Marvin Dziuk

Dziuk's Meat Market—Castroville, Texas

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[BEGIN INTERVIEW] **00:00:00**

Marvin Bendele: OK, this is Marvin Bendele. I'm here today with Mr. Marvin Dziuk at Dziuk's Meat Market in Castroville, Texas. It's about twenty miles west of San Antonio. OK Mr. Dziuk, I'd like to ask you to state your name and spell it, give your date of birth, and I'll check the levels, make sure everything looks good.

Marvin Dziuk: Sure, Marvin Dziuk, that's spelled M-a-r-v-i-n, last name is D-z-i-u-k, and date of birth is seven, five, fifty-six.

MB: OK, thank you. Everything looks pretty good here. Well, let me get started. I think I'm going to ask just kind of a general question just to get us going here. One of the main things we wanted to get out of here [the interview] is—how did you get started with Dziuk's Meat Market? How did you get started in the business? I'm sure it's a long history, and we can do some follow-up questions with that, but if you'd just give me kind of a brief—or elaborate if you need to—

MD: Sure, actually back in the sixties my dad started the company and was joined by one of his brothers in the six—early sixties and another brother in the late sixties, and then I graduated from high school in June of '74. And in June of '75, this location at the time was closed up, and my dad happened to know the person that owned it, and he talked him into opening it up, and he actually bought the place in '74. And when I was eighteen years old, I was moved here as a manager, and we opened on June 1, 1975, and I've been here ever since. And now my dad and uncles are all retired, and I've actually bought them out, and now I own the business.

MB: So, your dad originally had a business in a different spot? Where was that and what did he do there?

MD: OK, originally the company that we had was started back in Poth, Texas, and we actually had a retail store there, a slaughterhouse there, and then of course in '75, when I came on board, the company branched out and we had a second location here. And then in '84, we branched out again and had a third location in San Antonio on the Southside on Pleasanton Road in Southcross, in that area there. And so in our heyday in the late eighties and nineties, we were running three retail locations and a slaughterhouse. And then upon my dad's and uncles' retirement, the rest of the company was sold out, and I purchased this location from them.

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MB: And your dad's name is Edwin? Is that correct? Edwin Dziuk?

MD: ***[Nods in agreement]***.

MB: Have you—did you grow up in Texas? Has your family always been from here, or did you come in later on?

MD: Yeah, my family are Polish heritage and they're from the Kosciusko [Texas]—my dad is from—my dad was born and raised in Kosciusko, and my mom was born and raised in Cestohowa [Texas], which is just two small Polish communities between San Antonio and Corpus [Christi], kind of, Karnes City area. I think Panna Maria [Texas] is right in that area, and that's probably the oldest Polish existing community in the United States. And they're all from

that area there—that's where they're—my family has originated from—they were—they were farmers back in the early years, and I think both sides were all farmers and my dad—my dad actually—

[Pauses to tell employee to stop making noise]

MB: OK, we're back.

MD: OK, let's see—oh yeah, the Polish—yeah, my dad was a farmer and originally did that all his life, and he was probably, oh, I don't know, I would say in his forties or so until opportunity came on board to work in a meat market and he started working there and worked for a number of years, and then upon the owner's retirement, actually talked him into taking over the business, and that's how the family acquired it. It's just the previous owners were the Kotzur's, it used to be Kotzur's Meat Market, K-o-t-z-u-r, I believe it is, and it was two brothers in it, and that's been—I don't know when the company was actually started—when they started it—but they were both retired out and then sold it to my dad. So, that's how he got started.

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MB: Well, I know you mentioned that your dad knew of this place [current Dziuk's building] being open. Did y'all have a connection to Castroville? Because Poth is probably what, an hour-and-a-half southeast of San Antonio, right? Or something like that?

MD: Right, my dad actually knew a guy by the name of Billy Tschirhardt who owned this place at the time. They happened to know each other from the stock yards in San Antonio, because

back then a lot of cattle were bought at the stockyards, and these people like my dad would go out and buy cattle, and then they were brought in and butchered, and that's what we sold. Now, of course, it's all feedlot beef now, but back then it was—it was stock yards, and that's how he knew Billy Tschirhardt, and as luck would have it, Billy owned this place. And—and my dad had never been to Castroville. I had never been to Castroville, had never even heard of it, and as luck would have it, I was dating my wife at the time, and her family is actually from LaCoste [Texas], so I had to actually get my wife to bring me here to see where I could find where the town was. So, we came here one time and looked at it and after that we decided to come here.

