

TED LEGNON
Legnon's Boucherie – New Iberia, LA

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Date: August 14, 2008
Location: Legnon's Boucherie
Interviewer: Sara Roahen, Southern Foodways Alliance
Transcription: Shelley Chance, ProDocs
Length: 36 minutes
Project: Southern Boudin Trail – Louisiana

[Begin Ted Legnon Interview]

00:00:00

Sara Roahen: This is Sara Roahen for the Southern Foodways Alliance. It’s Thursday, August 14, 2008. I’m in New Iberia, Louisiana at Legnon’s, if I’m pronouncing that correctly.

00:00:13

Ted Legnon: Correct. Legnon’s Boucherie.

00:00:14

SR: All right, Legnon’s Boucherie. Could I ask you to say your name and your birth date?

00:00:19

TL: My name is Ted Legnon. My birth date is August 25, 1954.

00:00:24

SR: Okay, and can you say in your own words what you do for a living?

00:00:29

TL: We have a retail meat market here and we pretty much specialize in boudin and sausage and you know we also have all cuts of meat but pretty much specialize in boudin and sausage and Cajun foods.

00:00:42

SR: So that word *boucherie* on your title—what does that mean?

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TL: Butchering.

00:00:50

SR: It’s an old French word?

TL: Right; correct.

00:00:53

SR: Can you tell me, is this your birth place—New Iberia?

00:00:57

TL: Yes, uh-hm, I’m born and never left here—been here it will be 54 years. [*Laughs*]

00:01:01

SR: And what is your heritage?

00:01:04

TL: Well I grew up in the next little town over actually and then you know we're just pretty much common people, and I took this up after—you know, a job after school it started off with and kind of grew from there. [I] just pretty much always had the desire to do this type of thing and I just stuck with it, you know.

00:01:27

SR: What was the little town one town over?

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TL: Jeanerette.

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SR: Oh Jeanerette. I notice you have LeJeune's bread?

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TL: Yeah, he's from Jeanerette too.

00:01:36

SR: And so what—on either your mom or dad's side of the family or both, are you Cajun, French, German?

00:01:45

TL: Yeah. French, uh-huh, on both sides of the family French.

00:01:50

SR: So your ancestors came from France and not from Nova Scotia?

00:01:55

TL: They were in France and they went to Nova Scotia and then here, yeah.

00:01:59

SR: Okay, all right. Do you speak any of the French dialect from around here?

00:02:03

TL: No, no I don't. I wish—I wish I did.

00:02:07

SR: Did your parents or grandparents?

00:02:08

TL: Yes, they did, and I never learned it. [*Laughs*]

00:02:13

SR: I think that’s true with a lot of the younger generation.

00:02:17

TL: Yeah, they was the last of it, you know.

00:02:20

SR: So tell me a little bit about how long you've had this place.

00:02:25

TL: I've been in business about 27 years, you know on my own, and I've been doing this for about 36 years total.

00:02:37

SR: And so after high school you started?

00:02:38

TL: Yes, uh-hm.

00:02:40

SR: And was there something that inspired you to do that—another family member?

00:02:44

TL: No. I just you know—I just determined that's what I wanted to do after I got into it and I liked it pretty much, and I just stuck with it.

00:02:54

SR: This space feels really new. Is it new?

00:02:58

TL: Yeah. It’s--we’ve been in this building about six and a half years.

00:03:02

SR: Where were you before that?

00:03:04

TL: We were about—we were more towards the middle of town in a more of a neighborhood type thing. And it was a much smaller store than this, and you know it was an old store and I made—and we stayed there about over 20 years.

00:03:23

SR: With the same name?

00:03:25

TL: Right, uh-hm.

00:03:26

SR: This place was really busy the one time I was here, and I see you have additional parking, so I’m guessing you get busy.

00:03:34

TL: Yeah, we do, uh-hm.

00:03:35

SR: Do you have a lot of your old customers from the old place?

00:03:39

TL: Oh yeah. I think we kept all of our old customers since we moved here, and--and gained a lot of new ones with the new location.

00:03:48

SR: Is this kind of place—a boucherie, meat market, boudin place—the kind of place that people travel for, or is it usually something [where] you just go to the one that’s in your neighborhood?

