

**Uzee Family: Donald, Diane, Celeste, and Andre
Larose, LA**

Date: August 19, 2007
Location: Larose, LA
Interviewer: Sara Roahen
Length: 1 hour, 34 minutes
Project: Southern Gumbo Trail

[Begin Uzee Gumbo Trail Interview]

00:00:02

Sara Roahen: This is Sara Roahen for the Southern Foodways Alliance. It's Sunday, August 19, 2007. I'm in Larose, Louisiana with the Uzee family. If I could get you all to introduce yourselves—just say your name and your birth date—I'd appreciate it.

00:00:20

Celeste Uzee: Celeste Uzee. 1973.

00:00:25

Donald Uzee: Donald Uzee. 1937.

00:00:29

Diana: Diana Uzee. Ain't none of your business. *[Laughs]*

00:00:33

SR: That's allowed. *[Laughs]* And we're here to talk about gumbo because your family has been involved in the French Food Festival that's here every year. And maybe you could just sort of tell me a little bit about the festival and how long you've been involved.

00:00:56

CU: Well the festival is a classic South Louisiana food festival. It's a fund-raising—large-scale, public fund-raising event that supports the non-profit community center. And it's almost the last of the dying breed in some ways because so many festivals have become commercialized and rent out space to restaurants or caterers or commercial food providers, and our festival is still 100-percent community driven. Every bit of food that's produced at the festival is cooked by family, friends, members of the community, people who participate in the life of the community.

00:01:31

SR: Hmm, and so there aren't restaurant vendors there?

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CU: None.

00:01:36

DU: It's all—it's strictly as Celeste said—volunteers, family members and people in the various communities, not just Larose. We have Cut Off, Galliano, and people from the area who bring in their—their favorite dishes, and most of them prepare them under the—we have a large circus tent that is put up every year. And we've been playing this little game for, oh, the festival started in what—19—?

00:02:18

CU: I want to say '73 or '72. We're not the best experts on the early history of the festival, but I think we've been doing it since the second or third year.

00:02:29

DU: Yeah, we've been doing it—not the first year because we weren't invited. And they invited us, you know and we got into it whole hog.

00:02:41

SR: And how—did you make gumbo from the beginning?

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DU: Yes, we did. We made gumbo and we've modified the recipe from the—from the beginning.

00:02:52

SR: And do you make the gumbo under the circus tent or do you make it here?

00:02:54

DU: We make it right there under the tent.

00:02:56

CU: From scratch every day.

00:03:00

Diana: Start at 5 o'clock in the morning.

00:03:04

DU: And we make it, and we'll show you later on—we make it in 60-quart pots. We make two pots at a time, and we make our gumbo a little bit different than normal, but that's going to be for later. But everything is done right there under the tent, so what the customer is getting when they come with their tickets is that fresh bowl of gumbo.

00:03:31

Diana: We make eight pots for the weekend.

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SR: And so the festival is how many days?

00:03:37

Diana: Friday, Saturday, and Sunday.

00:03:38

SR: And what time of year?

00:03:41

Diana: The last full weekend in the month—

00:03:42

DU: October, every year.

00:03:47

Diana: It has to be the last full weekend.

00:03:48

DU: Yeah.

00:03:50

SR: Okay, and [*Laughs*] we have a member trying to escape. What—maybe you could describe the gumbo for me.

00:04:01

DU: Well the gumbo is a traditional—or, excuse me. Let me rephrase that: a non-traditional seafood gumbo. We have oysters, shrimp, crabmeat—

00:04:22

Diana: Claws.

00:04:24

CU: Crab claws.

00:04:23**DU:** Crab claws.**00:04:25****Diana:** Sausage.**00:04:28****DU:** Sausage, ham—.**00:04:33****Diana:** And of course the roux.**00:04:34****DU:** Roux. We don't use okra in ours. We use—it's a roux base and—**00:04:40****Diana:** All the greens.**00:04:43****DU:** Celery.**00:04:44****CU:** Celery.

