DONALD LINK

Herbsaint and Cochon Restaurants – New Orleans, LA

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Interviewer: Amy Evans
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[Begin Donald Link]

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Amy Evans: This is Amy Evans on Wednesday, March 21, 2007 for the Southern Foodways Alliance in New Orleans, Louisiana, at Herbsaint with Chef Donald Link. And Donald, if you wouldn't mind saying your name and also your birth date for the record.

00:00:14

Donald Link: Donald Link. Birthday July 18, 1969. **[*Phone Rings*]**

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AE: Okay. And we have a lot to talk about here today, but we're here to talk first about boudin and then a little bit about gumbo. But first I want to kind of couch our discussion in some history of your family and—and your—your Cajun background.

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DL: My family is—my last name is Link, obviously, and my dad—that's my dad's last name, and his mom's last name is Zaunbrecher [pronouncing this *Zon-brecker*]. It depends on where you come from; over there they call it Zaunbrecher [*Zon-breaker*]; in Germany it's Zaunbrecher [*Soun-bre-sha*]. And they came from Germany in 1880 with a group of forty immigrants. Forty families came over, and they settled in Robert's Cove, Louisiana, which is practically, I guess, in Rayne, and that's a community there. And then from—that stretches from where I-10 first comes off in Rayne [Louisiana], coming from New Orleans all the way through Basile [Louisiana], I think. And you start at one end in Rayne, and it's a lot of Link land—Link properties. And then when you get to Highway 13, you start seeing a lot of the Zaunbrecher fields, and they farm rice. Actually, Nicholas Zaunbrecher, the first immigrant, was the first person to sell rice commercially in Louisiana and sent the first load to New Orleans. And they developed a lot of the farming standards and irrigation, built some bridges to get other people's rice to market, and that's—that's pretty much all they still do over there. It's been—it's a long history of rice farmers and now, of course, they're—they're farming crawfish and then—and they make sausage and boudin—not for sale. Well, a couple of them do it for—have a store but for the most part it's done for personal consumption for the families. They are big families.

My dad on the Zaunbrecher side is one of eighty-eight grandchildren. His dad, Lawrence Zaunbrecher, who was Nicholas—Nicholas—his son is Lawrence and that's my dad's grandfather and that's—that's the tree that has the eighty-eight grandchildren just from Lawrence. So it's—it's huge, talking about ten kids—ten kids each kind of situation, ten or eleven kids. So it's a farming community and—and back then that's—it was important. And if you go there today, it's—it's something that I've always known about as a kid. I knew that we had big families, and I knew that we were from Crowley but up until I—my later teenage years, I never really got outside of Louisiana, so I never really understood the importance of what that meant and how unique that was. I just figured that was commonplace. I thought the food was commonplace and the family was common, and it wasn't until I started getting a little older and kind of moved away for a little while that I started to realize that there was something very unique there. And, in fact, this community has been there since 1880 and is still—still makes—.

So I went two months ago and made sausage with the Zaunbrechers and I thought—I know—I know they do it a lot. They have a camp, they call it, behind one of their houses that's the Zaunbrecher Camp. So it's a communal house that they have, and the front part of this house is all kitchen and—and table to eat at for the Tuesday night suppers, and then behind that is the sausage and boudin making area which is—which has industrial equipment. And, like I said, I showed up there at dawn, thinking we were going to make 200—300 pounds of sausage and it ends up we did 2,000 pounds that day. And it's ten guys—ten of the cousins get together, and each of them has a slightly different recipe. So you have one guy that's cutting all the different spices for the different sausage and to this—in this day, in particular, it was—it was deer and pork, but like two weeks after that it will be straight pork and boudin. And—and it depends on—this was obviously deer—the end of deer season so it was time to use that. But the—the process was unbelievable. I mean ten guys made 2,000 pounds of sausage in five hours. I mean the German efficiency is at work. I mean it's unbelievable. It's an old smokehouse right outside, maybe twenty yards from the camp, and they have these little carts that they fill up with all the sausage and hang it in there on the poles. Amazing. And in—it was a good experience for me because, like I said, I had—I had gone there, and I know that they made the sausage and I know for German Fest they make 2,000 pounds for that festival. **[*Phone Rings*]** But none of this gets sold, which is the really amazing part—that it's still a community that gets together and kind of feeds each other. So all the sausage gets split up between the ten of them, and then that's kind of their food supply. And on the same day I broke off with my dad's cousin JW, and we went to his farm and because he was like, "Well," you know, "well, I got boudin there." So he actually has—and everybody has their own sausage making equipment, as well, for stopgaps, I guess, for the three weeks, you know. **[*Laughs*]** And he had boudin that he had just made, so we tasted his and it was just—it was unbelievable. And I met another one of the cousins, Dale, and he—and I have in my wallet, actually, on the back of some random business card I have his recipe for boudin that he gave me. So everybody has their own thing. And the cool thing about the Zaunbrechers in this community is that they all make their own. I mean they'll go buy it and, if you show up, you know, for a project, like if you're about to go out on the rice fields, maybe you'll stop and pickup some boudin for breakfast. And these stores are open at six o'clock in the morning for boudin and that's—that's something I don't think that a lot of people really understand about boudin is that it's—it's an all day food. And when I went over there to make sausage, I stopped and picked some up and got five pounds, and it was devoured in fifteen minutes. But it's a very common thing, you know. So I went to tour the—the Eunice Rice Mill and that was like nine-thirty in the morning, and everybody in the office—there's like the butcher paper is just open, and there's a knife and there's the boudin and black coffee. You know, just to see that that's just like all day. But it's never—it's never so much a meal as it is a snack or just something that you eat, you know. I've got to be really careful because I can eat boudin—I have to—I have to make a real good effort to stop eating it because, for some reason, it doesn't like fill me up. Maybe it's the MSG. **[*Laughs*]**

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AE: Well can—do you have a sense of how the recipes within the family vary at all?

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DL: You know it's—it's interesting talking to different people out there because everyone has their opinion, and liver seems to be one of the main opinions people have. Some people love it, some people hate it, some people wouldn't know the difference if it was in there or not; I know Bubba Frey, who is a cousin of the Zaunbrechers—same grandparent, different last name but same grandparent—and Bubba has got a tremendous store in Mowata [Louisiana], which is on Highway 13 on the way between Crowley and Eunice. And, in my opinion, that's the best boudin in the whole area, and I’ve eaten a lot of it. But his, I think, is—is by far my favorite. And he—oh, go ahead.