00:04:02

TL: Well I’m hoping that they travel to us. As far as my experience, we have a lot of people from here in this area that come; we also have a lot of people that come from out of town and stop and pick up things, you know. Or people who leave from this area and still have family here, they’ll come back and pick up a lot of things that might be frozen or something and take it back with them.

00:04:24

SR: Tell me a little bit if you can about your boudin. I've heard in a lot of places that this is the best, and I'm wondering if you can tell me why you think that is.

00:04:35

TL: Well one of the reasons, I think, [is] we make it the best way we can. And we make it fresh every day. I mean it's made every day and--and we just put the rice seasoning in it. We have a recipe that, you know, and we stick to it and we just try and do things right; that's our number one thing is to make it right. And I know a lot of places, they try and make it just to make more money on it, and we don't even think about that. We just make it and try to make it on volume, you know, and which we're doing fine with it.

00:05:10

SR: And what do you mean by make it right? Do you mean certain ingredients or—?

00:05:12

TL: Yeah, we use good ingredients to start off with you know. We don't put anything that's too fat or anything, or too much gristle or anything, and like I said, make it fresh.

00:05:25

SR: Can you tell me a little bit about the process? I mean, do you get here in the morning and start it right away?

00:05:30

TL: Yeah, we get here about 4:30, 5 o'clock in the morning and we start, and usually we finish making the boudin about—usually, hopefully—9:00 or 10 o'clock we're completely finished, and that's making about 1,400 or 1,500 pounds. But the process starts off, we--we cook the meat; it just kind of smothers down, boils type thing and cooked, and then it's—the meat is strained. And then the meat is ground and mixed with the cooked rice and seasoning—you know, onions, bell peppers, and garlic and everything. And then it's mixed together and then it's put into a stuffer and we stuff it into the casing.

00:06:10

SR: I don't want you to divulge any family secrets, but can you tell me what kind of cut of meat you use?

00:06:19

TL: We use like Boston butt; about 90-percent of it is Boston butt, and some trimmings—you know different trimmings, but it's mostly a Boston butt.

00:06:26

SR: And by—what do you mean by trimmings?

00:06:30

TL: Just little pieces of—it might be cut in pork chops one day, and it might have a few that's kind of irregular or something and we just put that in--in the boudin. But just basically it's Boston butt.

00:06:40

SR: And how do you get your meat in here? Do you—I hear a saw going back there?

00:06:48

TL: Yeah, we have a meat saw. We get--most of our meat, we get it from distributors. Most of them come out of New Orleans, and we have one out of Carencro, and it comes in boxes and then we just have to cut it up into small pieces and cook it, you know.

00:07:02

SR: So no whole animals or anything?

00:07:05

TL: No, we don't do that anymore. No.

00:07:08

SR: Did you used to?

00:07:08

TL: Yeah, uh-hm.

00:07:11

SR: And how come you stopped doing that?

00:07:13

TL: It was just too labor-intensive, you know, and it took a lot of labor and we just kind of got out of that for physical labor reasons.

00:07:21

SR: And what about rice? What kind of grain of rice do you use?

00:07:26

TL: We use the long grain rice.

00:07:30

SR: And do you cook it in a rice cooker or—?

00:07:33

TL: Yeah, we have some commercial rice cookers, gas rice cookers. Yeah, each pot cooks 55 cups at a time.

00:07:40

SR: I’m partial to long grain rice boudin, but people who don’t use it think that it doesn’t stick together enough. Do you have a trick on how to make it stick together?

00:07:51

TL: No, I don't really have a trick. *[Laughs]* You know the rice cooker pretty much does that job, you know.

00:07:59

SR: Do you think that there is a style of, you know, New Iberia-area boudin?

00:08:06

TL: No, I don't think so. You know out of all of the places that make boudin everybody makes it a little bit different. I don't know if that's the way they was taught or whether they think it's the best—I'm not sure why they do it different ways, you know. But basically any is pretty much the same; it might not have the same flavor and everything but you know the process is pretty much the same.

00:08:28

SR: How did you develop your boudin recipe?