00:04:44**DU:** Bell pepper, onions.**00:04:46****CU:** Green onions.**00:04:46****DU:** Green onions, parsley.**00:04:47****CU:** Parsley and the seasonings.**00:04:51****DU:** And the seasonings, which includes everything from Worcestershire to garlic.**00:05:01****Diana:** Lemon juice.**00:05:03****DU:** And lemon juice.**00:05:03**

CU: Crab boil.

00:05:05

DU: Crab boil.

00:05:05

CU: We actually have the detailed recipe for that quantity printed in the community cookbook. It's also printed in a copy of that *Louisiana Cooking* magazine, and so you can make a gumbo for 200 by following the recipe.

00:05:17

DU: If you're so inclined—if you're so inclined.

00:05:19

Diana: If you have a reason to.

00:05:20

DU: Yeah, if you're so inclined.

00:05:23

SR: And how—well I have so many questions. First, what kind of sausage do you use?

00:05:30

DU: We traditionally use Savoie's pure hot. In other words, we have used others, but we always go back to Savoie's.

00:05:46

Diana: And the hot version of it.

00:05:46

SR: So it's smoked?

00:05:47

CU: Yeah.

00:05:47

Diana: It's not a heavy smoked; it's a light smoked.

00:05:52

CU: It's not—I mean, it's a mass market commercial product. Savoie's started out as—as a small operation, but they do all kinds of prepared foods now and it's very consistent because it's made on an industrial scale. It's not like buying, you know, smokehouse sausage where one week's batch is hot, the next week's batch is less hot.

00:06:11

Diana: Right.

00:06:11

CU: It's also, I'm pretty sure it's in a synthetic casing. It's not in a natural casing, which is good because a natural casing sausage boiled that long in a gumbo would kind of get yucky and start to disintegrate. And so it stays together. Its industrial characteristics work well in our large quantities.

00:06:34

Diana: And it's whole—like she says, the sausage holds up, keeps from falling apart.

00:06:38

SR: And how is it—what do you mean by *non-traditional*? What would make a seafood gumbo more—?

00:06:44

DU: Because a traditional—a traditional seafood gumbo wouldn't have the ham or the sausage—.

00:06:53

CU: Well, and that's a traditional Lafourche Parish seafood gumbo. We happen to live on—in sort of the outpost of Acadiana. The Cajuns on this—the east side of the Basin culturally are pretty distinct from—culinarily at least, distinct from the west side of the Basin. These aren't rice farmers; these aren't sweet potato farmers. Here you have

fishermen, fishermen with great access to fresh products all year-round. If they wanted crabs, they went half a mile down the road and they put out their crab traps and they got crabs or shrimp or oysters or whatever product was available. So they weren't really making a seafood gumbo with a little bit of seafood and stretching it with some other cheaper protein—the hogs in their backyard, or you know, whatever they had on hand.

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Diana: Weenies.

00:07:36

CU: Hotdogs or Spam or bologna or any of the things that you find—.

00:07:42

DU: Believe it or not there are some people who do, in their gumbos, put the stuff that Celeste just mentioned. There are some that will put weenies, Vienna sausage. In other words, the way gumbo was, and still is—it's whatever you had—

00:08:05

Diana: Whatever you had.

00:08:07

DU: —went into the pot, and that's what you ended up with. That's why lots of times the term *un gumbo* means it's just a mixture, which is a way from what gumbo really is. A

gumbo is just a bunch of stuff. That's just like the other food that's popular: jambalaya.

As many gumbos as there are, there's as many jambalayas. In other words, we make gumbo—she doesn't make gumbo the same way that I do, or that she does.

00:08:48

CU: No, hers is too thin.

SR: Your mom's is too thin?

00:08:52

Diana: The biggest fights we ever have is how to cook anything—mainly gumbo.

Because her sister makes it one way, and she makes it another way, and he makes it another way, and it's like, *Well I can come if I can bring my gumbo, but I don't want your gumbo.*

00:09:12

DU: Well you know it's—again, even the next door neighbors don't make gumbo the same way.

00:09:19

CU: Well considering they're all from Texas.