MB: And LaCoste is just down the road about five miles. So, you mentioned that your father, when he was running it in Poth—and this may be still the case—had a slaughterhouse out there as well. Do you still have your own slaughterhouse?

MD: We still actually own it [the old slaughterhouse building in Poth], but it's not operating at this time. With just one retail store, the butchering volume in the area has really gone down to where it's mainly just the stock-show-type animals, and it's real seasonal, where in the Spring there's a lot of animals to be butchered, but in the Fall and Winter—in the Summer, Fall, Winter, there's just not a lot of livestock to be butchered in this area, and we have, kind of, gone towards boxed beef, kind of, to where we don't butcher. Years ago we used to butcher eighty, ninety percent of all the beef that we sold, and now we probably butcher ten to twenty percent of the beef that we sell. And the remainder of the beef and the pork that we buy now is all boxed beef. So yeah, we own a slaughterhouse, but it is not operating because it is not just financially able—it can't pay for itself; it just doesn't work.

00:07:30

MB: That ten percent of the beef that is butchered, or twenty percent, do you do that here onsite?

MD: Oh no, I actually have that done at a—another place in Poth; Wiatrek's Meat Market does my butchering. They actually butcher for about five or six different meat markets. So, that's about what it takes—one slaughterhouse for maybe half a dozen places to survive. Each place does not need its own slaughterhouse.

MB: So, you mentioned boxed meats. Where do you end up getting them from? Is it just depending on prices and things like that?

MD: Well, I have a couple of big suppliers like Excel and IBP. I think—which now I think ConAgra owns Excel, and there's just a couple of big producers that own—I think there's like three guys that own a very large percentage of the beef production in the United States, and those big plants have a local distributor in San Antonio, and we buy through a local distributor.

MB: OK, so in terms of sales in the retail store here, what do you think—well, what is your biggest seller? I know you sell sausage and you do a lot of venison and stuff like that, so—

MD: Our number one item in the store right now is beef jerky. We have beef jerky, we have dried sausage, we have a fresh sausage—an Alsatian-style and a Polish-style sausage that they use for barbecue, or grilling, or boiling, or however—that's a real good product, but our number-one product is beef jerky.

MB: Did the—? You said Alsatian-style and Polish-style. What's the difference in the two different styles of sausage?

MD: Well, basically the Alsatian sausage is a—I guess for someone that's not from south Texas, the best way to describe an Alsatian sausage would be a kind of a brat. It's a raw sausage that's not—doesn't have preservatives in it. So when you cook it, it's going to be brown it's not going to be red. It's kind of like a raw brat, but the main ingredient that makes Alsatian sausage Alsatian is the coriander. That's a product—it's a spice that I have seen nowhere else—anywhere—that's put coriander in sausage. They do in this unique—this area—and it's very unique to this area and the people here think that it's the greatest thing that ever happened, but after you get out of this immediate area, you'll find that most people never heard of it and don't care for it.

MB: Well, I know—my experience with the Alsatian sausage, growing up in the area as well, is that it's usually prepared—in my family, it was always prepared boiled. Do you know a lot of people that actually barbecue or grill it, and what do you usually do with it when you cook it?

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MD: Well, it can be done either way, to each his own. I mean, when you boil a sausage, to me you kind of—some of the flavor comes out into the water that you boil. And when you grill a sausage or barbecue it, it tends to hold all the flavor in, so it's a lot richer finished product. It just totally changes the taste to where you can cook the sausage two different ways and you end up with two totally different products.

MB: Well, do you have—just going back to some of the retail stuff—the clientele that comes in here—do you have a pretty steady, loyal clientele, or do you have people coming from everywhere and you see them once and never see them again? I guess you probably have both, but I mean can you kind of talk about the clientele a little bit?

