

FLOYD POCHE
Poche's Market - Breaux Bridge, LA

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Interviewer: Sara Roahen
Length: 49 minutes
Project: Southern Boudin Trail

[Begin Floyd Poche Interview]

00:00:00

Sara Roahen: This is Sara Roahen for the Southern Foodways Alliance. It's Thursday July 19, 2007 and I'm Breaux Bridge, Louisiana. And if you could for me say your full name, and your birthdate, and how you make your living, Sir?

00:00:16

Floyd Poche: My name is Floyd Lee Poche. I was born August 17, 1952—almost 55 years-old—and in Breaux Bridge, and I make my living by having a meat—specialty meat processing. We have a retail store that we've been having for, since 1962, that my dad had before me. So, and I bought it in 1976, so it's 31 years that I've been doing it. And about 15 years ago we got into shipping the boudin and other Cajun products across the country. We opened a USDA processing plant, which allows us to ship our products all over the continental United States. And we also have an RV park that we have further from here. So I actually have three businesses, so I earn a living from all three.

00:01:11

SR: And so you were born in Breaux Bridge?

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FP: I was actually born a few miles down the road in a little town called Arnaudville, but—. That's actually where I was born.

00:01:22

SR: Could you tell me, to start out, a little bit about your heritage: where your parents or grandparents came from, and how they might have gotten into this business?

00:01:32

FP: Yeah. Actually, our great-grandparents and stuff came from the border of Germany and France, so we're actually—we're not from the Nova Scotia part of—. The Poche family is from that region and they came, well, a long time ago. I don't know exactly what year but, and they landed in New Orleans and then moved their way up to, to this area and bought some property. And actually the little area we live in right now is actually called Poche Bridge—the same name as our last name. It's kind of like in a little area that's—. But you know they have the famous Bayou Teche that's right in back of us that crosses—that's the longest bayou in Louisiana, and they had built a little bridge a long time ago to cross the bayou right here on my great-grandparents' land. So they named the little community Poche Bridge because of that, and they had like a cotton gin and stuff like that, you know. And then my grandfather had a little ole shack that he used to slaughter a pig on the side of the bayou and then bring the—bring the pig up to his little store and actually started selling pork meat and boudin and crackling and stuff like that back in the early '40s or something. Something like that—1940s.

00:02:47

SR: And so that store was around Poche Bridge? It wasn't—?

00:02:51

FP: Yeah, actually where—right in front of the one we have now. Right to the right of here.

Right in the same area, yeah.

00:02:58

SR: And so the side of your family that's from the German and French border, that's which side of your family? Both?

00:03:05

FP: The Poche—the Poche family, and then my mother is from North Louisiana. She was a Chapman, so I guess that's kind of Irish. So it's kind of a strange mix. Yeah.

00:03:17

SR: Okay. And so did—so it was your great-grandparents who moved here first. Is that right?

00:03:23

FP: Right, uh-hm.

00:03:25

SR: And do you know if they were in the meat business at all back in Europe?

00:03:30

FP: I'm not quite sure. You know we never did research it that far back, but it's been a long time ago you know, but I know like the great-grandparents were settled in this area, you know, and had a cotton gin, and my grandpa had a little meat business. And then my dad built this—this cement block, the actual store, in like 1962. But he actually had a little place on the Breaux Bridge Highway that goes to Lafayette in 1958, that he ran for four years, like there, but it was some property he had rented, so—. But he owned this property here and he came back and built the permanent store now that we have.

00:04:05

SR: And so you said that your grandfather made boudin. Do you have any idea how long that's been a tradition, boudin making, in this area?

00:04:13

FP: Shew, I—probably as long as, gosh they go back, probably you know that's—the Cajuns were famous for using up a whole pig, you know and making—using everything on a hog. Like the song says: *everything on a hog is good*. So they—they used everything to make boudin and cracklings, and then you know whatever else they'd use the pig for, like roasts and stews and stuff like that—salt meat.

00:04:43

SR: So when you were growing up, on what sorts of occasions would you eat boudin?

00:04:49

FP: Probably to stay alive [*Laughs*] because we were poor back then, and you know—and they made boudin. It was just something you ate you know, and you know rice was pretty cheap and plentiful, and so—. I mean, you know the basic Cajun cooking is like really a well-cooked, cheap form of food in a sense that's—it actually comes up good after you cook it a long time, you know. Kind of, that's the tradition of Cajun food. It's not the most expensive food they have in the world. [*Laughs*]

00:05:21

SR: Can you describe, for the record, what boudin is and what it contains?

00:05:26

FP: Yeah. The boudin we—we make has pork and pork liver, and you know onions and green onion tops, and a little bit of jalapeño peppers that we added over the last 10 years or so, you know. Before it was made with the green cayenne peppers, but it's kind of, that's something that's hard to get in this area now, whereas the jalapeño peppers took over. So we use that and red cayenne pepper and salt, and that's basically it, you know. It's real simple ingredients.

00:06:01

SR: So the green cayenne pepper, did that use to be prolific in this area?

00:06:07

FP: Right. Almost everybody back 30 years ago had a pepper field, you know. It was like a cash crop, and the Cajuns used to go and—and they'd grow cayenne peppers and process them and

make hot sauce and send them to the other areas of the country. But all this now has probably moved to Mexico [*Laughs*] and became jalapeño peppers. Yeah.

00:06:28

SR: And that's where you get—is that where you get your jalapeno peppers from, Mexico?