00:09:19

SR: Oh really?

00:09:21

CU: They're from Texas; we're not eating their gumbo.

00:09:23

DU: They won't even make it.

00:09:28

Andre: They're so similar—they're so similar that somebody—you've got to know how to make it to recognize the differences.

00:09:34

CU: Yeah, there's subtle differences.

00:09:37

Andre: There's not enough differences to amount to much.

00:09:38

SR: I have to interrupt and say who this mysterious voice is talking from the corner.

00:09:47

DU: That's Andre.

00:09:46

SR: Andre Uzee, Celeste's brother, who has a lot of good input, I can tell. And so, oh boy—well, let me just ask about the—the family disputes when it comes to cooking. So usually, you know, you hear about kids learning how to cook from their parents—but I guess y'all did that and then went on and formed your own styles. Is that—Celeste? How come you don't make a gumbo just like your mom?

00:10:24

CU: Well first of all, my mother is not Cajun in any way whatsoever. She grew up in Central Louisiana. She's Scotch-Irish, German [*Laughs*]*—other stuff—*

00:10:33

Andre: Paper mill.

00:10:34

SR: Paper mill?

00:10:37

CU: And so her gumbo tends to be more like soup—less like a stew. It's much, much thinner than certainly what you get in Southwest Louisiana, which we sometimes disparagingly call gravy gumbo. You know, your spoon will stand up in the bowl it's so thick.

00:10:50

DU: That's just like a New Orleans gumbo.

00:10:51

CU: Well and restaurant gumbos—city-style gumbos, which are made with really, really intensely reduced stocks, a whole lot of roux—a very rich gumbo. Our gumbos are brothier. But hers crossed the line into soup. Real broth.

00:11:05

Diana: Yeah, but one of the best-tasting gumbos you can get is Prejean's out of Lafayette, but it is so thick it's gravy. If they added a quart of water to what they gave you, you would have a good gumbo, but it's—it's just too thick.

00:11:19

SR: And which gumbo do you like there? I think they have a couple different kinds.

00:11:21

Diana: They have the duck and andouille that's—but like I said, but it's thick. I mean your spoon can stand up in your bowl. But okay.

00:11:30

SR: And so when you're making the gumbo for the festival, it sounds like there are a lot of you pitching in. Who gets to decide, or who decided in the beginning the ultimate recipe and style?

00:11:47

CU: Well it started off with a pretty straightforward traditional gumbo. And what happened is, over time the festival grew and we were cooking in larger and larger quantities. And as you know, large-quantity cooking is nothing like cooking at home on the stove in a single pot. And so we evolved over time to the increased scale—just increased the volume of festival cooking. So we went from a roux actually made in the bottom of the cooking pot to a roux prepared separately—prepared on-site, prepared fresh that day, but made in a pot with the sufficient bottom so that the roux wouldn't burn, which we'd then transfer to the bigger pot. So it's not necessarily so far afield from traditional gumbo; it's just a whole lot of small adjustments or reworkings. But there's this great division of labor that happens because the gumbo—not only do we make it on-site; we still hand chop everything that goes into it. All the ingredients are prepped the week in advance. My mom is the chef de commis: she's the prep guy, or the prep gal. And we have a whole—

00:12:48

Diana: Have a whole staff.

00:12:49

CU: We have a whole gang of people who show up, and we spend an entire evening cutting all the sausage, cutting all the ham, cutting all the celery, cutting all the bell pepper, cutting the onion—. Oh we do cut the onion by food processor, but shhh. Don't tell anybody.

00:13:03

Diana: Just the white onion—not the green onion.

00:13:4

CU: Just the white onion—not the green onion. The green onion is still cut by hand.

00:13:08

SR: 'Cause it's so strong?

00:13:08

CU: Well it's a 50—it's a 50-pound sack of onions.

00:13:10

Diana: Oh now we're at 64, now.

00:13:11

DU: Sixty-five.

00:13:12

Diana: Sixty-four pounds.

00:13:14

Andre: You lose—if you use a food processor you lose a lot of liquid that hand-chopping you don't—you don't lose.