MD: Sure, yeah, that's one thing that we've found that year in, year out the volume changes very little. The weekends are almost predictable by last year the same weekend; people are pretty much on a track to where they even vacation the same time. They make the same stops when they come. I mean we have a lot of people that shop with us every week, and we have a lot of people that come down the highway and don't never go by without stopping. It just—but we are seeing a shift to value-added products. In other words, there seems to be a lot more demand to the consumers wanting stuff that's ready to eat—almost ready eat, ready to cook, seasoned, marinated. We're seeing that there is a very large demand for value-added products that are not necessarily cooked, but ready to cook.

MB: That includes smoked meats and things like that. And I guess do you smoke your own meat here?

MD: Yeah, we do smoke our own meat. We've got—we actually have three different smokehouses that are programmable and can run different programs through it. We have a drying room that's set up just to—so it doesn't tie the smokehouses up because a lot of, like, jerky and dried sausages require removing moisture. And you can do that more efficiently,

slower, and it does a better product in a room with a controlled temperature and humidity, and it leaves your smokehouses open and available for cooking products more.

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MB: Has the—in the value-added—you're talking about value-added products—I noticed online in your website that you can buy your meats online now and have it shipped, I guess. Has that, you know, increased your sales, or has it completely changed the way you do your sales nowadays?

MD: Oh, well it's getting there. We just started selling online less than a year ago, and we're seeing an unbelievable amount of gain in that area. We're finding a lot of people from San Antonio starting to order on the web—not even driving here from San Antonio. Twenty minutes away and they would rather choose to pay the five dollars to have it UPS'd [shipped] than to drive here and get it. So, yeah, we're finding a lot of people—a lot of people finding the ease of ordering online instead of coming out to the store, and we're not advertising it in any way whatsoever, and it's growing every week.

MB: It could be a function of gas prices. It may cost five bucks to drive out here nowadays, so—

MD: And time.

MB: Right.

MD: And the time; you figure the time, the gas, the wear and tear, and the amount of—and mental anguish—and you can order it and have it delivered to your door in a day, I mean, it's hard to beat.

MB: Right, right, but you pretty—you have a pretty good local following in just the immediate county as well, so, I mean, people come in your—every time I've been in here it seems like people are all over the place. It seems like you're pretty busy most of the time.

MD: Oh yeah, we do really well, and every year since we've been here, the business continues to grow, but we continue to add new products and phase out some of the old products—and it is a kind of a niche market. You kind of have to—I don't know how you would describe it—you have to sell what the people want to buy, not want you want to sell, you know.

MB: Do you—? One product that I've had here is the dried sausage. And over the years, I've eaten it here and there, and I would admit that sometimes it tastes a little different than it does from year to year. Do you guys tweak the recipes, or is that just a function of the meat in that particular year or things like that?

MD: Well, it's really weird. I mean, we do a lot of deer processing to where there's sometimes over a hundred, two hundred batches in a day put in the drying room, and for some reason, which I can't totally explain, is everyone of those batches will have its own individual uniqueness to it. So it starts with, you know, how well the animal was field dressed after it was butchered. It goes back even further to probably what that animal was eating when he was butchered—what the

muscle makeup was, because if you get into the feedlot business, you'll learn that the more grain-fed an animal is, the different—the grain effects the taste of the meat. But we're finding that even in sausages, and just all products, that it's almost impossible to make a exact same product every time—especially dried sausage, where it's a naturally fermented product, where it goes in a drying room for a few days. The—removing the water—it just doesn't happen the same in every batch. It's just really hard to put a finger on, but it's—every batch has its own little uniqueness, but we do tweak a little bit but not much. After so many years, we've found that everyone's taste buds are kind of unique in that everyone measures a sausage—what they eat from what they're accustomed to eating. So, whatever you were raised on, you kind of grade everything else by that criteria. So, it doesn't matter what you make—I always say it's like an opinion: everybody has one, and you put ten people in the same room with the same product and you're going to have ten different opinions. So, it's basically the same way with sausage.

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MB: And does that—? I would think that in this area that probably is even a little bit more of the case, since a bunch of the people around here make their own sausage also. Do you think that's probably one part of it?