00:06:33

FP: I imagine that's where it comes from, you know. We buy from the local produce people and stuff like that now.

00:06:39

SR: And how does your, the boudin that you're making today, compare to the boudin that your grandfather and father made? Has the recipe changed much?

00:06:49

FP: Well you know, of course it's changed quite a bit because the ingredients has changed a lot. You know, you try to keep it as traditional as possible, but as—as the years go by you know, younger people that's eating boudin, I don't find they like as much liver in their boudin. So you know, naturally we slowed down on putting as much liver in boudin. And probably the—whereas we buy just the meat we actually use for the boudin; we buy meat especially for it, you know, like pork shoulders and pork butts, which is a real good piece of meat, whereas a long time ago they would slaughter the whole hog and put a lot of the fat, you know, a lot of the jowls and stuff like that; a lot of the pieces that wasn't good, like to make roasts or steaks or whatever

you would—you know, more trimmings. But now we make so much boudin that we buy the meat especially, the—you know, to make boudin. And it's a better quality of meat than there was 50 or 60 years ago. You know, like over the traditional time, whereas a lot—probably a lot healthier for you and a lot leaner, because when you used to eat boudin 50 years ago it was, you'd get all greased up with all the *[Laughs]*—the grease coming from the boudin, you know.

00:08:03

SR: What about your personal taste? Has that changed? How do you prefer it—with a more livery taste or less?

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FP: I think I've adjusted to the way it tastes now a lot more. I think it's probably the best—in my opinion the best—we've ever made, you know, the one we're making now. But I guess if you were used to eating it back then, it's an acquired taste, you know. You know boudin, you either like mine or you like the other guy's, but some people don't put any liver at all in it, which you know it's—I'm not saying it's bad, but you know it's just more traditional to have a little bit of the liver taste in it.

00:08:41

SR: So I was—when I was walking into the store this morning, I saw a man. At 9:00 a.m. I saw a man buying two pounds of boudin. Do you think he was eating that for breakfast?

00:08:50

FP: Oh I'm pretty sure. We have some that buy it at 4 o'clock in the morning when we open.

[Laughs] So I mean, you know in this area there's a lot of oil rigs, and you know oil rigs are—work usually 24-hours a day. So we sell a lot to the oil field companies and they'll—they'll buy trays of hot boudin, and you know 10--12 pounds at a time, and bring it to their workers on the oil rigs and let them eat it. It doesn't matter if it's 6 o'clock or 7 o'clock or 8 o'clock in the morning, you know—any time. It's kind of a product that they eat all day long.

00:09:26

SR: What about you? Do you still eat boudin or—or are you tired of it?

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FP: Oh no, I still eat it, you know. Not as much I guess, or not any less. It's you know, just mostly taste it every once in awhile and make sure it's still—. But every once in a while we'll, I'll get hungry for a piece and I'll eat some.

00:09:43

SR: And are you open at 4:00 a.m.?

00:09:45

FP: Yes, ma'am. 4:00 in the morning until 8:00 at night.

00:09:50

SR: Wow. What about, I know that you have a seafood boudin. When did that start becoming something that Cajuns did?

00:09:59

FP: Probably we started making it, probably about 15 years ago I would say. Maybe a little bit longer than that. And it was just something to add, another—another type of boudin, you know. The one we make is just a crawfish a boudin; it's not really a seafood. Some places make seafood with crabmeat, shrimp, and crawfish. And then some people make chicken boudin also, with just chicken meat you know. But the pork is way better—way better product out of all of them, you know, way better substance—excuse me. Way better seller.

00:10:29

SR: And is the seafood boudin popular with locals, or is that more of a tourist thing?

00:10:34

FP: I'd—it's real popular with locals, you know, and both. I mean it's—you know I mean it's not as popular as pork boudin, but I mean it's still—it's still a good item and something that we sell you know.

00:10:52

SR: Can you tell me, can you describe roughly the process of making it without divulging any big secrets?

00:11:01

FP: Well there's—there's really no big secrets into making boudin, you know. Everybody has the best boudin. All the local stores you're going to go to, everybody you're going to interview makes the best boudin [*Laughs*] in the country, so there's really no big secrets. And you know the process we use, we buy boneless pork meat and it's, you know, it consists of pork shoulder meat. And you know buy liver, pork liver, and we boil the two in water, boil—we actually boil it separate, the pork and the pork liver because—because like I've said before, we find the taste overpowering with the liver. So when we drain it out we don't put any of the broth from the liver. We use the broth from the pork meat to mix in with the rice and onions and stuff. And then after it's boiled, you know we pass it through a grinder like a quarter inch blade, and we add our onions and stuff like that. We don't—we don't boil our onions either. We put them in there, like raw onions you know, and mix it with—. Some places boil their onions and mix with it. And—and then we, after it's all grind together, then we mix it with the rice and the seasoning and the broth from the pork that has been boiled. And then we stuff it into the casing.

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SR: What is the casing?

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FP: It's a hog casing that, you know, you buy traditional sausage casing. It's called a 35--38 pork casing, you know hog casing. It's a salted product.

00:12:37

SR: So you don't put garlic in boudin, huh?

00:12:39

FP: No, we don't. Some places do, you know, but we don't actually put it. Ours is real simple. It's a real simple recipe. **[Laughs]** We put meat in ours. That's the secret ingredient we have.

[Laughs]

00:12:52

SR: I don't know if you should be telling me that. And then, what—how do you cook it?