00:13:25

SR: Uh-hm. And so you must—when you have the night when everybody is prepping, you must have to eat then too, huh?

00:13:35

CU: I'm embarrassed to say, yes: we have hotdogs and chili every year.

00:13:40

Diana: It's homemade chili. At least I don't give anybody something out of a can.

00:13:46

SR: Well I think that's acceptable.

00:13:46

Diana: They're all-beef wieners. [*Phone Rings*]

00:13:51

Andre: Like Nik [Nik is Celeste's nickname] was saying, I've got my job, she's got her job, he's got his job, and get out the way. Let me do mine, and everybody comes together on the end to bring—I bring the roux, and then she does the tasting—

00:14:12

SR: Wait, so you—you do the roux?

00:14:15

CU: He's Mr. Roux.

00:14:15

SR: Ah, okay. And what is—

00:14:17

Andre: He handles the water—

00:14:21

CU: I think we made him Mr. Roux because he can take the heat, because it's a miserable hot job, you know. You have to stand over there, and we're making a roux with a really large quantity of flour and oil.

00:14:30

SR: How much?

00:14:32

DU: We use two pounds—two-pounds of flour per pot, which is not really that much—that heavy a roux.

00:14:43

SR: And what kind of oil do you use?

00:14:45

DU: Peanut oil. We may change this year to canola oil.

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CU: I don't like canola. We're going to fight about that.

00:14:55

DU: But we don't use a blend. It's—it's a—

00:14:58

Diana: That was my other daughter, Danielle, who called to tell y'all there's other ways to make gumbo besides the—. Because if you do the new traditional way you'll—you can use jarred roux, and you can use chicken and make a dark gumbo. But in our area, people don't mix chicken and shrimp. But if you go to the black community here that has

a big gumbo, they use the chicken and shrimp together. The Mount Zion Church here makes a really good gumbo. And it does mix shrimp with chicken.

00:15:39

SR: Well let me just—you said a word in the beginning that I didn't catch—that Danielle called to say there's a way that's not like the—?

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Diana: Regular.

00:15:53

SR: Oh okay; I don't know. And so where does Danielle live?

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DU: About eight miles south of here in Galliano.

00:16:02

SR: Oh okay. Oh boy, there's so much going on right now.

00:16:08

CU: Well can go back to the festival if you want to and talk about the mechanics of what we actually do there.

00:16:13

SR: Okay. Let—yeah, let me ask one thing about the roux—or two more things. First of all, is it like a one-to-one ratio of flour to oil, or—?

00:16:23

DU: Yes, and then when any excess oil at the latter part of the cooking when the excess oil comes to the top, you'd skim it off.

00:16:32

SR: Okay.

00:16:33

CU: But one-to-one—.

00:16:33

DU: It's easier to make.

00:16:37

CU: Right. Like she made a one-to-one roux for the gumbo she just made, but it—it's harder to burn because you have more oil so the flour doesn't clump as much. It's easier to stir through, and again you can skim off whatever extra oil rises to the top of the end. You can make a leaner roux, but it's easier to burn.

00:16:54

SR: And why would you maybe switch to Canola?

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DU: Because right now peanut oil has gone through the roof price-wise, and lots of times they're producing what they call a peanut oil blend used for frying, and quite often you can't—you don't have access to the pure peanut oil.

00:17:21

CU: Well you do but you have to pay retail for it and—and most of our purchasing for the festival is done through wholesale, you know. The organization gets a lot of the dry goods and things like that, and their provider probably can't supply it. I'll spring for it. I hate canola oil. I think it smells funky.

00:17:39

DU: Okay.

00:17:40

SR: And what color do you get the roux?

00:17:41

Andre: About the color of that table. [*Laughs*]

00:17:44

SR: The color of the table?

00:17:51

Andre: Peanut butter.

00:17:53

SR: Peanut butter—a little darker than peanut butter.

00:17:53

DU: Not the chunky.