00:08:34

TL: Just--just started, you know, kind of small and just watching other people doing it, and then kind of put my own recipe together. Real simple. I mean it's the easiest thing in the world to make, you know—to me.

00:08:51

SR: It's funny because boudin makers tell me that, but then boudin eaters are very specific about their tastes of boudin.

00:09:00

TL: Uh-hm. I think they have—probably just in South Louisiana they might have, I don't know, 200--250 people that might make it I would think; I don't know. And I think they only have a handful of good ones, to tell you the truth. [*Laughs*]

00:09:14

SR: Why is that, do you think?

00:09:17

TL: Again, I think they're going back to trying to make a lot of money, and you know they might put a lot of rice or something just to make it cheaper and make more profit, but I don't think it works for many of them.

00:09:31

SR: What your proportion of meat to rice? Do you—?

00:09:33

TL: We use about half rice and about half meat.

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SR: And your vegetable seasoning, your celery and your green pepper and your onion—do you put those in raw or do you cook them first?

00:09:44

TL: They’re a little bit cooked. We put them in raw with the rice, and the juice and the meat is so hot it--it cooks them without being overcooked.

00:09:55

SR: And so do you consider boudin similar to rice dressing?

00:10:00

TL: Yeah, that’s what I would consider it: rice dressing in a casing.

00:10:05

SR: All right. You know, you’ve been doing this for a long time. Is there—do you have any family working with you? Is there a next generation?

00:10:16

TL: I have a son that worked with me for a while, and then he got out of school and he went to work in the oil field and he’s making a lot of money right now so he [*Laughs*]—maybe later on, you know, when I get closer to retiring he might come back in here.

00:10:34

SR: When you were coming up, did you like to cook?

00:10:38

TL: A little bit, yeah. You know, I liked to experiment with things and kind of play around with it—mostly for fun, you know, just to see what I could do.

00:10:47

SR: Who was the cook in your family?

00:10:49

TL: Like when I was growing up, you mean? Oh my mother. Yeah, my father didn’t cook. My mother cooked.

00:10:56

SR: Did she ever make boudin at home?

00:10:58

TL: No, uh-um.

00:11:00

SR: So when you were growing up, did you eat boudin?

00:11:03

TL: Yeah, uh-hm, and when I was growing up we grew up out in the country and you know I still remember, I was real young and, you know, killing the hog that was in a pen in the back and--and making the cracklins and the boudin, but I was really too young to make it. I mean we made it like once a year for—that was about all we did. My aunts and uncles would come and it was kind of—well, actually, they called it a boucherie. You know, getting together—a couple of families together and killing animals and making boudin, and a little bit of sausage.

00:11:39

SR: Were those fun days for you, do you remember?

00:11:41

TL: Oh yeah. Oh yeah, it was fun. I’m glad I was able to do something like that you know.

00:11:47

SR: What would the kids be doing while the parents were dealing with that?

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TL: Most of the kids, their job was just like to gather the wood and put under the pot—you know sticks out in the pasture or something—and keep the fire going. That was--that was our job, you know, but I was probably at the time between six and ten years-old, somewhere in that area. And I can remember doing that.

00:12:08

SR: So you would keep the fire going. Was that for, the cracklin’?

00:12:13

TL: Yeah, like when they would cook the cracklins or cook the boudin meat, you know they would cook it outside, and of course not like you would cook it outside anymore. [*Laughs*]

00:12:21

SR: Not too many people do that at all anymore I guess.

00:12:23

TL: Right, right. Very, very few.

00:12:26

SR: So if your family stopped doing that around when you were ten, why did they stop?

00:12:32

TL: I don't really know. I don't know why they stopped to tell you the truth. I guess they was—I guess it was a lot--just easier to just go to the store and get it at one point.

00:12:45

SR: Do you remember what your favorite thing to eat on boucherie day was?

00:12:49

TL: The boudin and cracklins [*Laughs*].

00:12:53

SR: So after they stopped doing that, or even during that, on what occasion would you go buy boudin?

00:13:03

TL: We--like I say, we lived out in the country and had the store four or five miles from us, and then they would make boudin and we’d go over there and get some, you know for—you know like once a week or so we’d get a little pack of boudin.

00:13:19

SR: For snacks or for dinner or—?