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AE: I was just going to ask you if you could describe what you love about it so much; what makes it your favorite?

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DL: I think there’s a lot of factors that go into boudin that make it, like how much liquid it has, how much it’s been churned, you know, what kind of spices are in it, how much MSG is in it. Because not all of them have MSG, but I’d say, for the most part, it’s a pretty good bet that all the sausage and boudin has MSG. I know I don’t think JW’s did at his house, but there’s a difference. I mean pretty much from my experience making boudin, if you put liver in it, you pretty much have to have either some sort of sodium nitrate or MSG, and that was a problem I had when I first started a long time ago experimenting with making boudin. I’d make it, and it tasted great that day, but then the next day it had this kind of off-liver taste to it. And that stuff is just weird, that pink salt, but just a tiny pinch of it in a batch of boudin will completely eradicate that flavor. And it will—it will keep for—you know, a few more—it will keep for days, rather than one day.

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AE: Does your family—because traditionally, I know a lot of boudin was made with a lot more organ meats that were put into the boudin, instead of just the liver, as kind of a way to use every part of the—the pig. Does the boudin that's made for home consumption, personal consumption, does it have additional organ meats in it or—? Do you know?

00:09:04

DL: No. No, I mean I—I was curious about that too and I was always curious as to why you don't see boudin noir [or blood boudin] around anymore, and so I asked the—you know JW, Dell, Reggie—I asked those guys—and Loretta—all my dad's cousins about why you know—because when we make—when they all make boudin now, it's all processed—or all cut meats. Nobody is cutting—killing pigs anymore, you know, which is really interesting, too, because now they have it all cut down, and they can pick and choose what part of the pigs they use for the boudin. Like Dell was telling me temple meat, which I've never even heard of, but he makes his boudin with temple meat, you know, from the temple of the head, and you can order that. You can order temple meat in a case. And JW was telling me he likes using the jowls mixed with some of the pork butt, so they all have these very interesting combinations of pork.

But I started asking them about when they were kids how—how it worked, and they were actually the last generation that butchered pigs, you know, and they told me a story about how they would—their dad would—or granddad, Lawrence Zaunbrecher, their grandfather, would tie the pig tails on the kids, and they'd run around and act like pigs. And I asked him, I said, "Well why doesn't anybody do that anymore?" And, I guess, pretty much the answer is that the kids these days seem to be the issue. They said they—they get grossed out by the blood, and the organ meats is kind of an off-flavor. And it's—it's very interesting because I asked JW how many kids he had, and he said he had four or five. And I made a joke. I'm like, "Really, that's it?" I said, "What happened?" And he said the same thing. He said, "Ah, these kids just aren't the same," you know. It's just TV and they just want everything in the world and they're just exposed—you know, my theory is that kids are just exposed to so much more through the television and—and the way the world and the way that our country is right now that it's not—it's not the same, you know? You think about in the '50s and '40s when these kids were coming up, they had German POWs working the rice fields during the War, and they were ten kids that grew up hard and they grew up farming and there wasn't much of a school and there was no TV at all, and that's what they ate, you know, and there was no—.

And for me, too, when I grew up, my granddad on my mom's side, I mean he was from Alabama so his food was whole squirrel, rabbit, liver, and that's what we ate. And at that time I didn't really think much about it either. I was just like, "Well this is how we eat." But now days everybody knows the kids—you know, even my daughter, unfortunately—I mean they know that that's—they don't have to eat that and it's like well I could just get a pizza or I could just have a hamburger. I don't have to eat organ meat. And it's changing, and that's my theory on why you don't find blood sausage anymore. I do know of two places that still have it but in general you don't find it anymore because they're not killing pigs anymore for home consumption. All that's done at slaughterhouses, and they're onto doing other things now. And not only that, but if you look at the size of the family, like the 2,000 pounds of sausage that we made that day, I mean do you know how many pigs you'd have to kill to get that much sausage? **[*Phone Rings*]** I mean that's a lot. So I think the pure volume has a lot to do with it, too—just that you can't keep up with it and—and then also now what's really the point for them to do that when they can just order up 1,000-pounds of pork meat? That sure is a lot easier than killing ten—five pigs, whatever you'd have to do to get that kind of—that kind of meat. So it's changed, but it's changed, I think, in an interesting way. I mean, like I said, I think the difference in what makes boudin special is how much liquid goes in it, you know. Everyone has a percentage liver—it's either half, a quarter, or none, you know. I think mine is a quarter—the one I make is a quarter. But if you've ever seen the machines that turn the boudin, I think the amount of time it spends in there has a lot to do with it. I mean when I make my boudin, when it first gets put together it just—it's loose and it's tempting not to put anymore liquid in it, but it has to look kind of wet and loose because once you churn it—and that's what these machines do. They have like a combine that churns it; it starts to break the rice up. And I've done it by hand before, so I can actually sit there and watch it happen. And you stir and stir and stir and then it starts to get that—that meats start to break out and the starch comes out of the rice, and it gives it a certain texture. And everybody that I know from that area is—has very specific things they like and dislike about boudin—how wet it is, how dry it is, and it's just different. Some people go, "Oh, I don't like that." And everybody knows all the boudin, too. You can talk about each one, and they go, "I don't know. I don't like theirs. It's a little too wet for me." Or, "No, that one has too much liver." And everyone has an opinion. I mean Bubba Frey's, I think, is the best. It's got the right consistency of moisture in it, the pork is broken up, and he uses a dull blade, so the pork gets kind of smashed a little bit. I mean he has very specific ways—when—when do you put the green onions in, when do you put the onions in? Are the onions cooked, or are the onions raw? And that's something I—you know, I cook mine but he puts his in raw, and they push it through the grinder. So all those things, I mean it's amazing to me how a dish with what—four ingredients, maybe—has so many different variations, but it really is four ingredients anyway you cut it you know. It's pork, rice, water, and onions, and maybe liver—so maybe five and your spices of course. But I don't think Bubba uses too much red spice at all; his is really white. It's real white-looking boudin, which I like about it a lot. It's got a more pronounced like white and black pepper flavor than a muddled red paprika, garlic powder kind of thing.

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AE: So experiencing boudin is a multi-sensory kind of deal. Can you talk about that a little bit and—and smell, maybe particularly, since we haven't talked about that yet?