00:17:56

SR: Not the chunky. [*Laughs*]

00:17:57

DU: No, we hope it's not that—

00:17:59

CU: And Skippy—not that all-natural stuff.

00:18:01

Andre: No chunky. If it's chunky I throw it—.

00:18:04

CU: I will say it's—I will say it's about the color of a dark cardboard box, too.

00:18:08

DU: But we will also add this aside: the color can be changed.

00:18:16

SR: How is that?

00:18:18

DU: To make it darker. And don't do like some of the restaurants do by putting coffee—lots of restaurants use coffee to change—.

00:18:28

CU: I don't think—I don't think lots do, but you'll run across—

00:18:31

DU: Lots of them do, and especially in the New Orleans area. Clyde used to swear that that's what the restaurants where he used to go to, they used coffee to change the color of the roux. In other words, you blend—you make the roux, just make it blend with the oil; cook it—cook the flour. And then make it whatever color you want. We use something

that—and I don't mind telling you—we use Kitchen Bouquet™. If Kitchen—if the color is not to Celeste's satisfaction, add a little more Kitchen Bouquet™.

00:19:09

CU: I like it dark because the—. If you cook a light roux, that medium-brown roux, it gives a great taste, but sometimes with—especially with a seafood gumbo, because of all the ingredients you're putting into it, it comes out the color of that—of like dishwater at the end of the night. You know that nasty dishwater gray. And I just find it's a horribly un-appetizing color, so I want it to be on the warm side of brown as opposed to the—.

00:19:34

DU: And then you know, as I said, we went to a place that's supposed to know how to make gumbo.

00:19:43

SR: A restaurant?

00:19:46

DU: You were with us, right?

00:19:47

CU: Uh-hm.

00:19:49

DU: And we had a bowl of their gumbo. We passed it around the table. We always sample other people's gumbo. It tasted nothing but coffee. It's a beautiful color, nice ingredients, but it had a strong coffee taste.

00:20:06

Diana: I think the gumbo that's closest to ours that we've ever eaten anywhere is Don's in Lafayette.

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CU: Don's seafood gumbo in Lafayette?

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Diana: Old Don's in Lafayette.

00:20:14

DU: In town.

00:20:17

CU: Oh, the one downtown?

00:20:18

Diana: Yeah.

00:20:19

SR: I've had somebody tell me I need to try their gumbo.

00:20:21

Diana: You know who else does a good one too that's close to ours? In Opelousas, it's Savoy's—? Savoie's?

00:20:37

CU: Where in Opelousas?

00:20:38

Diana: I don't know.

00:20:39

Andre: Can't be much. Opelousas ain't big.

00:20:42

SR: What—so Kitchen Bouquet™, I know a lot of people use that in gumbo and other kinds of cooking. Yeah, I haven't used it. Does that give any flavor?

00:20:53

DU: No, it has no flavor.

00:20:55

CU: It's a, you know, sugar-derived burnt caramel color.

00:21:00

SR: Uh-huh, okay. What about—this is a little off-topic, but I'm curious because I've noticed talking to people in Acadiana that a lot of people use jarred roux to make gumbo. What do you—what do y'all think of that?

00:21:14

DU: That's what Diana said when she just talked to Danielle: Danielle has started using jarred roux. We always like to kind of—kind of keep a little bit of the tradition, you know—.

00:21:28

CU: I don't use jarred roux because I make my roux with bacon grease. **[Laughs]** And I find that the jarred roux, it's usually soybean oil. It's perfectly fine. It's a nice dark, dark color brown—a darker brown than you would ever get doing it from scratch at home with a whisk in a black iron skillet 'cause it is really dark. But I don't find it has much flavor, and I would much rather use bacon grease or put a little butter in my oil and get a deeper flavor out of it.

00:21:58

Andre: It's just like making it in microwave.

00:22:00

DU: A lot of people make roux in a microwave now. And you know, as Andre says, have you ever heard of making the roux in a microwave? And again—

00:22:09

CU: It's pretty easy. It browns beautifully; you don't have to stir it. You stir it up initially to get the oil and the flour mixed, and then you stick it in the microwave and you do it one-minute increments and it just gets browner and browner right before your eyes.