00:13:20

TL: Kind of just a snack.

00:13:24

SR: Does that place exist anymore?

00:13:24

TL: No, they closed down. They went out of business. The hurricane a few years ago messed them up and they never got it going again.

00:13:32

SR: What was that place called?

00:13:34

TL: Labiche’s Grocery in Lydia, kind of south of here.

00:13:40

SR: Uh-hm. Do you know how to spell that?

00:13:40

TL: L-a-b-i-c-h-e.

00:13:44

SR: Do you remember during the boucherie, or another time in your youth, seeing or eating red boudin, blood boudin?

00:13:52

TL: Yes, uh-huh. And we used to make it. I don’t really know—I was too young to know exactly how they did it. And at the time I ate it and didn’t even know it was blood for some reason. But I remember them making them.

00:14:12

SR: What about now—do you ever eat that or make it?

00:14:14

TL: No, uh-uh. No, it’s illegal—or, excuse me, to use the blood you have to kill the animal on the same premises that you made the boudin, which you’d have to be a slaughterhouse to have that done. And we don't have a slaughterhouse; we get our meat cut and in boxes, you know.

00:14:38

SR: Right. Let’s see, what was I going to ask? So your family—what did your parents do for a living?

00:14:45

TL: My mother was just a housewife and my father worked at the salt mine, at the local salt mine over here.

00:14:51

SR: Oh, not—Avery Island?

00:14:57

TL: Avery Island, uh-huh.

00:14:57

SR: Oh, so did he work down in the mine?

00:15:01

TL: Yeah, uh-hm.

00:15:02

SR: Was that scary?

00:15:03

TL: He liked it, you know. I never went down in the mine myself. At one time he would—like once a year they'd have a get-together and they'd bring people—you know the family—down in the mine, but at that time I was too young to go. I never did go down there.

00:15:22

SR: Yeah. I guess I didn't really realize until recently what that meant, that people were going that far underground, but there were never any accidents or anything, huh?

00:15:33

TL: Not at this mine, but where I lived out in the country they had—I was I guess I was about 10 or 12 years-old; they had a bunch of people that lived in the neighborhood that died in the mine. They had--I'm not sure how many of them but it was a lot of them, you know. And I knew some of the guys personally. They were older than me; they were like my daddy's age, but I knew quite a bit of them.

00:16:03

SR: What kind of mine were they working in?

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TL: Salt mine.

00:16:07

SR: I didn’t realize there were more salt mines besides the Avery Island one.

00:16:11

TL: Yeah. They have Avery Island. They had Jefferson Island; they had one at Cote Blanche, which is near Sycamore Point out there. Then they have another one, Belle Isle, which is more towards, I guess almost to—not too far from Patterson I guess—you know past Franklin; around Franklin/Patterson area.

00:16:37

SR: And so Avery Island, was that sort of a commute from your home?

00:16:41

TL: Yeah, it was probably around 15--18-miles I would guess.

00:16:45

SR: And he just came back and forth every day?

00:16:48

TL: Uh-hm, yeah.

00:16:49

SR: Would he bring salt home?

00:16:51

TL: Yeah, you know every once in a while he’d bring us a big old chunk of salt about this big and the size of a softball or something and—.

00:16:56

SR: And then how did you use that? Did you have to chip that or grind it?

00:17:00

TL: Yeah, we would just, you know, put a little piece in your mouth and--and suck on it, but we never did actually use it. It was just fun to look at. We didn’t actually use it.

00:17:12

SR: Somebody was telling me about another boudin place in Jeanerette called Sonnier’s. Were you familiar with that?

00:17:17

TL: Yeah, he’s--he’s not a boudin place. He makes cracklins. That’s the only thing he does.

00:17:23

SR: Oh okay. I thought he used to make boudin.

00:17:26

TL: Maybe he did at one time years and years ago, but--but he does strictly cracklins, you know, and he sells it like wholesale. He’s a wholesaler type thing.

00:17:36

SR: What about, what time of day in here is the busiest?

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TL: It’s hard to say, you know. Generally we’re busier in the morning than the afternoon, most of the time. You know, from 6:30 in the morning until noon is usually our busiest time.