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DL: Yeah, well, like I said, different areas have different flavors. Lake Charles has a very—very, very particular pork flavor. I don't quite understand why, but I know that every time I have boudin or pork in Lake Charles, it has that flavor and I'm sure they're getting it from a different processor than say, in Crowley, and I'm sure that has something to do with it. But it almost has more of a braised pork flavor and that aroma is like super porky in a good way. But it tastes like my granny's cooking, which is even stranger because when she—she cooked a lot of pork, obviously, when I grew up, and all the pork in that area still has that aroma and that flavor. And I don't—maybe it's the air there that's different, but I was there—my grandmother's funeral was a few months ago, and I did a pork roast in my granny's house because my dad bought my granny's house when she passed and remodeled it. But I made a pork roast for the funeral—for after the funeral—and I went outside to make a phone call, and I could smell that pork from outside her house, and it smelled just like it did when I was six years old, standing in that yard when granny was making a pork roast. There's something about the air, the grass—I don't know. But that pork aroma combined with that area and that house was just—it's like I was just transported back to being six years old. I mean it was phenomenal how it smelled just the same and how I have such a strong memory of what that pork smelled like when she was cooking it.

But as far as the boudin goes, man, I could—like I said, I could eat it all day long. I have some—I should have brought some. I have some in my freezer, actually, at home. Yeah. But I love it all. I mean, you know, I like it—I don't like too much MSG in it to where it gives you a headache because I think some of them are a little gung-ho with that.

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AE: How did you develop your recipe that you use [at Cochon]?

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DL: Mine? Mine I just kind of, you know, from my memory of different types of boudin I kind of tried to recreate what I liked. And I don't use MSG. I have once or twice just to check it out, and I can tell it has MSG in it, and so I don't really—I think with sausage it works a lot better, MSG, but I don't think with boudin it's very necessary. But mine was a process, you know. When I first started doing it, I didn't really ask anyone how they made it. And I braised the pork with it with all the onions and seasonings. I put it in the oven and braised it. And it was good but it wasn't quite like the boudin I grew up with. So I forgot who I—I actually went down to Steve Zaunbrecher's store in Basile [Louisiana] and watched him and then realized from going to different places that nobody braises it; everybody boils it in water, not chicken stock. Nobody uses chicken stock. They might use bouillon for a few things and we'll talk about that, I guess, with gumbo, but everybody boils it. So I'm like, well, what's the difference you know? So I tried that. I boiled it, and it makes all the difference in the world. It changed the texture; it changed the flavor; you get a better stock out of boiling it. Like I said, you would think that slow braising it would make—bring out most of the flavor that way but it—it—for some reason, it doesn't. And then I realized you can't overcook it; it's got to be—have some texture left to it, so you can't boil it until it's falling apart. You have to boil it until it's just done, so that when it grinds, it still holds some texture, and then it breaks out in the rice, you know. And then, of course, I learned about stirring and breaking that and the different seasonings and experimenting with how much liver to put in. So we did different stages of, you know, half, third, quarter, none, you know, just all the different things. I made it without liver and it's like, well, I think it needs liver just kind—just from tasting and trial and error. And I think the recipe we have now, I've tested it now seven, eight times and it's definitely, I think, the one I like the best.

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AE: Has your family had it?

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DL: Yeah, my dad has.

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AE: What did he think of it?

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DL: He likes it. He likes it a lot. I mean it's usually—at Cochon he's had it. But he hasn't had it cased. I haven't brought him any cases yet, but the next time I go out there, I think I'm going to—I'll case a bunch and bring it out there.

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AE: Uh-hmm. Now let's talk a little bit about—or a lot about your culinary experience and how that translates into what you're doing now here in New Orleans.

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DL: I think that what—what we do here is, you know, it's a very classic bistro style restaurant. Or Herbsaint is. And Cochon is—Cochon is just something completely new. I mean I can't—I don't really have anything to compare it to. I just—it was—it was like Cochon, in particular, was a very interesting concept to put together because we didn't want to make it catchy and like old-fashioned like ice water in Mason jars and red and white checkered tablecloth kind of—you know? But we didn't want to make it too modern or too over the top either. I mean basically, what I wanted to do with Cochon is cook the food I grew up with, just like really—that—those flavors and—and those concepts that, you know, like my granddad's cooking and the sausage making and the boudin, just to really have that flavor and that depth in a restaurant. But we are in New Orleans, downtown—a lot of people coming here. I wanted it to be something that straddled that line of old world and new world, you know, but mostly keeping the food in the old world and keeping the design of the restaurant a little more contemporary, just so that you have a more upbeat energetic metropolitan feel, which is, again, like I said, straddling that line is—it's a fine line to not go over. That's why I had all the furniture made there is because I couldn't find any furniture that I thought really captured that, and then I found a local carpenter that built all that—that, I think, did that. And—and the thing is, it's like the food in here, too, as well, it's like—it's new because it's old because nobody is doing old food anymore. And I'm sure a lot of people are but there's this—the whole trend with new modern, what to do next, where to go from here. And for me, it's about going back, you know. It's about butchering your own meats; it's about using different parts, about curing our own meats. When we started here at Herbsaint years ago making our own bacon and making the guanciale [cured Italian bacon made from pig's cheeks] for the spaghetti dish, and we're making salamis and we cure our own fish, if we're going to do salt cod, and we started butchering pigs and lambs here whole. And now Cochon, we get whole pigs there, and now we're at a point now where we're starting to talk to farmers about growing certain pigs, so it's—it's growing, you know, and it's—and again, this is all going back to—to an old world way of cooking and not the new—the new way.

And I'm working on a book right now that has a lot to do with the old style of cooking that I grew up with, and it takes a lot of digging. And this is why the sausage thing was so exciting for me because when you go back to like the '60s, the '50s—'60s—my mom's generation and you look at the recipes, there it's—it's the emergence of Crisco oil and all the Lipton Onion Soup Mix and all these packages that started to make women's lives easier. But what I think is really fascinating in Louisiana is that the men are the ones who—who do the real cooking. That probably didn't sound good, but what I mean is the outdoor cooking. There's so much outdoor, the simple—the simple outdoor type of cooking. And when I went to the—to make sausage, I'm on a search. It's like—because I keep getting these recipes from family members that have cream of mushroom soup and Lipton Onion Soup Mix and all these things, and I'm like, I've got to find beyond this, you know. I know that everybody in the country uses this stuff. I mean it might be different here in the homes, but I want to get beyond that and find out where all this—what—what were people cooking before Lipton Onion Soup Mix and before there was cream of mushroom soup. And then when we did that sausage thing that's—I found it, you know. And at JW's farm we went out there because he had these ducks he wanted to show me and he has Pekin, Muscovy, pheasant, running all over the place. And he just goes out by the shed and shoots them and preps them for dinner. And he's got this huge twelve-foot smoker that he's going to smoke the duck in overnight, and he's got boudin that he just made and that—I found it. That's what I'm talking about, and that's what's so interesting to have a restaurant that does old-fashioned food is because nobody cooks like that anymore—not in the homes, anyway.