00:22:21

DU: There is a festival in New Iberia, Louisiana, a gumbo festival—strictly gumbo—where there's over 70 participants who gather—70 teams who gather and make gumbo. They start at 5 o'clock in the morning and they make all kinds of gumbo. There's one group, and I have photographs of it. This guy makes an oil-less roux on the stove-top. He starts with five pounds of flour—

00:22:55

Diana: It takes him five hours.

00:22:56

DU: —and it takes him about four and a half hours to get just the flour in this heavy-bottom pot to the color he wants it.

00:23:06

CU: You can also buy already-browned flour in a jar at Winn-Dixie.

00:23:10

SR: Yeah, I've seen that. And so what's the difference of the flavor in a gumbo—a gumbo that doesn't have oil in the roux?

00:23:16

DU: I don't know. I've never had it. So I can't tell you. What happens—?

00:23:23

Diana: I think the oil helps the flavors to blend.

00:23:26

CU: Yeah, and I think that—not just—you're right, but the reason it blends is because there's spices that are oil-soluble, like all the peppers. You know everything in capsicums are oil-soluble, so I mean to me it would be flatter-tasting, you know, but we'd have to try them side-by-side.

00:23:44

SR: Yeah. And what do you make your roux in for the—for the festival? Like a—?

00:23:51

DU: Magna-Lite. An oval—the largest Magna-Lite oval because of the heavy bottom.

00:23:56

CU: It's like a 20-quart.

00:23:58

Andre: You need a thick, thick pot.

00:24:00

SR: Okay, and what do you stir it with when you make it at that quantity?

00:24:03

DU: A wooden paddle.

00:24:04

SR: A wooden paddle, huh?

00:24:05

DU: Yeah.

00:24:08

Andre: Wooden spoon—don't use metal.

00:24:10

DU: There's a—

00:24:09

Diana: See why it has a browned edge?

00:24:13

SR: Uh-huh. We're looking at—is that what you use to make your roux?

00:24:16

Diana: That's the paddle that stirs it.

00:24:20

CU: It's a flat-ended wooden spoon.

00:24:24

SR: Right, and it's—I'm going to take a picture of this later, but it's very brown on the end.

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DU: That's from the heat.

00:24:29

CU: It might even be bamboo.

00:24:33

DU: No, that's not a bamboo.

00:24:33

CU: It's not? Because I had a bamboo—.

00:24:35

Andre: That's the one from the—

00:24:35

SR: From the what kind of tree? Okay, inside joke.

00:24:40

DU: There's a story—Andre—

00:24:42

Diana: This is not the biggest one. The biggest one is lower, but it's one shaped just like this.

00:24:46

SR: Oh okay. This is—this is the oval pot. I'll also take a picture.

00:24:51

DU: The other one is—what is this one?

00:24:56

CU: Eight quarts.

00:24:58

Diana: That's the little one.

00:24:58

DU: That's the small one.

00:25:02

SR: Uh-hm. And—well that's interesting because I ask people—I often ask people what they use to stir their roux. I also prefer wooden. A lot of people, you know, use a metal whisk.

00:25:13

Diana: Well you always keep—

00:25:15

DU: What happens with—

00:25:17

Diana: —a metal whisk close by in case it starts to lump, you can beat the hell out of it—.

00:25:22

DU: What happens with a metal spoon, when you take it out it absorbs the moisture from the air and you're going to be putting a—

00:25:31

CU: That's some voodoo science if I've ever heard it.

00:25:33

DU: —and it may be putting moisture into your oil and flour.

00:25:36

CU: Well I guess it does cool off quickly and it might—you might have some condensation on it. What I don't like about a whisk is it doesn't have a flat surface so you can't consistently scrape the bottom.

00:25:49

Andre: I got a whisk—the whisk is to break up—.

00:25:53

SR: You use a whisk to make sure that it's not lumpy?

00:25:56

Andre: Yeah, right.