00:12:56

FP: Well you see, the meat and everything is all cooked once it's stuffed into the casing, so actually the only thing that's raw in the boudin is the casing. And that's real, you know that's paper thin. So if we like—when we cook it out here we put it in some water and just let it simmer and don't let it actually boil, you know, and just let it get up to about 180-degrees or something like that, and—and then it's done. It's nice and hot, you know kind of steaming but not—it's not something you can boil in a pot and just let it boil because the casing will bust. It'll swell up and bust, you know. So you just—. And then some people, you know, put it in the microwave oven and heat it up. Some people put it on a barbeque pit and grill it, so it's—it's a bunch of different ways, so you know it's changed a lot over the years. But the traditional way was just to put it in water and let it simmer, you know, to get it hot again. And then in the olden days they'd actually wash out the hog's intestines that—of the hog that they butchered you know—and they'd clean

out the intestines and stuff it into those. And so, I mean those were real tough so you really had to—then you could probably boil it—*[Phone rings]*—that’s good. He can call back.

00:14:11

SR: So those were tougher when they would use it—?

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FP: Right, yeah, from the actual pig—yeah. The casing now is all processed. It’s all real small and, and you know they get a lot of yards of casing in a pig. It’s not like real pig, you know. It might make a bunch of layers—they separate the layers. It’s kind of process they go through.

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SR: Where does the meat come from? Is it around here or—?

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FP: The meat we use for our pig?

00:14:39

SR: Yeah.

00:14:39

FP: No. We buy, actually from a commercial pig that’s slaughtered—the company is John Morrell. It’s—we get it—that’s in Sioux Falls, South Dakota. So we get a truck of meat every

Sunday afternoon fresh. You know the pig is actually killed on Thursday or Friday of the weekend and then brought over here after they're done, you know, so it's pretty fresh.

00:15:04

SR: And just to get away from boudin for a minute, do you get other parts of those pigs for some of the other things that you make?

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FP: Oh sure. We do a lot of, you know—we do a lot of pork roast; we season pork roast and stuff. We get—and then the stuffed pork chops and ribs and all that. We get, like, almost like the whole hog but kind of separated already. We're kind of the commercial way of doing it.

00:15:31

SR: And how long do you think the average person waits before they eat your boudin? Do they eat it right away or take it home?

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FP: Well [*Laughs*] that's hard to say. If they're supposed to be taking it home it will get there, but a lot of people eat it—some of them will eat it up on the counter when they buy it, and some of them eat it in their car. That's what a lot of people you know say already, how they just sit in the parking lot and eat part of a boudin. And also we have a dining room so they can sit and eat some in there also, you know.

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SR: I've noticed that even no matter what the size of the place, is it seems to be that boudin and crackling always go together. Do you have a theory about why that's true?

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FP: Well I guess that was the two parts of the pig that kind of went together. Like when you're trimming off the pork so you could boil it for your boudin, and then the skin is kind of hard, you know, so they would actually chop those up and fry the cracklings and boil the pork meat kind of the same—the same time and the same area, you know. And whereas the other parts of the pig that you eat—back in the older times they were either salted down or pickled it or do something like that, and you could eat it later, like in the next few days. Whereas the boudin and crackling kind of had to be—well the crackling, after it's fried, you know it lasts awhile, but it just kind of is a traditional—boudin and crackling kind of go together, huh.

00:17:06

SR: Yeah. So is pickle meat a Cajun thing?

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FP: I'm not quite sure, but I think it is. I know Cajuns are—everybody must have pickled meat at one time, you know, across the country. But I think the Cajuns did pickle a lot of meat, you know marinated it and pickled it and all that stuff.

00:17:28

SR: So what about your parents, did they speak French at home?

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FP: Sure. Like my grandpa, that's all he spoke was French. And my dad spoke—well actually my mom was from North Louisiana, so not enough French speaking there, so she didn't know much French, but all the kids—and then having the business in this area too. It's almost like a given that somebody has to talk French. Not as much now as it was like 20--30 years ago, where a lot of the older customers only spoke French, you know, when they come in the store. So you had to know how to speak both languages.

00:18:02

SR: Do you speak French?

00:18:03

FP: [*Speaking French*]. Je parle un petit peu de français. Je connais pas si c'est le meilleur français tu peux parler, mais je comprends joliment le français.

00:18:12

SR: Okay. I think I understood most of that. [*Laughs*] Well, who was the cook in your house?

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FP: Oh my dad definitely, you know. It was—you know the Cajun type cooking was my dad. And actually my mom was the North Louisiana version with the white gravy and the biscuits and

stuff like that, and my dad was more the brown smothered down, you know, the Cajun—the Cajun type cooking; the, what they call it, one-pot cooking, you know. These big black cast iron pots where they would put all their meat and onions and bell peppers and garlic and smother it down. So he was the master at that [*Laughs*], which everybody in Cajun country is.

00:18:55

SR: Especially—it's especially different from other parts of the country. I think that men here cook a lot.

00:18:59

FP: Right. You know, and we've—we've had that discussion before. We were seeing how—you know with having the RV park down the road, and a lot of the local people that go, you know that comes to the RV park, they all have their black pots out on the weekends and each camper is cooking, whereas you probably go to a campground in another state, you would probably see—wouldn't see anybody cooking, or maybe just grilling. But it's amazing to see that, you know, like on a Friday or Saturday night at the RV park, how you'll run into a lot of the people cooking outside in these black pots.

00:19:35

SR: And what would they be cooking? What they fished that day or—?