MD: Well yeah, most people don't realize that there are, you know, that many different ways which you can do, but around here we've found that these people—every, everybody in this area has their own sausage recipe. And theirs is better than everybody else's, and no one else's is any good but theirs, because that's what they're used to eating. So, they grade everybody else's by what they think it should taste like. So, it's really an unfair test of anything—to amount to anything.

MB: It definitely is, and I know that's what my father would say—his is always the best, of course, but—

MD: Of course.

MB: Well, can—in preparing the sausage, or getting it ready here, could you kind of just go through in—as detailed as you can, just the process of making your sausage? Without, of course, revealing any secrets, but—

MD: Sure, well OK, the main thing that you have to have is you want a correct fat-to-lean ratio. You've got to have some fat in the meat because the flavor and the taste in meat is determined by the fat of the meat. In other words, if a meat has—you've—I'm sure everyone has had meat that is too lean. It has no flavor. That's why filet mignon has to have bacon around it because it has no fat—it has no flavor. So, you have to find it somewhere—so, the flavor is in the fat. So, you have to have some fat, but you don't want it too fat because then you have a problem with the amount of percent—of the bite. You don't want it greasy, but you don't want it dry, so you've got to have a real nice fat-lean ratio of meat. Some people like all pork, some—we make actually a pork and beef sausage. We put a little beef in it—it changes the product just a little bit. So, what you do is find a good, correct lean—probably about eighty-five percent lean product is what I like. I don't like it any leaner than that because if you put it any leaner than eighty-five percent analytical lean, you have a product that in my opinion is kind of mealy and dry and kind of falls apart on you. Then, of course, you have to have the correct amount of salt because what

salt does—it extracts the protein from the meat and that kind of binds the molecules, the fat molecules, and it extracts the protein and gives it the texture of sausage. And then after that, I mean, boy, then the whole can of worms opens. It's salt—you've got the peppers and the cayennes and the jalapenos and the garlic and the cheeses and the coriander, and everything else you can find in the pantry goes in after that. But there again, it's all personal preference, but the main thing in sausage is a good quality meat, salt, and some pepper, and after that—it's personal preference after that. I mean, you can make a great product with salt and pepper and maybe a little garlic, and you have a wonderful product, and that's really pretty close to what our Polish sausage is—is salt, pepper, garlic, and red pepper—just a real basic, won't-come-back-and-haunt-you-type sausage. It's just a great product, and that, of course, is—in this area, it's all ground together, mixed together in a mechanical-type mixer. Then it's stuffed into a pork casing—we use a natural pork casing to stuff the sausage in, and because—in this area, they don't believe in preservatives, which the nitrate is the main preservative used in sausage, and that preservative is what makes the sausage—it's why hams are red, it's why bacon is red, that's why all that is red. If you put preservatives in it, it's red when it's cooked. Our sausage is kind of a brown, roast appearance when it's cooked, because it doesn't have the nitrates in it. And because it doesn't have nitrates in it, it doesn't have a long shelf life. So, we like to make sausage and see it consumed in no more than two, three, four days at the most, to where the convenience stores and the grocery stores can't basically have that type of sausage because they can't get it through central distribution that quick. So, they've either got to freeze it or vacuum pack it or do something to try to extend the shelf life, because the natural product, we found, is just a totally unique product.

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MB: What is the process of stuffing? I know a lot of people that make it around here on their own, just mixing the venison and the pork, they have their—some of them have the crank stuffers. What do you guys use?

MD: Well, basically what we use is, we have a water stuffer. It's basically a piston-type machine that has a cylinder, and that cylinder is a piston and on one side of the piston is water and on the other side of the piston is the product, and then that water pressure actually pushes it through a stuffing horn into a casing. But there's vacuum stuffers, there's actually mechanical stuffers, gear driven. The water is just—use water pressure, that's what we use, but there's certainly great mechanical stuffers. And like I said, the best, newest thing out there is vacuum stuffers, and the product is actually stuffed under a vacuum, so those do give you a bit of a different texture—a bit of a different bite. But those are more for mass-production type—you know, we do every little batch separate. So, half of our batches wouldn't be enough to even get anything out of the machine. So those are for continuous-type use.

MB: In terms of smoking, do you smoke some of them longer than others? And what does that have to do with the flavor of it?