You know, to have a really old-fashioned smothered pork roast, I mean, I don't, you know—people aren't really doing that much anymore. You know, it's not healthy, it takes a long time to do and, to be honest, I don't really have that much time at home either. **[*Coughs*]** You know, I'm testing recipes for my cookbook, and it's staggering the amount of time it takes to cook, you know, and you got to clean dishes and you're messing up the whole kitchen, and it takes all day. I've done testings and it takes, you know, eight to ten hours for me to test a couple recipes so obviously, nobody has that time anymore. I have two kids, and it's like our pace these days—just go, go, go. So that old slow—got all day long to cook, people just don't—don't have it.

But it's nice to see the Zaunbrechers are still doing it. And that's my next thing that I really want to do is I want to go down there and—and kill something and then do it from the start—just to—just to experience what an all-day process of doing something like from—from the first step to the table, you know. It's something that I've never gotten to do. But they've done it their whole lives. They don't eat at restaurants. You know, when they want dinner, they go kill it.

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AE: Can you talk about what that means socially, too, to the members of your family? Because you were talking about what you found behind the Lipton Soup and all that is more of a oral tradition of cooking and—and recipes. And then what it also means for the men to get together and make sausage just from a social perspective.

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DL: Well I think it's a communal effort, obviously. And being that they're all German, it's a very get-it-done kind of process. There's not a lot of goofing off. I mean there's a few jokes thrown back and forth but, for the most part, it was a very impressive display of efficiency. I mean I just was blown away. I mean you start out with one group that all cuts and as soon as you're like a certain percentage through, four of them break off and start grinding, and then they just keep moving to different areas but—but socially, it's just like it's something they do and it—you know, and it's sad because talking to them, it sounds like it might be the last generation that does that. There was one kid there that was about eighteen years old, and the rest of them were, you know, mid to late 50s, and they're all concerned that that's going to be it.

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AE: In that large of a family with eighty-some grandchildren, is there anyone who has an interest in reviving the hog killing—the boucherie tradition—even around the holiday or something that's a more annual event or—?

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DL: Not—not really, not that I gathered. I mean they don't really think about it that way. I mean and that's—and that's the thing that's—that's hard to explain to people. Like I would never have been able to see the side of that country and—and that area if it weren't for me being family. You know? And it's kind of odd for me to like bring somebody down there. I mean I've brought a writer with me, you know, Paula that's doing the book with me and, you know, so she gets to hang around and be there but they're not—you know, they're—they're different from the French part of the culture in the fact that I think they're a little more reserved—or some of them are—and so like I was talking with JW about rice, and he was complaining about rice, "The price is down, and you can't get what you used to for it." And I'm like, "Well, have you tried like slapping a—a—you know, some sort of specific label on it or saying it's Louisiana rice?" And they're like, you know, don't know what I'm talking about. He's like, "What?" **[*Laughs*]**

00:27:47

AE: I can pause this for a second.

[Recording is paused for approximately two minutes as Chef Link gets a glass of water.]

AE: Okay, so you were talking about the rice and—and having them kind of remarket it to try and get a different audience, maybe, or customer.

00:27:57

DL: Yeah. I mean the thing is all these—these things are not—they're not really concerned with it, I guess, is the word. And I was at—I was at my dad's, I guess, it was that time I made that pork roast, and I was looking for rice to cook and I pulled out this bag of rice, and it's got a big picture of Texas on it. And it's like, "What the hell are you doing with Texas rice?" He goes, "How do you know it's from Texas?" And I pull up the bag, and I'm like, "It's got a picture of Texas on it." **[*Laughs*]** I said, "You should be ashamed of yourself to come from a rice family, buying Texas rice." But the thing is, nobody knows how to buy Zaunbrecher rice. I mean mainly it's Mahatma and WaterMaid [brands] and that's—that's mostly that area that produces that rice, but it all goes to market, you know. But if you put Louisiana on it and did a campaign for Louisiana rice, I mean there's—it's like the dairy farmers *Got Milk* campaign. You know? But they're—they're just—so it's not in their realm of thinking. I mean these are farmers; these are people, like I said, that don't leave the area. They have—they have never been out of the state. I mean they—they eat their—grow, eat, kill their own food. It's a different world and it's—I think it's amazing that it still exists, and I'm very concerned that it—that it's not going to exist for much longer. The more Chinese crawfish comes pouring in and foreign rice and all these foreign products that keep flooding the market for—for less than what it costs them to make. So I mean it's—it's definitely—I've seen over the years, JW is more and more concerned with the rice industry. And that's why you see a lot of them now are switching to crawfish, where normally they might grow soybean in the off-season for rice, but now that it's—crawfish has become a big business. I mean Billy Link, he's my age and he's doing 15,000 pounds a week over to Houston. I mean he has tons of fields—and the Zaunbrechers all do that too. Like when we were at JW's farm, there's a dirty old mud-covered pickup truck with a whole mound of crawfish sacks in the back of it, so that's definitely, I think, becoming a bigger business than—. I mean I think it's more profitable than the rice—probably a lot less effort, too.

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AE: Can we talk about Cochon again and you're—the culinary world has really recognized you for what you're doing there with that, especially with your James Beard nominations of late, but I wonder, outside of the culinary world's response to a place like Cochon, what kind of the everyday customer's response has been to see head cheese on the menu and—and boudin and all these traditional Cajun foods.