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FP: Yeah. Well they—you know they like to cook fish courtbouillon. But a lot of them make jambalayas and just smothered meats, you know like—. You know that—that's the thing, I think: the Cajun people had the, really the worst part of the cows and the pork, so they'd put it in black pots and cook it three or four hours until they would get real tender and real good, which you know a lot of people is trying to copy nowadays, you know. It's—really it turns out good after it's been cooked for a while, but it's not like a ribeye. You go into the stores, or some places you go now and they—they cook it in minutes, but it doesn't happen. Even the kind of meals we serve, it's—we still do a lot of that one-pot cooking, you know, like the pork stew where you actually cook it for two or three hours, and smothered beef where it's been smothering for two hours and stuff like that. Which a normal restaurant can't really serve, you know, because of the time. Nobody wants to sit down and wait three hours, but we cook it ahead of time and serve it like that.

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SR: And so at the RV park people are cooking like that over their campfires?

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FP: Over a campfire, or they bring their butane bottles, you know with their burners outside. You know they're even boiling crawfish, some of them are [*Laughs*], or stuff—stuff like that, you know so they have—it's something to see sometimes.

00:20:55

SR: Do they invite you over?

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FP: Oh yeah [*Laughs*]. There's more, probably more than we want to go to, you know. That's kind of one of the, one of the things when my—when we first decided to build the RV park and my wife went and said, *Man, isn't that something? They're paying you to stay here plus they inviting you to eat and they're feeding you*; so I said, *How can you go wrong with something like that.* [*Laughs*]

00:21:18

SR: That sounds like a fun place to be. Did your father like your mom's North Louisiana cooking?

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FP: Yeah. I mean there was some things, you know he—he would really enjoy her cooking like the cornbread dressing. They would make like a whole pan of cornbread with maybe chicken pieces in it, or pork pieces in it you know, which—which we kind of we wouldn't do around here. They cooked it all in a pan like cornbread, and then you know he liked the white gravy too—so biscuits and gravy and all that stuff.

00:21:54

SR: What about, we're also working on a gumbo oral history project. Can you tell me, you must have had a couple different gumbos in your house if both your parents were cooking?

00:22:05

FP: Right. Well actually my mom, they wouldn't cook gumbo in North Louisiana, so she had to learn from my dad down here you know. So when he made his, you know—making his gumbo. You had wanted to know about a gumbo, or you know how—? **[Laughs]** I don't understand.

00:22:21

SR: Oh, I'm just wondering what kind of gumbo you had—you grew up eating?

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FP: We had, we had all kinds you know. We had the, you know shrimp and okra, and chicken and sausage, and mostly the chicken and sausage. My dad loved to hunt duck, so we had a lot of duck and sausage gumbo, and a lot of just duck gumbo. **[Laughs]** You know even, even rabbit and a lot of wild game gumbo. We had a lot growing up, you know, because even the little birds—. They had black birds back in those days, and they was plentiful, and they'd shoot a whole bunch of—they call it a chock in Cajun country **[In English: gackle]**. A chock is those little black birds, and we'd make a chock gumbo, which is—probably you'll never see anymore, somebody cooking something like that you know. And even a gumbo is, the reason they cook it the way they do is because of the—the type of meat you would put in there, where you would—they'd add the roux, you know the flour and the oil and get it nice and dark, and then add your onions and celery and garlic and boil it, and put some—if you had some wild game, and just put it in there and boil until it got tender, you know. And then it was real good after boiling it for two or three hours and then having the—the flavors of the meats and all the onions just blended together.

00:23:36

SR: Do you know how to spell that word, chock?

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FP: Chock? Probably just like a chalk. I would say like a chalkboard. Yeah, how would you spell that? I'm not very good at spelling. *[Laughs]*

00:23:50

SR: And so how dark would your dad get his roux?

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FP: He'd probably get it nice, nice and dark, you know. I guess a dark brown—not black, you know but dark brown.

00:24:05

SR: And are you the cook in your family?

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FP: I do a lot of cooking, but you know probably—my wife is a good cook too but she's—she's a Cajun girl too. She's—but she likes to, she likes to really cook good. She takes her time and really cooks. She doesn't cook that often, but she's a real good cook. And then probably I cook a lot more than her and, but I'm not as good as her, but I'm better than a lot of other people. But

she's a real good cook. **[Laughs]** You know because that was kind of her tradition in her family too, like you know to make a supper and then invite all the relatives, you know. So it's a big deal over here in Cajun country to make, say we're cooking tonight. You know like we, if everybody comes you might have 20 or 30 people coming and they all sit outside and, you know, stir the pot outside and everything. And it will take awhile and naturally drink beer while it's going on.

[Laughs]

00:24:53

SR: And that happens at your house?

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FP: Not too often because we're so busy with the store, but at the campground you know, I'll go cook with some of the friends and stuff like that. We usually go out there and—but mostly when I'm there we grill something, you know barbeque or something. I still, I still love barbeque like—. But we smother stuff down over here at the restaurant everyday. You know we have like this, the one pot cooking so we eat that so often at the store and at the restaurant here so when we cook at night it's usually something like grilled or barbequed, or maybe a boiled seafood: crabs or crawfish or something like that.

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SR: And what is your wife's name?

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FP: Karen. Karen Hebert, before she was a Poche. [*Laughs*]

00:25:37

SR: Another Cajun name.

00:25:38

FP: Right.

00:25:38

SR: Do you have kids?

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FP: Yeah. We have, we have a little girl together, and then with my first wife I have a son that is Scotty. His name is Scotty, and my little girl's name is Rebecca.