MD: Actually, the reason for smoking is—there's two reasons. One, they say that the smoke on the exterior is more of a preservative and it, also, of course, is for the smoke flavor. A lot of people say they like the smoke flavor, but that there again is personal preference. What you do is you try to smoke a sausage when it's—when the sausage casing is still wet and impervious ***[sic]***, that's when you apply the smoke. And then once the casing dries, the smoking process—smoke

won't penetrate anymore. It only—the smoke only penetrates the casing when the casing has a tacky feel to it. So, that's when you apply your smoke. And then once the casing is dried, that is sealed. So, if you're making a dry sausage, the main reason for smoking is for of course, shelf life and flavor—fresh sausage the same way, for flavor, because some people don't always end up grilling it, but if you're going to grill it anyway, it doesn't matter if it's smoked or not—you're going to get all the smoke on it usually when you grill it. Unless you want a certain flavor of smoke like hickory or something, but there again the smoking is not necessary, and a lot of the Alsatian sausage is sold raw—not even smoked.

MB: Does the—how long does it usually take to make the dry sausage? How long does it take to dry it? And I guess, of course, it depends on how big the sausages are. But also the jerky—how long does that—what's the process and how long does that take?

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MD: You go to the dry sausage—I can make it, if I had to, in twenty-four hours. But what we prefer—we prefer a method of more of a natural, slower-type drying process that takes about five days, and what that does—we do it at a lot lower temperature, a high humidity, but a low temperature. And when we make a dry sausage in a day versus make it in five days, the end product is totally different. If everything is done the same except the drying process, by doing it in five makes it taste one way and the other way makes it taste like a totally different product. So, there again you're supposed to take the internal temperature to 151 degrees to make sure it's fully cooked, and we do do that, but some people don't always heat treat their products. But we like to heat treat them just for the consumer safety part of it. And there again it takes—you can change the process a dozen different ways and have a dozen different flavored products at the

end. So, you just have to kind of find what you want to do and what works for you and your facility-wise and customer-wise and produce that product. And like the jerkys—we make a real thin product about an eighth of a—maybe eighth, maybe three-sixteenths product, where we actually slice it—slice the meat up. It's temped out first so you can slice it, not frozen, not totally thawed, about half way in between—slice it and then let it thaw completely. And then we put it in the meat tumbler and add the ingredients and tumble it in there, and that actually massages it and mixes the seasoning, and we'll put that in the smokehouse, and we'll have it ready in four hours. You know, and then we have another thicker product that we actually marinate and let sit for forty-eight hours in the cooler. And then take it out and smoke it for a day, and then let it dry for two days. And it's more of a, you know, one-inch-thick product. So, it's two completely totally different products made out of the same type of meat, just a different process.

MB: In terms of your raw meats, who do you—where does the meat go? I know people come in and buy here it also, but do you send it out to other stores and they buy, like at HEB [a regional grocery store chain] or something like that?

MD: We got into a little of the wholesale, but my personal business strategy has been that I didn't really want to get real big into the wholesale because I didn't want to build a facility and then that one customer being able to jerk your production from you and cause you to cease to exist. I prefer to go into retail and do a lot of different functions to where no one could say—call me on the phone and say, "Hey I'm not going to buy from you anymore," and it wouldn't make that big of a deal to me. I mean, I don't have all my eggs in one basket. So, for that reason I chose—and I had plenty of opportunity to supply the bigger stores and chose not to do that

because I felt that the retail business that we have here, the location that we have, the facility that we have, the customer base that we have is very adequate for the size business that we are, and we're very happy with that and don't really care to get into the wholesale part of it. So, we're basically, strictly retail with a few restaurant customers that have their niche towards quality products and that's who we go after.

MB: What about, like, festival—like, festivals, like, say, the St. Louis—I think it's called St. Louis Day or something like that? And then, like, Fourth of July festivals? Do you provide meat to the people who are barbecuing for stuff like that?

MD: Oh, yeah, sure, we provide for all the little cook-offs and like the St. Louis Day. I buy all the meat for the whole celebration. We actually take all of our equipment down there and make it down there at the park, so they can say it's Alsatian-made or whatever you want to call it. That's a big tradition thing that all the people in the parish go down there and make it. Yeah, but we provide all the—we buy all the meat and provide all the equipment for them to use and everything else.