00:30:44

DL: I think—I think the response has been tremendous. I mean it was—you know, I felt pretty confident going in that it would—it would work. I was like, it makes perfect sense: we're in New Orleans, I'm from Louisiana. I mean because there was a point where a few years before I opened Cochon, I was like, I love cooking Italian food. And I thought it would be cool to have an Italian restaurant, which I may do at some point later, but I thought about it and I'm like, well, why should I do Italian food? I mean I'm born and raised in Louisiana, I live in New Orleans; everybody comes here—nobody is coming here to find some Italian food, and the people that come to visit Louisiana are looking for that. And I've never been real thrilled with the options in New Orleans, you know. Any time customers would come in Herbsaint and ask me where to go get Cajun food, I'm like, well, the first thing you've got to do is get a car and go about two hours west of here. But there was really nothing here. I mean and that's why I didn't want—I mean there's New Orleans food, which isn't the same, you know. Po-boys, red beans and rice, jambalaya, you know, Creole—Shrimp Creole, I mean that's all New Orleans' adaptations of the blending of Cajun and Creole or what have you. I'm not going to get too far into that, but the point is, I felt like I had a very unique upbringing with food and probably one of the last generations, you know, to eat whole squirrel with bacon fat dumplings. And kids just aren't eating that stuff anymore—or big slabs of liver smothered in onions. It's just not there. So I think it was a perfect idea to put that here in New Orleans, so when people come here and they go, "Well, where do I go get some good Cajun food?" And it's fun. You know it's—it's a good—I think it's a great price point, it's a good-looking room, and the food is very authentic. You know, we're not trying to cover it up; we're not trying to fancy it up; we're just doing really straightforward food the way I had it and what I remember that those flavor profiles being with ham hocks and bacon and pork and greens and lima beans, you know, all of that really old-fashioned stuff. And I think the response has been great. It's like Eric Rippert from Le Bernardine came in once and, to me, that was like, you know, that—that was really cool to see that because I don't do what he does. There's a lot of people that cook that way, you know, the modern new American French infused or however you want to call it. There's a lot of people doing that. There's not a lot of people doing this, so it's different. It's unique, you know. And I can imagine for somebody that works with say, squab and foie gras, it's a lot to go to another restaurant and get that and then go to another restaurant and get that, you know, like to me—like when I lived I San Francisco, that got kind of tiresome. It's just like one restaurant after the next has a tuna tartar, has a foie gras has squab or some sort of organic chicken, and it's just the same—the same—the same, maybe prepared differently, a different setting, different atmosphere. But to come here and to be able to get fried livers and pepper jelly and rabbit and dumplings and alligator and boudin, I mean, that you can't get everyplace, especially not in the city. I mean you can go—even in Lafayette, in that area, you still have to split up your trip to get all this because you're not going to find everything in one place. This place will do the best crawfish and this place will make the best boudin and this place has the best bisque, but it's all scattered. You have to know—and you really need to know how to do it when you go out there to—to get that experience. But I think it's been received enormously. I mean it's a real honor for me when people come from—from that area—from Cajun country—and eat there and go, "Oh, my God, this is—this is good," you know. **[*Laughs*]** Like this isn't some made-up place by somebody from out of town, and they can taste it. And the thing is, just like how I can—if you give me some boudin from Lake Charles, I can tell you it's from Lake Charles and the same with Lafayette and all the different areas. There's a certain way the—the boudin tastes in those areas and a certain way it's supposed to taste, so when you have it outside of there, people can tell. Like this guy has got to be from Lake Charles or he's got to be from Rayne or Crowley, and they know. And especially the gumbos, the one thing that people really—from that area when they eat it they're like, "Oh yeah, of course you're from Lake Charles." Or—I mean they immediately know that—that gumbo was made by somebody from that area, you know. And just like if you look around at gumbos here, they're—they're lighter, you know. They have a different kind of flavor profile as a rule—as an area. And if you go out there, they have a completely different taste. And that's why, when people from that area come here, they know immediately that it's—it's from that part of the state.

00:35:31

AE: Do you think anything you have on the menu at Cochon is a nod to Crowley or is—is—people could recognize as being from that area?

00:35:40

DL: Well, I mean, I think the boudin, I mean the—one of the things, I'll just tell you real quick that I was worried about that with restaurant, too, was lima beans, greens, we can get this at home. But that's from that area because people still do eat like that over there. So when they come here and they're like, "Well I can get this at home, why do I have to pay for it?" But you know—but only some—some of the things, the greens, the lima beans, I think, you still see a lot of that going on—black-eyed peas, but I haven't seen a rabbit and dumplings in anyone's house in a long time.

00:36:17

AE: And I don't think many people are making watermelon pickles, either.

00:36:19

DL: No, I don't think so. Well some people, like I mean my dad's cousin, Loretta, still does a lot of pickles, and I'm going to put some of her recipes in the book.

00:36:29

AE: So can you talk about what it was like when you were in the Bay Area and working in San Francisco what your Cajun heritage meant to you then, and then how that evolved when you got to New Orleans and opened your restaurants?

00:36:40

DL: Well when I—when I first moved out there, I was—I had cooked all my life—pretty much all my life from fifteen on, and that was always what I did for a job. You know, fry-cook, dishwasher, hamburger joints. So I did all that and when I moved to California, I had maybe one semester at college to graduate, which I walked out of LSU [Louisiana State University]. I hated college. I just walked out one day. I didn't drop any classes. I just threw my books in the trash and left because I hated it so much. **[*Laughs*]** And I moved to California with kind of in the back of my head like, "Oh, I guess maybe I'll think about finishing." And—and then, as usual, I got a job to get by working in a restaurant, and that's when it clicked. I was doing—I got hired at this—this dive dump in lower Haight, you know, to—to—to be a cook and then when I saw I was from Louisiana they were like, "Well we were thinking about opening up—doing some dinner here with like a Louisiana thing." And I'm like, "Well sure," you know, "I'll do that." And that's how it started. That's how—and like I said, at that point I didn't really think that it was all that big of a deal—that Louisiana food is just food, right? But come to find out everybody was very interested in—in that kind of food and the place did great after I took over. They went from doing eight people a night to 100 people at night, which is all that place could really hold. And I guess it was—it was there where it just kind of—just kind of hit me like a ton of bricks. It's like I don't need to go back to school; I don't want to. This—I love this; this is awesome. And then that just kind of grew, and then I eventually took over at the Elite Café, which was a New Orleans restaurant. And they gave me free reign over the menu there, so I came in there and threw everything away from the first day I walked in. I went in, actually, on a Sunday night and threw all the food in the trash and came in Monday morning and started a whole new menu. And it's—the reputation started to build from there, and I just couldn't believe it. I'm like God, I'm getting written up and reporters are coming in and it's like, why? What is the big deal, you know? But it was a big deal to them, and it definitely got me thinking like, this is—this is very interesting you know and—and then it—I guess when it really turned for me to come back was when I had my daughter, and then I was like, you know I'm going to go home and buy a house and open a restaurant and settle down. And it's—it's different now. I loved living in California; the mountain biking was awesome, going to wine country. Man, it's a beautiful place. It definitely is. But there are things that I have here that I could never have there: the family, my dad living here, my wife's dad lives here, all the camaraderie with the people we work with. There's ninety people on staff. And we all can play volleyball together and have picnics and company parties and crawfish boils, you know, whereas in California everybody has got to drive—somebody is driving two hours to get somewhere because nobody lives right close to each other. We had a Super Bowl party once, and I had four friends over, and one is from 19th Avenue, one had to come from Marin, one came from Alameda, and one had to come from the South Bay. It was just, you know, it's a pain in the ass. And you pay for it.