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SR: And I don't know—I don't know what their ages are, but could you tell me that?

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FP: Yeah. Scotty is 25 and Rebecca is 13. So—.

00:25:57

SR: And is your son involved in the business at all?

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FP: Yeah. Actually he's, he was just here and he was—he works in the USDA processing, you know. That's kind of his thing. He likes—he mixes all the boudin, the sausages, and the andouille and tasso and all that. So he knows how to make all that already, so he's doing good.

00:26:17

SR: So there's a good chance that Poche's will be around for a long time, it sounds like.

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FP: Well hopefully so. *[Laughs]*

00:26:26

SR: What is your impression—I mean when I drive around this area, it's—it doesn't seem like the influx of fast-food and huge supermarkets has really maybe affected the regional cooking. Do you—what do you feel about. I don't know, the cooking traditions of this region? Do you feel like they're thriving or starting to die out a little bit?

00:26:56

FP: It's kind of, you know, with everybody being at a face-pace I actually think it's dying out a little bit, and I think our restaurant is kind of very unique with food we serve. You know like I was saying, some of the stuff that takes awhile to cook. Some of the, some of the stuff we start cooking at 5:00 in the morning, you know, and it's not ready 'til 9--10 o'clock, so you know it's

really a slow process. So there's not a lot of—it's probably a lot of time and expense, so I guess this type of cooking, I think, is kind of going away. But then you know, I think it's still real popular because it's kind of unique compared to a lot of the other stuff you eat in the area, you know. I mean our business is great because of that, I think: you know that we still actually cook all—everything ourselves and not buy stuff that's precooked and just warm it up like a lot of places do.

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SR: And how long have you had the lunch business?

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FP: Well actually since I bought it from my dad in '76, but he actually—he cooked lunch too you know. So I learned that from him, you know. He would cook basically the same way and—and all that.

00:28:04

SR: And do you have someone who's overseeing the kitchen, or is that you?

00:28:09

FP: Well no. We have—we've trained quite a few of that, that can cook it—you know cook the same way and kind of have recipes to follow that certain—certain days we can cook the certain products, but yeah—.

00:28:22

SR: So one thing that you have on some, for some lunches, is pork backbone stew?

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FP: Right. Yeah that—

00:28:31

SR: Can you tell me a little bit about that?

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FP: Yeah. I mean the pork backbone is like really, you know, well like it says, it's the backbone of a pig that's well-seasoned and cooked in roux base, you know with—with water and just smothered down 'til it's real thick and good. That's one of the most popular things we serve, you know you can't hardly find backbone stew anywhere you go. I don't know if you've ever seen it before but—. [*Laughs*]

00:28:57

SR: Not much.

00:29:00

FP: Yeah. We serve it actually two days a week, and you know it usually sells. And that's one of the things that we start—like I said you know, we start maybe cooking at 5:00 in the morning and let it cook slow and long for about four hours, so it makes a real good gravy and stuff—rice and gravy. That's Cajun country, huh?

00:29:18

SR: Yeah, that's the staple.

00:29:21

FP: Right.

00:29:21

SR: And also, it looks like you have crawfish étouffée every day.

00:29:25

FP: Right. You know, I mean that's really a tradition especially in Breaux Bridge. Breaux Bridge is supposed to be the crawfish capital of the world, so I mean you have to—. If somebody is coming to Breaux Bridge, you have to be able to eat crawfish when you come to Breaux Bridge, so that's probably—we sell a lot of crawfish étouffée also.

00:29:43

SR: What was the—how popular was crawfish when you were growing up?

00:29:45

FP: Probably not as popular as it is now. You know actually, man the crawfish is really an item, and it's really popular you know boiled, étoufféd, fried, and—and in boudin, and you know fettuccine and all kinds of stuff. So you know that's really caught fire, I think the last 10 to 15

years. The crawfish is really popular. I mean back, back 40 years ago you was almost embarrassed to eat crawfish. You'd almost have to hide because nobody—they thought you were really poor and out of the way if you ate crawfish, you know. So, but then it's really a gourmet item, so it really reversed itself over the years. But I can remember, man—they said, *Oh man, you have to eat crawfish again*; you know like boil—and mostly it was just either étouffée or boiled back, back when we were growing up.

00:30:38

SR: And did you like it?

00:30:40

FP: Yeah, I always did like it you know. It was always—my dad was a good cook, so there wasn't much he cooked that we didn't like. Everything was, was good you know.

00:30:48

SR: Are your parents still alive?

00:30:48

FP: No, they both—they both passed on you know.

00:30:56

SR: Do you have other family members in the business?

00:30:59

FP: Yeah. Actually I have one of my brothers that works with me, and then my son in here, and I used to have some—some other sisters. But at the campground it's actually my sister and my nephew and nieces, that run that for me over there. She's kind of in charge of the campground.

00:31:21

SR: How many siblings did you have?

00:31:24

FP: We were eight growing up in the family, so we had a big, a big family. So we had to eat all this kind of stuff like we did, yeah.

00:31:29

SR: It's a lot of people to feed.

00:31:32

FP: Right.

00:31:34

SR: What about, what is the size of your staff here?

00:31:38

FP: Probably now about—at the restaurant and the processing plant, it's probably about 65 employees, yeah. So we're opened seven days a week and with—we run a processing plant too, where we wholesale a lot of stuff to go out of town.

00:31:51

SR: Can we talk a little bit about some of the other products that you make? Especially the meat products because they're—a lot of them are very unusual. Maybe we can start with the chaudin. What is that?