MB: So, I'm sorry, you actually take your equipment down there and make the sausage while you're there?

MD: Yes, they actually—what they do—and, like I say, this has been since, I don't know how many hundred years ago. They've had, like, a hundred-and-something celebrations or something—

MB: Yeah, I mean it's been since the 1880s or 1890s.

MD: Right, so, yeah, basically what we do before that big festival every year on Saturday morning—well we—they built a big cooler down there onsite and we haul—we get all the meat delivered down there for the sausage and brisket for barbecue. We take it all down there on Thursday or Friday, and then Saturday morning we get up and actually take our equipment down there: grinders, meat stuffers, mixers, scales, and everything. And about a hundred guys show up there every Saturday morning before that thing, and we actually make the product right there fresh and hang it in the cooler, and it stays there fresh waiting for Sunday morning for them to start cooking it.

MB: Wow. And just for the record, we're talking about the annual St. Louis Day Festival that they have here in Castroville. Well, I guess that the next step that I wanted to ask about is, I know you do a big business during hunting season and a lot of the business during that time is I guess dressing out or processing the deer themselves. And do you make sausage from that? Or do you just process the deer? Or do both depending on customer?

MD: Well, we actually—it's such a busy time of the year for us, we actually go to—change our store hours and open seven days a week from eight to eight—seven days a week, we actually probably double our store hours. We actually double our staff for those three months. Not only do the deer hunters use our processing facility, they buy a tremendous amount of meat. It seems like these guys—all year they stay home, and then when it's deer season, every one of them are

grilling, barbecuing on the way out and dragging something back on the way back. And they bring a lot of deer in, and, of course, we make all of our specialty products: dried sausages, salami, snack sticks—you know, all the venison products. All the beef products that we make all year, we make those specialty products in venison out of each individual deer for the hunting season. So yeah, we make—all the specialty products that we make beef, we also do them in deer during the deer season.

00:30:14

MB: Is it legal to sell venison in a retail situation? I know most of the time you're making it for the people that killed the deer and things like that, but can you take some and put it in your counter here and sell that?

MD: OK, the way the law is, if a—but first of all, there's two distinct differences. There is hunter-killed venison and there is inspected wild game. And wild game that can be under inspection is animals such as any exotic that's not a native game animal, such as an Axis, a Fallow, Red Stag, Elk. Anything that's not in its native environment can be farm-raised, butchered under inspection, and then all that venison can be sold as venison. But if it's—let's say, for example, a whitetail deer, killed by a deer hunter, that meat cannot legally be sold. So, there's a big—a distinct difference between an exotic animal, butchered under inspection where an inspector actually sees the animal when he's alive, and then it's butchered, and then the carcass is processed under certain specifications. Then that carcass can be sold for whatever the market will bear.

MB: So, before we turned on the recording you were talking about some deer that you purchased and are raising on your own. Is that an example of that? Can you butcher those deer since you're raising them and feeding them? And also, maybe mention a little bit about what that—what your doing there with that.

MD: Well, like I say, I've worked in the deer business all my life, and I've really grown fond of the whitetail deer. I've hunted them all my life; I enjoy hunting them. And what I've done lately is start a whitetail deer breeder operation, which again it's a native game animal. So, no, that animal cannot be farmed for anything—I'm just doing it as a hobby because I've actually deer-proofed a little place, and I'm going to turn out these genetically superior deer and raise my own deer and go out and enjoy them. But no, that is not the type of deer that you would be able to go out and harvest. You would have to do something like Red Stags or Axis or some other non-native animal and do that sort of thing.

MB: Just to go back to the St. Louis Day celebration, I want to touch on that a little bit more. When you're making your own sausage there in front of people, are you selling it there? And are other people doing the same thing, like, I guess, just individuals that have their own homemade recipes doing it around there, too?