00:17:58

SR: Do people eat boudin in the morning?

00:17:58

TL: Oh yeah. That’s their favorite time to eat boudin. We sell more in the morning than we do in the afternoon.

00:18:05

SR: And they eat it for breakfast, I guess.

00:18:08

TL: Yeah, a lot of people eat it for breakfast—you know, a late breakfast, early dinner type thing. And we have a lot of people that come, like oil field salesmen; they'll pick up, you know, maybe 10--15 pounds and bring it to customers, and that's the way it's done around here. That's how they treat them, I guess, is bring them food.

00:18:27

SR: Through the belly?

00:18:28

TL: Yeah, yeah. [*Laughs*]

00:18:30

SR: That's smart. What about, do you make any other sausage here?

00:18:33

TL: Yeah, we make fresh sausage. You know, pork sausage; we also make chicken sausage; we make our own smoked sausage; we make andouille.

00:18:47

SR: And what's the difference between smoked sausage and andouille?

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TL: Not a whole lot of difference. But there is some difference. The andouille is a much coarser ground meat, and it's almost chunks of meat, and has a little extra garlic flavor in it, you know, and it's a much bigger casing. Usually--usually it's a beef casing, which is pretty big in diameter compared to the smoked sausage. And the smoked sausage is just like a regular ground sausage and it's just smoked.

00:19:21

SR: You have a smokehouse here?

00:19:22

TL: Yes, uh-huh.

00:19:23

SR: In this area, when people are making gumbo for example, is it—do people tend to use fresh sausage or smoked sausage?

00:19:34

TL: They use some of each. We have more people that uses the smoked sausage in their gumbo.

00:19:39

SR: I haven’t met very many female boudin makers. Have you?

00:19:45

TL: Well we have one back there. *[Laughs]*

00:19:47

SR: You do?

00:19:49

TL: She was in her own business at one time, her and her husband. And her husband passed away and she kept the business a couple years after he passed away, and it--it got too tough for her and she called me looking for a job and I was glad to have her. So she’s the cracklin’ maker, and she--and she helps us make boudin.

00:20:09

SR: Great. What about owner-operators? Do you know any women?

00:20:14

TL: No. She was--she was probably one of the few that they had left, I guess.

00:20:18

SR: Yeah. Also African American owner-operator boudin makers, I haven’t met. Have you?

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TL: No, I haven't.

00:20:25

SR: I wonder—I've heard that it's a German tradition. Have you heard anything about the origins of boudin?

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TL: Well from the stories that—and things that I heard and can put together—it was really a-- I'd guess you would say a poor man's meal, the servants and stuff. The richer people would—you know when they would kill a hog they would eat the better cuts of meat and they, the servants, probably slaves, chopped all of the, you know, maybe the liver and whatever they could scrap up I guess, and they mixed it with the rice and before you knew it they would put it in a casing and made a sausage out of that. And that—I think that's how boudin came about actually.

00:21:09

SR: It can be a very hearty meal.

00:21:12

TL: Yeah. Yeah, you have meat and you have—you know usually most people put a little bit of pork liver in it.

00:21:19

SR: Do you do that?

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TL: Yes, we put some pork liver.

00:21:24

SR: Any other organ meats?

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TL: No, that's the only thing—is just the liver.

00:21:28

SR: And do you get—do you have customers who won't get it because there is liver in it or—?

00:21:32

TL: Yeah, we have a few of them that say, *I wish ya'll wouldn't put the liver; we don't like liver*, you know. I can't make 100 different kinds of boudin, you know. And I'm not going—I'm going to only have one. We sell a lot, probably more than anybody in the immediate area for sure, and we must be doing something right you know. You can't satisfy everybody anyway, so—.

00:21:58

SR: What about wholesale? Do you do wholesale?

00:22:01

TL: No, no, it’s only sold at this location.

00:22:04

SR: Any mail order?

00:22:06

TL: No, we don't do any shipping at all.

00:22:09

SR: And you don't do any seafood boudin or anything, do you?

00:22:10

TL: We do a crawfish boudin.

00:22:12

SR: Oh, you do—oh? Tell me a little bit about that.