00:32:05

FP: Yeah. The chaudin is probably one of the—we're one of the few places that has a USDA inspected pig stomach. It's a pig stomach that's stuffed with more pork. You know, it's ground pork and seasoned with onions and bell—it's kind of like a meatloaf in a sense that's stuffed inside of a whole pig stomach, and you can actually smother it down. It's one of the things you can put in a black pot and you can pot roast it and smother it down for two or three hours, or you can just bake it in the oven if you—if you don't really know how to pot roast. But it's so much better: pot roast it and you have the gravy to go over your rice and stuff like that, whereas if you just bake you just slice it like a meatloaf, you know. And actually the stomach serves as a casing, you know that—to surround the meat.

00:32:52

SR: Uh-huh. Do you eat the stomach casing?

00:32:54

FP: Oh yeah, sure. Yeah, it's kind of chewy, but you know what—especially if you smother it down for awhile, then it will get real tender.

00:33:04

SR: And ponce—is that how you say it?

00:33:09

FP: Yeah. Ponce is—a lot of people call it the same thing, you know. It's really the same thing; you know a ponce is actually a cow's stomach. But we don't have a cow's stomach, but, and then a—you know pork stomach, we call it a chaudin here, but the people—some of the people call it maul or—it is, a ponce in French is stomach, you know. It's, so I mean even you have a ponce. *[Laughs]*

00:33:36

SR: Yeah, I do. *[Laughs]*

00:33:38

FP: Well I didn't mean you have a big ponce, but anyhow that's what, that's what the French term for stomach is: ponce. So—.

00:33:44

SR: Oh so they're basically the same thing, just from different animals?

00:33:47

FP: Yeah right. Well it's—yeah, I guess. I guess that's what you—you could say.

00:33:54

SR: And tasso?

00:33:54

FP: Tasso is, it's a real lean piece of pork that's sliced about an inch thick and heavily seasoned, you know, and then smoked. And it's, you know, kind of cured too. It has a little bit of cure like—I couldn't say exactly a ham because it's a lot drier and harder than ham is, not as moist you know, but people dice it up and they add it like to their jambalayas or even gumbo and creamed sauces. It's a real popular item for other restaurants to use like in their, in their fancy cooking. You know they have a tasso cream sauce, and where actually they don't use very much of it, but then it adds a lot of flavor to it, their dishes. They'll put it in sauces like this and serve it maybe with fish or with crawfish, or with even more beef or pork you know. It's just, that's mainly what it's used for.

00:34:47

SR: And did your father and grandfather make that also?

00:34:51

FP: Not—not my parents. I don't know how long ago tasso—you know it came from another area of Cajun—then the locals here—. But when I bought the business, then we actually smoking and doing, adding more stuff.

00:35:08

SR: Okay. What about turducken? How long have you been making that?

00:35:12

FP: Probably about 10 years now. We—you know it's, the turducken is a whole turkey that's—excuse me—that's de-boned and stuffed with chicken in a duck. And then we add dressing, you know, and we have a cornbread and rice dressing, or we have a seafood dressing of crawfish and shrimp, and one with just seasoning you know.

00:35:32

SR: Do you ever eat that?

00:35:34

FP: Oh yeah, once in a while, but it's more of a novelty item, I would say, than a Cajun item. It's probably—actually it probably came from France a long time ago, the turducken, where you—I guess some of the butchers didn't have nothing to do, sitting around and—**[Laughs]**. But it's actually, and sometimes it's gotten pretty popular you know, but it's probably more people from out of state buy it than locals. I would say = like, you know we ship stuff so it's probably one of the most popular items around the holidays to ship to other parts of the country.

00:36:12

SR: What about andouille?

00:36:13

FP: Andouille is a, is a coarse ground pork that we make, and it's a little chunks of meat like about an inch round, and it's stuffed into a beef middle or a beef casing that's about 50 to 55 millimeters big, and—and it's heavily smoked and stuff like that. So when we peel, we kind of peel off the casing and slice it up and use in a gumbo and jambalayas and stuff, kind of the same way you do the tasso, but it's just a little bit different flavor you know. Then other places make it and it's, you know—it's just kind of like regular smoked sausage, but this is—ours is like a real big one, a real nice one. It was voted by—what is the *Bloomberg's Report*, the one in New York City—as the best andouille in the United States.

00:37:02

SR: Oh yeah? Congratulations.

00:37:04

FP: Yeah. [*Laughs*]

00:37:05

SR: I've had it. I can vouch for it.

00:37:08

FP: That's good.

00:37:08

SR: It's more of a—it's hard, right?

00:37:10

FP: Right. And it's—yeah, compared—it's not something like smoked sausage where you would just slice it up and eat, you know like barbeque, put on a grill. But some people do, and maybe slice it a little bit smaller, but it's a good item. We sell a lot of it.

00:37:25

SR: And then you have some fresh sausages, right?

00:37:30

FP: Yeah, we have all kinds of fresh sausages, you know. We have just a regular pure pork sausage that actually is made just with salt and pepper, and then beef and pork the same way. And then we have a chaurice sausage—we call it chaurice, and it's a kind of sausage with a little bit of vinegar and garlic and green onion tops and stuff like that. And then we have green onion sausage, and jalapeño sausage, and even got pork and alligator sausage, or crawfish and pork, and chicken sausage now, and all kinds of stuff like that.

00:37:58

SR: Well that's one thing I noticed, is that—you have a chicken andouille, right?