MD: Basically, what it amounts to, is there is one guy whose name is—well it got passed on from his dad to him, and now I think he's passing on to his son, the third generation doing it. And one guy is in charge of that operation, and he brings his own secret formula in there, and he weighs up all the seasoning for all the sausage for the celebration. So, all of the sausage is made

to his recipe, by his mix, by the way he wants it done, because he's there in charge. And we actually just furnish the equipment for him—for all these people to use. So, no, it's a very well managed operation. It's not like a big free-for-all, each one doing his own thing. Every sausage is manufactured exactly the same.

MB: Well, back to the deer season. Could you give an estimate or an idea of what you typically do in, let's say, a week or a weekend in terms of processing deer?

MD: Well, we process about—we like to say about 4000 deer a season, and that's about a ninety-day period of time. So, I'd have to do the math on what that figured to a day, but that's a lot for a short period of time, because like I said earlier, not only is that a lot of animals, that's plus the big boom we have up front because of all the retail that all these hunters—hunter traffic creates. And then you have your holiday buying, your Christmas, your Thanksgiving, your New Years. All that holiday buying falls in the middle of hunting season. So, it's quite a chaotic time of the year for us. I think if we didn't process the deer ourselves, we'd still be almost double the other times of the year.

MB: Just doubling the regular retail that you have already?

MD: Yes, because see you have your regular retail buying, and then you have to add your—your retail customers come all year so you've got those guys. Then you have to add the holiday buying guys, then you add all the deer hunters buying on the way to the lease, then you have the

other deer hunters on the way back, dragging the things back in. So, you've got that all on top of your regular, yearly, seasonal buyers.

00:35:12

MB: This is a—I don't know, I think you do make this stuff—one other thing speaking of holiday traditions, do you guys do parisa and sell that as well?

MD: Yeah, we do. We sell that. We actually just sell it on Fridays and Saturdays because I'm a real—it's a raw meat product, so I really don't like to sell it unless it was made that day. So, the only time we'll have it is on every Friday and Saturday, and then earlier in the week, if you want your own batch, it has to be a sizable batch.

MB: Can you describe it a little bit?

MD: OK, parisa is ground meat dish. It's a sirloin—or round—quality meat product—steak-quality meat product with no fat, no gristle, no connective tissue, and it's actually—we put meat, that quality meat, with cheese and onions, and it's actually ground to a coarse-ground meat texture. Then it's salt and peppered and seasoned, however you would like. And it's actually kneaded together really tight until it makes a—kind of a dough, kind of like a sausage—almost like a sausage mix, but then it's served raw on crackers. It's an excellent appetizer. It's really special in this area. In this area, if you really want to put out the best, you have parisa on the table. It's what you do in this area.

MB: Right, and I've had—I've tried to convince friends to eat it, and sometimes they do and sometimes they don't, but it's a really good product. Well, I have just a couple of other questions really quick. First off, we'll get to kind of the barbecue here—do you have a barbecue tradition in your family? I mean, do you guys get together on the weekends, have you done it all your life, things like that?

MD: Sure, yeah, actually I barbecue all the time. As a matter of fact, I barbecued half the day yesterday. So yeah, we've always done that, we enjoy doing that and it just—you can't beat anything cooked on the spot like that.

MB: And just for the record, that was Father's Day yesterday—that was the seventeenth, today is the eighteenth. Well, I think I've got most of what I want to do. I kind of want to talk about the future of the market, I mean, it's kind of—the business was kind of passed down, I mean just going through your family from dad and your brothers and things like that. Is there a chance that you pass it on to some of your kids?

MD: Well, my daughter has actually just graduated from college with a business degree, and her husband and her both are working here now. They've been here a year, and I am really looking forward to turning the business over to them.

MB: Is that going to come pretty soon, you think?

MD: I'm working on my exit strategy as we speak. I've been here for thirty-two years now, so—I'm not that old, but I've been here for a long period of time. So, it wouldn't hurt to get some new blood involved, and they have actually come onboard and are doing a wonderful job now.

MB: Well, that sounds great. Do you have anything else you'd like to talk about?

MD: No, not unless you have any other questions about anything.

MB: I think I've got pretty much what I wanted. Yeah, I think we've covered everything. I really appreciate you giving me the time to interview you, and I guess that will conclude it. Thank you very much.

MD: Thank you.

[END] **00:38:49**