00:40:01

AE: Well in California, when you first started cooking what you knew, being a native of Louisiana, was there any kind of need to fulfill expectations of what Louisiana food was or anything that you kind of fought along those lines? Because I know a lot of people, when they think Cajun, they think highly spiced and when they think Creole, they think something different. Was there anything like that—that you had to kind of convince people of—or that was different than what they thought you would do?

00:40:25

DL: Well the blackening thing was a big issue. I mean because—well, that restaurant, particularly—the Elite—had that on the menu for a long time, and I just refused to do it. I was like, that's not what I want to do; that's not what I grew up with. I mean, not that there's anything wrong with it or it tastes bad, it just—that's just not what I wanted to do. I mean I just think that—at the Elite I just tried to really fuse French and Cajun food together like old country style, you know, rustic French cooking. And I think it was very similar and—and a big root of Cajun cooking, you know, the peasant, poor farming, one-pot, lots of similarities between the two. And the thing is, Cajun food is not spicy. It's not. If anything, it's salted. That—that's the difference between Cajun food. Like when I go home and I eat, everything is salted perfectly, and I don't know if I season that way because that's what I grew up with, or I just season that way so it tastes perfectly to me. I think that there's a relationship there somewhere. But to me, that's what—that's what it's about; it's about the products that are being used because they're local. The shrimp taste better in Louisiana, and I think they taste better in Lake Charles than they do in New Orleans. They have just a certain texture and—and iodine level that just is, to me, better. But again, it's probably because I grew up there. But everything there tastes different and it's—that's, I think, what makes it Cajun food is how they draw flavor from the meat and how they salt and how it's seasoned, but that doesn't make it spicy. I can't really recall ever having anything that I considered spicy growing up. And it's just not spicy. I mean you take gumbo, for example. If you make a roux, make a gumbo, and then at the very end throw in your meat and turn it off, that's not gumbo, in my opinion. What makes gumbo—gumbo is that all that stuff is put in earlier and has enough time to break down. That's why it's always better the second day. So every—all the components lend itself to the whole, so it's—and that's what flavors it you. If you just throw shrimp in at the end, and you taste the shrimp, it's going to taste like shrimp, but the gumbo won't taste like shrimp. Does that make sense?

00:42:43

AE: Uh-hmm. Well, this might be a good segue into talking about gumbo. And maybe just start with a family tradition of gumbo making or what—what you're used to being gumbo.

00:42:55

DL: Yeah. Well gumbo—I kind of taught myself gumbo. I feel like—God, I hate to say it this way, but I feel like I made it better because I'm pretty sure my mom made it with bouillon cubes, but a lot of people make it with water, and I'm not particularly a big fan of the water gumbos. And I—I watched my granny as she got older switch from making rouxs to using jars and she was—but she was older, and she couldn't get around. I asked her why she didn't make her roux once, and she goes, "Oh, I can't be on my feet that long." And—but I don't think a lot of people really do it that well. And I think it is because of the water. I mean I don't think I've ever in my life seen anybody make a stock. I mean bouillon cubes and canned stocks and when—when I did that pork roast for the funeral, I didn't feel like making stock because it was a real quick turnaround that I got there and had to have this ready. But I went to the grocery store, and there's a huge section of chicken stock, beef stock, I mean, it's enormous—bigger than any place in the country I've ever seen. There's just a whole section devoted to stock, so I know people cook with stock but I don't—nobody makes stock. It's either bouillon or canned stock. And, again, this goes right back to what we were saying earlier, the people don't have five hours to make the stock, which—and to be honest, I make stocks in my house when I'm testing, but I can steal from the restaurant, too. **[*Laughs*]** It's a lot easier for me to use homemade stocks. But sausage, I think, in Lake Charles, in particular, and that area sausage is probably one of the most important ingredients that—that flavor a gumbo. And, again, you can talk about sausage just like boudin, but sausage is definitely what is flavoring most of those and—and how you cook the chicken matters a lot. You know, whether you cook the chicken on it's side and pick it and throw it back in, or my preferred way is to cut up the chicken with the bone on and the skin on, sear it in the pan, take it out, make your roux, throw it back in with the bone on, so your gumbo is full of bones, but it's by far the best way to do it—a simple chicken and sausage gumbo as opposed to just throwing picked meat in.

00:45:16

AE: And you mentioned shrimp earlier. Are you—growing up, are you used to primarily chicken and sausage gumbo or was there a seafood gumbo, too, in your—in your earlier years?

00:45:27

DL: Well where I came from there's only two gumbos: chicken and sausage and seafood. And they don't really—I never really remembered seeing them mixed ever and still, to this day, when you go back there, it's one or the other. Whereas New Orleans, you know, they mix everything in the gumbo. But there it's—it's one or the other, which makes perfect sense to me because if you—if you mix them, you—the seafood is going to get lost. I mean we—we do some—I mean we—we mix ours here because I think that's—people seem to really like that depth and that flavor, but back home when I grew up it was one or the other. I mean when I was a kid, we did a lot of shrimping. Me and my dad shrimped all the time as a kid, so we had a deep freezer full of shrimp so, obviously, we had a lot of shrimp gumbo, bouillon cubes, roux, onions, pepper, celery and shrimp and lots and lots of shrimp.

00:46:21

AE: Can you talk about the roux and maybe how your grandmother used to make it and what kind of color she achieved in her process?

00:46:26

DL: Dark, dark roux. I mean to the point of it—it looks black. So it's, again, a fine line there. I mean I—to be honest, I hate to say this, but I've had to cut back on the color, and I don't make the gumbo here like I used to. But I've had to cut back on the color because, unless you've made it—100 rouxs, you're going to have a hard time deciding when to stop the roux. And if it goes—it can be a matter of three minutes, it will turn it from black to scorched, so I had to cut the color back just a notch so that we could have a more consistent product. But yeah, I mean definitely, slow is good. If you do it too fast, I think it will—it will give the roux a kind of bitter flavor. I've done it in an oven overnight, which was really interesting. I think it tastes good; it gives it a different texture. But definitely the speed that you cook it, I think, is the most important thing. Generally, a roux takes me between forty-five minutes and an hour before the vegetables go in—but just super slow and then at the end you've got to kind of—my rule that I don't know if it translates to other people well, but the way I decide when my roux is done, I wait three times when I think it's done. So when I think it's ready, I'll have to wait, and then the next time I think it's ready, I'll wait again. So then by the third time I think it's ready, that's generally about the time it's ready. **[*Laughs*]**

00:47:54

AE: Are you the only person who makes the roux for the gumbo here, or are there other people who do it?