00:25:58

DU: There's a story, if you want to hear this: we—after you take the Magna-Lite pot off the stove it still retains a lot—a lot of heat. And so what Andre does, he puts it on a chopping board and continues stirring.

00:26:20

CU: A wooden board.

00:26:20

DU: Yeah, a wooden chopping board, and he continues stirring, and naturally it continues cooking.

00:26:24

CU: To boil. It's bubbling furiously.

00:26:28

DU: The flour and oil is still cooking. And one day—we always have people visiting from all over the country, and one day this lady was looking over Andre’s shoulder and he’s stirring and it’s getting more brown as time progresses, and she asked him, she said—well, what did she tell you, Andre?

00:26:52

Andre: Well she asked me, well why—how was I cooking it? Why was it still cooking on the chopping—?

00:27:00

SR: Right, why was it still cooking on the chopping board?

00:27:02

Andre: Yeah, and I told her it one was one of them special trees I cut the wood from and it produces heat when you put a pot on it.

00:27:10

SR: That the chopping board was—?

00:27:13

DU: Yeah, it’s a magic chopping board.

00:27:14

Andre: Magic chopping board—she actually believed me.

00:27:18

SR: And what do you—so you have to take it off the heat a long time before it's done turning color, no?

00:27:26

DU: You—you can.

00:27:27

Andre: You can, you can.

00:27:28

CU: Well it kind of depends. We do it on this rickety old propane burner with this sorry wind deflector.

00:27:34

Andre: No, I had a brand-new one last year.

00:27:36

CU: Did you buy a brand new one?

00:27:37

Andre: I bought a brand new one.

00:27:38

CU: ‘Cause we turned it on the year before and it blew up and we [*Laughs*] almost burned down the whole tent.

00:27:42

SR: Wait, what blew up?

00:27:43

CU: The little—

00:27:45

DU: The small burner.

00:27:47

CU: We had two—we have two large sort of—if you’re familiar with the standard kind of crawfish boiling rig—big propane burners that we run two pots full of gumbo on. We have a little side burner to make the roux over, because typically we have two full pots going and then we’re making a roux sometimes for a third or a fourth. And anyway,

the—if we had a burner that we could actually regulate, I guess you could make it over—entirely over the flame. But we’re a little primitive in those areas, so—. [*Laughs*]

00:28:16

Andre: We like to cool it off. That’s what—.

00:28:18

DU: You can't add the hot roux—

00:28:20

Andre: Right.

00:28:21

DU: —to the boiling pot. You have to cool it off.

00:28:23

CU: But that’s important. We got to tell her that. That’s where we diverge. This is the—the great schism of the gumbo family.

00:28:29

Diana: Yeah, because we didn’t do that for years.

00:28:33

CU: For a long time—for a long time when we were still making the roux in the pot, we did it just like you'd make a gumbo on top of the stove at home. You make your roux, and what happens next? You put your onions in. You brown your onions; you know, as the onions start to release some moisture and the roux is no longer sticking and the roux has stopped cooking, you add your other vegetables, cook them down for a while, and then you add your liquid. That works great in a pot this deep where you can quickly clean the bottom and you can make sure that none of that roux is falling out of suspension or globbing up or forming chunks or—or sticking to the bottom. And we—I think we lost one pot, and that's what changed this over.

00:29:12

DU: Yeah. In 30 years we—we lost one roux.

00:29:16

CU: We—we did that: we added the vegetables in and we're stirring. And again these pots—some of the pots we're using we own. Some of the pots are community property that belong to the community center. So the bottom gets dinged if somebody doesn't care for it properly, or if whoever scrubbed it last didn't really scrub out every little last speck of everything, or if there's some soap residue—

00:29:33

Diana: Cheap pot.

00:29:34

CU: —or if it's a really cheap aluminum pot with that funky finish, you know a non-polished finish. So we add the vegetables and we start adding the water and the roux falls out of suspension and burns on the bottom of the pot.

00:29:47

SR: After you added the liquid?

00:29:50

CU: After we added the liquid. So no, we switched it up.

00:29:51

Andre: That wasn't my fault.

