called Virginia Gourmet and that was located kind of south side, and then my sister is Karen Cauthen Miller. She actually uses her middle name. She's actually a local food writer so—

01:17:17

SW: And she's still here in Richmond?

01:17:19

TC: Yeah; she's here in Richmond and actually my niece should probably be inside in the butcher shop right now kind of waiting for me. But yeah; again I was working as a food writer for *Richmond Magazine* and they came to me and said, "Hey, do you know anybody? We're looking for a restaurant reviewer." And I said, "Yeah I totally have the perfect person. She used to be my business partner in my catering company. I'll tell her to you know—I'll tell her to swing by." So you know I told my sister and basically just said, "Well, I didn't point out that

we're sisters and we have different last names, so you might not want to point it out immediately. Like get them to offer you the job and then we should basically let them know that we're sisters so that there is no conflict of interest."

01:17:58

So yeah; so she got the job and we told them and they kind of said, "Well, even though that means some chefs know who your sister is she just can't review them. If—if she knows them personally she can't review them, but you have different last names so we're not too worried about it." You know that was shoot—eight years ago, pretty much anybody in—in the business knows that my sister is a reviewer and they don't care.

01:18:23

You know so it's—it's worked out nice in that she's probably my biggest cheerleader and for as lucky as we have been to get amazing national press, I can also be proud to say she never even sent out a press release, like it just sort of happened organically. You know but occasionally she does say, "Well, you know when we write our cookbook—when we write our cookbook." So maybe that will happen. You know get the sisters back together.

01:18:52

SW: Tanya is there anything else you want to add?

01:18:54

TC: I don't know; I've rambled about lots of stuff. No; I mean I guess I never expected to be a butcher you know when I went to college. And that was never sort of anything on the horizon. You know everybody tells me what I'm doing is sort of out there and unique and you know I'm very lucky that again people—national magazines and media and the *UVA Alumni Magazine* have been interested in what I've done. I just want to feed people. You know ultimately I just want to bring good—good food to people. You know right now again because I get bored and I've been doing this for six years and that's why we bought the farm. I want to grow some stuff. I

want to grow some animals. You know we had—we grew turkeys for—for Thanksgiving and you know it's one of the best damn turkeys that I've ever eaten and I don't particularly like turkey so that's saying a lot.

01:19:48

But I love the fact that people are getting backyard chickens and—and having gardens and you know and things like that and people are beginning to understand where their food comes from and appreciate it in a way that I think has—has been lost for the last you know kind of 20—30—40 years. You know I love when customers come in and will point you know to things in the case and if I have a pig's head they want to point it out to their kid. They want their children to understand that pork is a pig; that you know that beef is a cow. You know and they're not shy you know; they want me to point out what part of the animal it came from.

01:20:31

That really just sort of gives me faith in people that you know food is not this packaged thing in plastic at a store. You know they want to get to know their farmer. You know they—you know sometimes it's tough in that people don't necessarily always want to understand so they'll ask a question but they really don't want—care what the answer is. And that you know for a lot of people farm-raised and grass-fed and sustainable is trendy and it's because everybody else is doing it, not because they believe in it. But if only a—you know if only a part of my customers have that belief and if the others are coming because it just tastes better at least they're still supporting that system with their dollars and not spending it in a—in a conventional system.

01:21:14

So I do think that that's one of you know a bit of—the great things about what we're doing is you know we're helping you know small family farms and we're helping knowledge of —we are what we eat, and little kids need to not eat packaged crap. They need to you know go to the butcher shop and go to the farmers' market you know and discover you know what things really taste like, you know.

01:21:36

So if—if—if me just doing my job you know helps expose you know a child or an adult to different you know quality of product and—and give them an awareness or you know a single level of knowledge that they didn't have before then I've done my job well. And that's all I can do.

01:21:57

SW: I want to thank you for taking the time to do this today.

01:22:02

TC: Not—not a problem. I hope you're not freezing your butt off.

01:22:04

SW: No; actually it feels sobering. It's nice.

01:22:07

TC: I—yeah; I'm well—I like cold. It doesn't bother me, so – .

01:22:10

[End Tanya Cauthen 12-12 Interview]