00:22:15

TL: Okay. The crawfish boudin—I guess the best way to explain that is I would call it a crawfish étouffée in a casing. You know it’s pretty simple to make.

00:22:31

SR: And do you use the same trinity of vegetables?

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TL: Yes, uh-hm.

00:22:38

SR: And how long have you been doing that?

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TL: The crawfish boudin, probably about 15 or so years.

00:22:47

SR: And why did you start doing that? Was there a demand?

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TL: We had a couple people that asked me about it and they—. Somebody—I don't want to say any names—they said they were selling so many pounds of such and such, and--and I stopped there one day and I got a piece and I thought it was horrible. I said, *If he can sell this I know I can*, and I just started from there. And I started off, and now we sell—probably sell around, you know, 700 or 800 pounds a week.

00:23:17

SR: That’s a lot.

00:23:20

TL: Yeah, a pretty good bit for crawfish.

00:23:23

SR: And does the price of that fluctuate a lot with the seasons and stuff?

00:23:25

TL: No, we try and hold it at the steady—we sell it at \$4.99 a pound, and you know it’s been like that for a year and a half or so. We hadn’t changed the price; we try and keep it--keep it pretty level.

00:23:40

SR: Can you get enough Louisiana crawfish or do you have to get import?

00:23:45

TL: We have to get some Chinese crawfish in.

00:23:48

SR: Yeah, it’s hard to get a steady supply.

00:23:51

TL: Right, yeah, all year-round, unless you put up—put it in your freezer, and you know thousands of pounds and have a chance of a hurricane coming and you’d be out of electricity, so—.

00:24:03

SR: Did that happen here with either Hurricane Rita or Katrina?

00:24:09

TL: No, no, none at all. It didn’t. The electricity when out for less than six hours here right at this place.

00:24:19

SR: Has it ever happened with another hurricane—that you lost?

00:24:24

TL: We had Hurricane Andrew at the other location, and we had—we were out for only about a day.

00:24:33

SR: What about the other things in your meat case—what’s your best-seller in the meat case?

00:24:40

TL: I would think sausage, and then we sell a lot of patties, you know beef patties or hamburgers ready-made and seasoned. And also the chicken patties made with chicken meat, and it’s made into a patty and we sell quite a bit of it, sometimes 2,000 of them a day on--on a weekend like on a Saturday. We--quite a few times we’ve sold 2,000 or better.

00:25:08

SR: Of the chicken patties?

00:25:10

TL: No, total chicken and beef, yeah.

00:25:13

SR: Wow, that’s--that’s amazing.

00:25:15

TL: Yeah, it started—it didn’t start off like that, you know. You just got to keep working at it and make a good patty, and we sell quite a bit of it.

00:25:23

SR: People don't want to make their own patties, I guess.

00:25:24

TL: Right, that’s the thing. People just want to do it as quick as they can, you know.

00:25:30

SR: Yeah. What about—so the boudin, do you sort of think of that as—is that a good money-maker, or is that more—you make that for demand?

00:25:41

TL: Well both. I mean it’s a good high-profit item and you know that’s what people want. People want something ready-to-go and ready-to-eat, and--and I think that’s the trick, that it’s something that you can stand up and eat or sit down and eat—pretty much anything, you know.

00:26:00

SR: Do you still eat it?

00:26:02

TL: Oh yeah, I sure do.

00:26:05

SR: Do you cook with it at home at all?

00:26:05

TL: Cook with—?

00:26:07

SR: With boudin. Like, do you ever take it home and do anything with it or—?

00:26:10

TL: No, very seldom. Maybe if we have company coming, out-of-town people, you know, that we might cook some and heat it up—heat it up at the house and eat it, but not very often.

00:26:23

SR: Do you get customers from New Orleans that you know of?

00:26:27

TL: Yeah. We’ve got—in fact since Hurricane Rita, they have a lot of people that came this a-way and we got to know quite a bit of the families and a lot of them—well a few of them even stayed around here and some of them keep coming back fairly regular, you know.

00:26:43

SR: It’s funny because I find that people in New Orleans really like boudin but it’s really hard to find it.