00:47:58

DL: Oh no, I don't—no, every—they've—they've—I've trained other people to do it. I mean I can't spend an hour every other day making roux anymore, but I've definitely—if it starts to go off—it did what, I don't know, six months ago it started—I noticed that the roux started to get a little inconsistent, so then I made the next four gumbos, while they [the staff] sat and watched. So if I notice that they're just slightly changing, I'll jump back in, and I'll start making it and have people watch and so that they can see where, when, to feel it. I mean the thing with the—the roux that I've always found—that I've always been fascinated with gumbo—it's one of the first things I ever made. I mean it was like a—a project of mine to learn how to make gumbo. I mean I sat there and I made it and I looked at it. And I mean the whole process of going shopping for it, even in San Francisco I used to love making gumbo because I'd go to Chinatown and get live crabs and fish for stock and just use all these products. And the whole process of making it and then, of course, you know you have to have a six-pack of beer ready, a couple—you know, a couple cold beers on hand while you make the roux. But the whole process, it's like becoming one with the roux. And like just sitting there staring at it, and it's always nice to have some company in the kitchen you can talk to but it's a matter of—like with any food, I think, but especially with a roux, you have to almost become one with it and have to listen to it and—and relate to it and think of it as—as its own entity, its own living thing that will almost tell you when it's ready to take the onions or whatever. You can just see it and smell it and hear it and there's a sound that it makes; there's a certain level of bubbling that it makes. The aromas change as you—you know as—as the roux grows. The textures change. It will go from thin to thick back to thin again. I mean there's a lot of nuances with that. There's different shades of rust and brown that it—it goes through. And it's all about—constantly, every time you make it—and this is what I try to tell the—the cooks here is every time you make it, you need to connect with it because that's how you'll get better at making it. And then the really difficult part, I mean the roux is one thing, but I found where most people mess up gumbo is the ratio of liquid to roux, and that's where people screw up gumbo because then it gets too thick. If it's not—that's why I hate writing recipes for gumbo because there's just—it's so hard to put a measurement on the liquid because it depends on where you stop the roux. If you don't stop the roux at the right point—and it's hard to say cook it for 4forty-five minutes, you know, because a few degrees difference on—on an hour is a lot. You know what I mean? And low on my oven is not going to be the same as low on someone else's oven or on somebody else's burner. I mean all burners put out different levels of heat, so it's a very difficult recipe to write because of that. And the thing that—with a roux, the darker it gets, the less thickening it has. So, for example, if you stopped it too soon and put the same amount of liquid in, it's going to be a lot thicker than if you let it go longer and put the same amount of liquid in. Does that make sense? So and—and then here's the thing: if you don't have the ratio right for liquid to roux, the fat won't come out of it, and then you'll have a really nasty greasy gumbo and—and even now, the cooks still sometimes will come up to me and like there's no fat coming off the roux—off the gumbo. And I'll go in there and I'm like, "Well shit, man, you've got a sauce here. This isn't a gumbo. Put some liquid in it. Now wonder it won't come out." I can't give you the chemical explanation of why that is. I'm sure there is one, but if it doesn't have enough liquid in it, those—that fat won't release. And, you know, we pull off—like at home, for example, I'll pull off all the oil I put in, which is, you know, if somebody did—. I did a recipe for—for a school textbook for gumbo and they put the calories on there; it was absurd, like 4,000 calories for a bowl of gumbo. But all that oil comes out—mine does, anyway. I don't—hopefully, people aren't out there making gumbo without pulling that oil out. But if I put in say, a gallon of oil into the gumbo here, I pull out a gallon, at least, of oil, if not more. I mean it comes out but then, like I said, then you risk thinning it out too much, and then you've got a thin watery gumbo. So it's definitely a really fine line, you know, but it has to be skimmed. You've got to continue to get that oil off of there. And there's, generally I'd say an hour to hour-and-a-half before any product goes in and then they go in—in stages, you know. If it's seafood, crab bodies and oysters go in after. And the thing is you want to get—I always try to get the oil out first so that you're not skimming out ingredients. So you get the oil out, and then you can start putting your ingredients in and give them a chance to break down. Oysters, in particular. I consider oysters a flavoring ingredient more than a garnish for this—for the gumbo. I like mine just cooked to hell and back. I like my shrimp to be falling apart in my gumbo. So everything goes in with enough time to break down. You don't just throw it in, like I said, and turn it off—or I don't. And—and the thing is, like with any meat, it will go through a process of firming up and then breaking down. That's just like if you do a roast—a beef roast—and you want it tender, falling apart. If you don't cook it long enough, if you cook it halfway, it's going to be hard and chewy. If you keep cooking it, it's going to break down, and then you're going to have a better sauce—the same with gumbo.

00:53:49

AE: Well all that you've said is making me think about your kitchen more and, you know, I know you have a lot of talented cooks in there, but what is it like in the restaurant environment to—to teach these culinary techniques that are so unique and, you know, you're talking about becoming one with the roux and people who are just learning that and—and you teaching them what that's been like, if you get my meaning? If I haven't botched it too much.

00:54:18

DL: No, it's—well actually, there's only a couple people allowed to do it. It's not like it's a general prep job that anybody can do. I mean I brought a sous chef here from California when I opened Herbsaint, and I had already been teaching him how to make gumbo over there. So when we opened up Herbsaint, it was the only two people that ever made the gumbo for years was me or him, period. Nobody else could touch it; nobody else could season it; nobody else could skim it; nobody could do anything to it, and it was off-limits. And it's still kind of like that now. I mean I've got two, three people now that can make it, but that's it. And nobody is allowed to season it. It's not—I don't—we have a recipe that we follow now, which is the first time in—ever that I've had a recipe that I use in the kitchen because I don't want people just—I don't want them disconnecting from it. Which is why I've always been against having recipes for the gumbo in the kitchen because I want people to get it. I don't want them to just fill up spices in a bowl and go **[*Gestures*]**. It's just—it just doesn't work like that, to me. I mean I know I have to have recipes to keep it consistent, but it just seems like **[*Sighs*]**—cheap, you know, to do that.