00:38:04

FP: Right. It's kind of some of the chefs that—that were using our andouille, wanted a little bit leaner version of the pork, or a little bit smoother flavor of meat. And so he suggested we try a chicken andouille, and so—actually our biggest customer for chicken andouille is in Chicago.

[Laughs] So he buys it; we have 1,000 pounds going to him, going up there today in fact, you know, of chicken andouille, just chicken andouille. He doesn't buy anything else.

00:38:35

SR: Is that a Louisiana restaurant?

00:38:37

FP: No. It's, he's a distributor, and he sells to the other chefs in the area, and God knows what they use it for, but they buy it. **[Laughs]**

00:38:45

SR: What do you think of that? Do you think that your—your father and grandfather are rolling over in their graves?

00:38:52

FP: Probably so. **[Laughs]** Probably so, you know. They couldn't imagine making something like that, huh?

00:38:56

SR: Wow, I don't know. So they made andouille also?

00:39:02

FP: Well actually, no. They just, they made the boudin, probably pure pork sausage, and the cracklings, and sliced a few porks, and maybe a little bit of the pickled pork and marinated pork, and that was about it you know—maybe some salt. I don't make it, salt meat. I know they used to, so I guess that's one of the items that, that we don't do that they did.

00:39:24

SR: What is salt meat?

00:39:26

FP: It's just pork meat that's, just you put a bunch of salt on it and just roll it up in salt, you know, and let it sit for a few days 'til it's all salt.

00:39:35

SR: And what do you use that for?

00:39:38

FP: To cook with, you know like a lot of people eat it with boiled cabbage or stuff like that, or just—we don't sell it, so I don't know what really know what they use it for anymore. [*Laughs*]

But I know, like some people just try to boil all the salt out of it and get it—it's kind of a unique flavor. It's like a salty piece of meat.

00:39:53

SR: And when you were growing up, was there andouille being eaten in this area?

00:39:59

FP: Not really that I remember, you know. We—once I bought the business from my dad, and then we started selling—it came from Opelousas, the andouille we were—we'd buy andouille to resell it in my store. And you know it would sell good, and I said well it sells good, so I started making it myself you know. So then we started making it better than what we—actually the place I was buying it from is out of business now. So, yeah.

00:40:27

SR: How much has the business expanded since your father—since you bought it from your father?

00:40:35

FP: Well he actually had the business for 14 years, if I can put it in simple terms. He had it for 14 years, and we sell more in a month than he did in 14 years. **[Laughs]** So—so I guess it's a big difference. But then the prices have changed too, so it's kind of changed a lot.

00:40:53

SR: How many pounds do you make a day, or a week, of sausage let's say—or let's say just boudin?

00:41:01

FP: Boudin, probably we make about 6,000 pounds a week of boudin, you know, and about 3,000 pounds of andouille and a couple of thousand pounds of tasso. Then you know, we know we also do boneless stuffed chicken and a lot of stuffed pork chops, which is by the pork chop, so it's kind of hard to say the weights and stuff like that, but we do a lot of that stuff.

00:41:19

SR: And do you ship much boudin?

00:41:21

FP: Yeah, oh yeah. We have, you know, we ship a lot of it. We ship a lot of everything now, you know, because we sell to other wholesalers in the area since we're USDA inspected.

00:41:34

SR: I wonder if it's mostly Cajuns buying the boudin.

00:41:36

FP: Probably not. There's probably a lot of different people getting brave enough to start eating boudin all over the country now. *[Laughs]*

00:41:44

SR: It must be kind of fun to see people discover that.

00:41:45

FP: Yeah, I guess so. It—we do a restaurant show once—once a year we do a restaurant show in New Orleans, and I guess that’s where you really see it. We always serve boudin at the restaurant show you know, kind of promoting our product and stuff, and I guess that’s where you can really see people that’s never eaten boudin before—at the restaurant show in New Orleans. Because at the store here, if you’re stopping here you’ve probably eaten boudin already, you know, so we don’t run into very many people here that haven’t eaten it. But in New Orleans it’s—. And some people can't stand the taste of it. It’s just amazing, and some of them can't eat enough of it you know, so it’s kind of, it’s an acquired taste—. Because we, we sell some of the—we sell some of the andouille and tasso to some restaurants in the Boston area, and actually the guys came down one year, and I mean the minute they put boudin in their mouth they couldn’t take it, you know, and they had to almost spit it out. **[Laughs]** And then after, after being over here a few times, then they started eating it, and he’s getting me to ship up. The same guy is getting me, he gets me to ship him up some boudin for his personal use every once in a while. But you know—. **[Interruption]** But trying to get some people in Boston to eat the product, it might be kind of harder when they’re used to clam chowder, huh?

00:43:09

SR: **[Laughs]** It’s different flavor. I mean I know especially the more livery—the livery ones tend to turn people off.

00:43:20

FP: Right.

00:43:20

SR: Oh, I wanted to ask you about hogshead cheese. Do you make that?

00:43:24

FP: Oh yeah. We sure do, and actually, you know like a long time ago, like anything else it was actually made with the hog's head, but actually now we just make it with pork and some of the pork—the pork skins, you know, pork rinds. We boil it up together and mix it with the onions and stuff like that. Because we make so much of it they wouldn't have enough pigs' heads to go around to make all the hogshead cheese. [*Laughs*]

00:43:46

SR: Was that part of your upbringing, people making hogshead cheese?