00:26:47

TL: Right, right. Of course back then New Orleans—you know New Orleans has a lot of good food and good restaurants but I haven’t run across a good boudin. [*Laughs*]

00:26:59

SR: I wonder why that is.

00:27:01

TL: I don't know. They had a guy that came here two or three years ago. He was from New Orleans; he was a food critic and he even wrote a book and I can't remember the guy's name, and he--he came and talked to me and was trying to figure out why these little meat markets survived so well here in South Louisiana but not hardly any other place, you know. And I think he just—I told him, *I just think that people around here are still like—this is like the country and they still like the boudin*. The only thing, you know a lot of people like to cook around here; I think that's the reason for it.

00:27:35

SR: It does seem like people in Acadiana really support the local meat markets. They want to know the person who is cutting their meat.

00:27:45

TL: Uh-hm, I think so. You know, we got a lot of customers that have been coming for years and they keep coming back. They get what they want and we try to give them what they want, I guess you'd say.

00:27:57

SR: What about when a place like a Super Wal-Mart opens up or a big supermarket—does it hurt you, do you feel, or—?

00:28:07

TL: No, they haven’t had any big ones that opened up since I’ve been here. At my other location a Super [Wal-Mart] opened up and we felt it for a couple of weeks and then we was back to normal you know. In fact to be honest with you I wish I could move into Wal-Mart’s parking lot.

00:28:27

SR: Because you’d get more traffic?

00:28:29

TL: Yes, yeah. In fact, you know Wal-Mart is straight down this street and I think that’s one good thing about our location here. You know this street goes right on the side of Wal-Mart, and I think it helps us out.

00:28:43

SR: Interesting.

00:28:43

TL: A lot of those big stores, they don't want to do this kind--kind of work, you know.

00:28:51

SR: What about, do you feel—you know you've been in the business for a long time now. Do you feel that people are eating more or less boudin over time?

00:29:01

TL: Well our boudin sales have been increasing steadily you know. It seems like they eat more.

[Laughs] They eat more over here anyway. I don't know about the other places but they—you know we keep increasing.

00:29:15

SR: When you were growing up, you know you mentioned the one place where you would go to get boudin. Were there less places then selling boudin, or more?

00:29:23

TL: I would think about the same. I think back then they probably had more places making it themselves. Now you know they have these places in gas stations that sell it, what I call the commercial boudin. You know they may have more number, the number of places may be higher right now, but I think that actually the people that made it was more back then than they do now.

00:29:50

SR: Because places get in frozen boudin, or—?

00:29:53

TL: Yeah, they get it in frozen and heat it up and sell it, and put it in the rice cooker and sell it. But you know I haven’t seen any of those that’s any good either.

00:30:00

SR: What about, you know a place like this really is—it’s not an actual boucherie, but it is carrying on a lot of the traditions of the--of the native food culture.

00:30:13

TL: Right, right. It sure is.

00:30:16

SR: Do you think about that a lot when you’re working? I mean, is that part of what you enjoy about your work?

00:30:20

TL: I’m kind of a competitive guy just by nature, you know, and I just—*[Laughs]* my wife is always wanting me to slow down but I--I don't feel like I can slow down. I just got a drive in me that wants to do it. You know, I want to do it all and hurry it up and I’m always running fast. You know most of time in fast motion to, you know, just to get all of the stuff done and—. But that--that’s about it really.

00:30:56

SR: What is your favorite part about coming to work?

00:31:01

TL: Just the--the process of doing it from start to finish and getting it completed and, you know, staying ahead on everything and getting the customers taken care of.

00:31:11

SR: Do you have a work ethic?

00:31:13

TL: Yeah, pretty strong yeah.

00:31:17

SR: When someone else is making the boudin, do you taste it or do they have—?

00:31:22

TL: Yeah, we taste it every day. You know every—even though we have a recipe, you know we do it the same way every day, it actually tastes a little bit different almost every day for some reason—type of meat or something or—. And we always taste it you know. And sometimes we might have to add or put a little bit of salt or a little bit of pepper, but that’s about the only thing we have to kind of fine-tune.

00:31:45

SR: Do you eat other people’s boudin at this point?

00:31:48

TL: Very little. I mean if I go somewhere that I heard somebody’s is good, you know I’ll stop and get a piece.