00:55:31

AE: But to generate that personal connection to the food it's—I mean, it's so Louisiana. It's so Cajun, and it's so a part of your kitchen. I mean I think that's a really just unique approach.

00:55:40

DL: Yeah. I tell them, you know, that I get a lot of weird looks, but I'll definitely get on my rants and be like, you have to be one with this food. **[*Emphasis Added*]**. You have to talk to it and speak to it, listen to it, have a conversation with it, you know, connect to it. It's not just some thing you're doing. You're not building TVs here. You know, we're making food, and we're making this food and—and that is what makes it special. You talking to it and being one with this food is what makes it—what makes it special. And I think that applies to everything. Obviously, gumbo has a much bigger place in my heart than—than most of anything else but it's the same thing with cooking a steak, as far as I'm concerned. You have to communicate with that piece of meat. You can touch and prod it and stick it and put thermometers in it all day long, but if you connect with that piece of meat while it's cooking, you'll know when it's done. It will somehow tell you when it's ready to come off and that's—so I try to tell like every cook—every single cook that is new has trouble with temperatures. All of them. I have maybe one or two people in my career I have seen been able to naturally know how to cook meat to temp. They all have to go through this thing. And I tell them it's like, "Look, you should feel it. It's a feeling you know. It's not a temperature thing." I don't allow meat thermometers in my kitchen. We don't have any. It's just like you have to know how long it's been on there, the way it feels—like if you take a hanger steak—that's what we have—it's this big around, and I mean you should be able to tell when you touch it how hot is it, what does it look like, how long has it been on, you know, what does it seem like? If you just had to go with an instinct, when would you say it was ready? Not by feel or a touch or anything but by just a pure instinct and a pure feeling—the same with gumbo and the same with all food, you know, you have to connect to it.

00:57:35

AE: So what about Creole gumbo and okra and filé and all those [gumbos]? Those are not in your repertoire at all or—?

00:57:42

DL: I have never understood what all that means. I mean I put okra in gumbo; I put filé in gumbo, but I don't thicken gumbo with filé. I don't want it to taste like filé. I use a roux. Do people really make gumbos with just filé?

00:57:59

AE: Um-hmm.

00:58:00

DL: Yeah, I've never seen it. I mean maybe I have and I just don't know. But maybe, I guess Leah Chase does, right? I had hers last night, and it was good. And I like it. It's different. It's not what I do, but I like it. I have had some that were—what was that place in Baton Rouge? There is a place in Baton Rouge, and I'll tell you, it was just—it was obviously thickened with okra, and it was not very pleasant to eat. It's like **[*Gestures*]** a big stream of slime off of every spoon and it's like, ugh. Filé I don't mind, but thickened with okra? I mean we cook our okra out before it goes in the gumbo, and we sauté it in oil, drain it, dry it, and then put it in, so we get the slime off of it.

00:58:43

AE: What about—do you have an opinion of tomatoes in gumbo?

00:58:46

DL: I do not put tomatoes in my gumbo.

00:58:52

AE: I learned just yesterday, actually, from someone that they learned that the acidity of the tomatoes really breaks down the sliminess of the okra, and that's a kind of, I guess, one of the main reasons that [they are] incorporated.

00:59:04

DL: That's very possible. I mean, I'm not—I don't put it in, and it doesn't mean it's not good or I don't like it. I like all gumbo. I'm—I'm very hard pressed to find a gumbo that I don't like. Even when they taste like water and roux, I still kind of like them, you know. So **[*Laughs*]** like I said, I—I haven't had too many gumbos that I didn't like. The only thing that really turns me off on a gumbo is if it's full of oil. I've had one like that here in town, and I didn't eat it. I mean I can handle a lot of different flavors and okra—I can even handle slimy okra gumbos, but I can't handle grease and oil just packed in there.

00:59:40

AE: Does your family still carry on a tradition of gumbo making along with the sausage and boudin and all that?

00:59:46

DL: Yeah, my—I think my Aunt Sally still makes gumbo on a regular basis and probably a few of my uncles and aunts. I mean my dad has never been much of a cook, and all my grandparents now are gone but—. Not—not so much—like I said, some of the aunts and uncles do but, you know, my dad is—he doesn't know what a head of garlic looks like. **[*Laughs*]**

01:00:07

AE: Do you have any brothers and sisters?

01:00:10

DL: I do. I have one sister.

01:00:14

AE: Is she a cook at all?

01:00:16

DL: **[*Shakes head "no."*]**

01:00:19

AE: **[*Laughs*]** Okay, well—.

01:00:21

DL: She can cook a few things. I think she—she got skipped, though. The—the gene skipped over her. **[*Laughs*]**

01:00:29

AE: Well is there—I don't want to keep you too much longer, and we've really had a wonderful conversation here. I've enjoyed it a lot. But I wonder if there's anything you'd like to end on, either regarding boudin or gumbo or your Cajun heritage that you'd like to share?

01:00:45

DL: Yeah, I would just, like I said, I just find myself where I am right now with my age and my kids really appreciating a lot more my background and my culture and the culture that we have, and the importance of preserving it, you know. It's just one of those things you have always taken for granted, like it's just the way it is and it's never going to change. But I have seen signs that things are changing and—and I'm glad that I'm going to write a book about it. And I have two kids that hopefully will—will understand where they came from one day. I mean I named my son Nicholas after Nicholas Zaunbrecher and, you know, that they will have that culture. And I don't wish this business on my kids by any stretch of the imagination, but I'm—I'm almost to the point where I'm going to demand that they learn how to cook some of these dishes just so that they carry it on and that this—this food doesn't go away—that it doesn't become processed and—and cheapened. And hopefully, with the cookbook and through my children, I can really preserve it in some way. But I think we've got a lot of family members that can carry that on, too. So but, like I said, it's just really, really important, and it's really a special thing in my life to know that I can drive out tomorrow to Cajun country and eat at JW's house and—and visit with them and go pull crawfish out of the rice fields, and it's a very cool thing.

01:02:10

AE: Well and you're headed to Baton Rouge today. Are you going to drive a little further and seek out some boudin?

01:02:15

DL: Not today. I've got to get back. But I am going—I've got next Sunday—this Sunday—yeah, this Sunday is the Eunice Championship Etouffee Cook-off, so I'm going to make a day trip for that. And then in May I'm going to spend an entire week out there and make my way through crawfish boils in Rayne up to Toledo Bend.

01:02:36

AE: Well I certainly appreciate you giving me this—this time this morning. This has been wonderful.

01:02:41

DL: Thanks.

[End Donald Link Interview]