00:43:49

FP: Oh yeah, definitely. You know everybody made hogshead cheese back then too, because what else were you going to do with the head? And they wouldn't waste anything, so—.

00:44:00

SR: How do you—how do you personally eat hogshead cheese?

00:44:03

FP: Just with, with bread. You know I'll slice it like, kind of like a lunchmeat or a ham, and put it on a couple of slices of bread and eat a sandwich like that every once in a while. I think it's a real popular way of eating it. Some people eat it just as—cut it in little squares, and just eat it like, like with toothpicks at a wedding reception or a party like that.

00:44:26

SR: Yeah. What about, I was going to ask you if there's a required beverage with boudin?

00:44:31

FP: Well [*Laughs*] that's—what's a Cajun seven-course meal? Is a six pack of boudin—or a six pack of beer and a pound of boudin. That's the traditional Cajun seven-course meal. [*Laughs*] So I guess beer is about the best product to eat with boudin, but there's nothing wrong with an RC Cola either. [*Laughs*]

00:44:49

SR: Right. Well what kind of beer do people drink in this area?

00:44:53

FP: What kind of beer? [*Laughs*]

00:44:53

SR: Yeah.

00:44:53

FP: All, all different kinds. It's—*[Laughs]*.

00:45:00

SR: Oh your red beans here: what kinds of meats do you put in the red beans?

00:45:04

FP: We usually put our chaurice sausage that's been barbequed, or you know, and then we cook extra ones and after it's cooked we add it to the—to the white beans and the red beans as we smother it down.

00:45:17

SR: And so growing up, did you eat red beans—red beans and rice?

00:45:20

FP: No, not very much. You know, like we ate black-eyed peas back then, but mostly—but not too much red beans and rice. You see the red beans and rice usually came from around the New Orleans area. They made the red beans and rice popular, and it's just kind of getting into this area the last few years, you know where it's popular—red beans and rice.

00:45:40

SR: Did you ever go to New Orleans when you were growing up? Is that something that people did, or was that just another world?

00:45:47

FP: It was just another world for us, especially living in this area, but you know once I got out of high school and everything else, then we'd go once in a while and still fascinated—it's a nice place to visit, but wouldn't want to live there. **[Laughs]** After living in Poche Bridge—

00:46:03

SR: Yeah, they're two different universes for sure.

00:46:06

FP: Right.

00:46:06

SR: Did you always know that you wanted to go into the family business?

00:46:11

FP: I think so, you know. I think from about the seventh grade and high school I was, I was telling it to my brother one day, and—and he was amazed you know, right. Even the guidance counselor in high school, you know said, *What you going to do, go to college?* I said, *Well I'm just going to buy my dad's business [Laughs] and—and run that.* And then she would say, *Well I*

don't really need to talk to you anymore. You know, so my guidance counselor in school, we lasted five or ten minutes of talking. It wasn't very long.

00:46:40

SR: And were you working in the business when you were in school?

00:46:43

FP: Oh we had to. There was no option about it. We had to, you know. We were brought up in the business working and peeling onions and peeling potatoes and whatever, seasoning meat and stuff like that you know, ever since we could walk. With my dad, everybody had to work. Yeah.

00:46:59

SR: On school days and stuff, or just in the summer, or when?

00:47:04

FP: Yeah, I always tell it to a lot of my—my kids, and some of the others, say we were about the only kids that didn't want to miss school because if we stayed home my dad made us work in the plant and on weekends and stuff, so **[Laughs]**—. We would say, *Aw, Dad, we don't feel good.* He said, *Well get dressed and go wash dishes out there if you don't want to go to school.* So the next morning we were back at school and didn't want to miss school. **[Laughs]**

00:47:25

SR: That's funny. And so was it the same with your kids? Does your daughter work at all?

00:47:32

FP: She does a little bit, but you know it's—it's changed a lot, and so she wants to just be the boss and run the place, you know. The same way with my son. You know, he don't like to do all the hard work. They just like to do the easy stuff. But anyhow—.

00:47:46

SR: Well I think I'm pretty much finished up with questions, unless you can think of something I haven't asked you that's been weighing on your mind.

00:47:55

FP: Somebody—

00:47:56

SR: You need to get back to work. What was your ring tone?

00:47:57

FP: My ring tone?

00:47:59

SR: Yeah.

00:48:01

FP: Call my cell phone. I don't know how to do it. Nadine, call 349-3320; see if you can pick it up. Do you know that song?

00:48:18

SR: Uh-uh.

00:48:22

FP: [*Ring Tone Plays*] That's the Hee-Haw Breakdown. [*Laughs*]

00:48:46

SR: Oh is that—is that traditional Cajun?

00:48:48

FP: Pretty much. I don't know if you can get more Cajun than that, huh?

00:48:52

SR: No. As well the music is a big part of life in this area. Was it—is it in your family?

00:48:56

FP: Yeah, pretty much. You know, not as much as my wife is—is really the music person, that was brought up into a lot of this Cajun music you know. But my mom being from North Louisiana, and my dad working all the time, we wasn't too much into the music scene like her family was. And you know they had musicians in her family and accordion players. Actually,

when they would cook us supper they'd break out the accordion and they'd all take turns playing a little tune, you know like on the accordion. Her family would, but ours wouldn't. We wasn't that talented with music and stuff, you know. *[Laughs]*

00:49:32

SR: Okay. Well, thank you for your time. I really appreciate it.

00:49:36

FP: You're welcome. Thank you.

00:49:38

[End Floyd Poche-Boudin Interview]