00:31:53

SR: Is there any kind of camaraderie between boudin makers? Like, are you friends with other boudin makers?

00:32:00

TL: No. I know a couple of people that work at other places, you know that’s doing well also, and I got to know them and we’ll--we’ll talk if I really need something or need to get in touch with somebody that he might know or something like that. That’s--that’s about as far as it goes.

00:32:19

SR: Let me ask you, are you the cook at your house or is your wife?

00:32:22

TL: Little bit of both, you know.

00:32:25

SR: What about—I’m also doing a project on gumbo. If you were to go make a gumbo for your family this weekend, what kind would you make?

00:32:36

TL: Well we just made one today, talking about that. We made a shrimp and okra gumbo. And that’s--that’s probably one of my favorites, is shrimp and okra.

00:32:43

SR: Here at the store, you mean?

00:32:44

TL: Uh-hm. Not to sell; just for the employees to eat—eat dinner.

00:32:50

SR: So like a staff meal?

00:32:50

TL: Yeah.

00:32:53

SR: That’s a good staff meal.

00:32:53

TL: Not all the time is it that good. You know sometimes it's just sandwiches or something.

We--we cook something every day like that. Nobody has to leave; you know, we take turns eating. They don't, you know—I mean I give them that; they don't have to pay for it or anything.

00:33:09

SR: Well that's nice. So do you put sausage in your shrimp and okra?

00:33:14

TL: No, I don't put any sausage. Just the shrimp and just okra.

00:33:17

SR: That's one thing I've found in this area, that the shrimp and okra you generally—it doesn't have meat in it.

00:33:22

TL: No, we—you know I never put any meat in it.

00:33:28

SR: Do you use tomato?

00:33:29

TL: Normally I don't but today I put two small cans of that Rotel tomato, and it came out pretty good.

00:33:36

SR: And did you make the roux or did you use a jarred roux?

00:33:39

TL: No, we make the roux.

00:33:39

SR: With what kind of oil do you use?

00:33:43

TL: I just use regular, you know, cooking oil—Crisco or something.

00:33:50

SR: Well that sounds like a great staff lunch. [*Laughs*]

00:33:51

TL: Yeah, I think they enjoy it.

00:33:54

SR: I just have one more question: So I saw that you have seven steaks in the case?

00:33:57

TL: Uh-hm.

00:33:59

SR: Do those have the bone in or out?

00:34:00

TL: Out, yeah. I wish I could get enough of them with the bone but I can't. You know it's kind of a thing of the past. They used to—I used to be able to call the slaughterhouse-type thing you know and get maybe just a shoulder and--and just slice it up into seven steaks. But that's pretty much a thing of the past.

00:34:21

SR: Why is that, do you think?

00:34:23

TL: I'm not really sure but I think it's just—on their end too it's just too labor intensive to start breaking down and selling certain parts here and there, and--and just easier not doing it, you know.

00:34:36

SR: But when you get it—the seven steaks—in from your distributor, why do you think they take the bone out?

00:34:43

TL: Less shipping weight. You know, the weight of the shipping, you figure a whole lot of them—how much the bones cost—so that's why just about everything is boneless.

00:34:56

SR: All right. But even without the bone people use--people still use that as, like, gravy steak?

00:35:02

TL: Oh yeah, that's one of our best-selling steaks. In fact it is our best-selling steak.

00:35:06

SR: Why is it so popular here, do you think?

00:35:10

TL: Well it's a--a fairly inexpensive piece of meat and it's a good piece of meat and people around here know how to cook it, you know. They make gravies or stew and chop it up and make stew meat with it, so it can be used for a couple of different things, and you know just a nice tasty piece of meat.

00:35:27

SR: If you just threw that on the grill, would that be any good?

00:35:29

TL: No, it would be--it would be a little bit on the tough side. It's not an ideal steak to grill—
mostly for gravies.

00:35:39

SR: So one final question: Do you eat the casing or not?

00:35:44

TL: I don't. Some people do but I don't, you know. I just bite it and pull it out.

00:35:52

SR: Okay, well, thank you for giving me your time.

00:35:55

TL: You're welcome.

00:35:56

[End Ted Legnon Interview]