00:29:53

CU: [*Laughs*] So we switched it up.

00:29:55

SR: It was not Andre's fault.

00:29:57

DU: Oh no. That was—this happened many years ago, back in the formative days.

00:30:02

CU: So we changed—we changed our procedure and we decided that we would add all the vegetables to probably five or six gallons of water in the pot.

00:30:12

DU: More than that sometimes.

00:30:14

CU: Maybe half of the pot full of water, and bring it to a boil—a rolling boil—and put cold or cooled roux into the boiling—into the *bouille*—into the boiling vegetables, and you stir the cold roux in, and that way the—the cooler roux hits the warmer water and instantly dissolves, as opposed to doing the backwards—putting cold—‘cause all we had access to really was hose water. **[Laughs]** We were putting water—we were standing there with the garden hose spraying it right into the pot. In a real sort of classical French tradition you would have the boiling stock or the boiling water, and you would add hot water to a hot roux. Well we—all we had was a garden hose, so—. **[Laughs]**

00:30:51

SR: So you’re adding cool roux to cooler water?

00:30:54

CU: Cool roux to hot water.

00:30:55

DU: No, hot water.

00:30:54

SR: Oh ‘cause you’re heating the water. And so you—you sauté the vegetables before you add the water or not?

00:31:01

CU: Nope, and that’s another thing where again, we—we diverge from a classical—from a South Louisiana gumbo, or from your classical French tradition, which tells you you have to caramelize your *mirepoix*. Phooey, it tastes just as good if you put it all in the water and—

00:31:17

DU: And boil it.

00:31:17

CU: —and boil the hell out of it. *[Laughs]*

00:31:19

SR: And do you do that at home too, or is it—?

00:31:23

DU: Everything—everything for the—for the fair, everything except the prep work, is done—

00:31:29

CU: No, no, no. She's talking about, do you do a bouille and then add your roux to it when you're making a pot of gumbo at home?

00:31:36

DU: Oh no, no, no.

00:31:38

CU: You do it the other way that we were talking about?

00:31:41

CU: Right, like a pot that size on the stove.

00:31:43

Diana: Yeah, that's a real pot.

00:31:43

CU: A small pot.

00:31:43

SR: Domestic pot?

00:31:46

DU: Yeah. No that's—we still, in small quantities we still do it the traditional make the roux, put the—.

00:31:58

Diana: But when I make a gumbo the traditional way, I use—I start off with olive oil.

00:32:04

SR: You make your roux with olive oil?

00:32:07

Diana: Oh yeah. I find it—

00:32:07

DU: [*Laughs*] See that—you know as you have found over the years it's—it's your personal preference.

00:32:16

CU: And I find olive oil easy to burn, personally. I've done that a couple of—.

00:32:19

Diana: Well I don't go off and leave it. I stay with it. *[Laughs]*

00:32:25

CU: Bacon grease, you know if it burns it sort of just tastes smokier.

00:32:29

SR: That's true. Okay, so let's go back to the festival. So you—your prepping—you also prep everything the night that you have the hotdogs and chili?

00:32:40

CU: Yes.

00:32:39

SR: You're under the tent?

00:32:41

DU: No, here.

00:32:42

CU: We are literally sitting here.

00:32:41

SR: Oh, you're here.

00:32:44

Diana: Where we start off that night, we will do celery, because if you do celery—

00:32:45

SR: How much celery?

00:32:48

Diana: —last they'll quit on you, because celery is so hard to cut. We do like 16 stalks—

00:32:53

DU: Eighteen stalks.

00:32:54

Diana: —of celery that's chopped. And then we move celery out; we bring out the bell peppers, which would be about—

00:33:01

DU: Forty—forty.

00:33:03

Diana: —more than that. I think it's up to 60 now since we have the two pots—bell peppers. We'll chop them. And then we do this sausage—we'll cut that.

00:33:14

DU: And the ham.

00:33:15

Diana: And the ham.

00:33:16

CU: And the sausage and the ham—the sausage, it comes out in links. It's split lengthwise, and sometimes we quarter it. It kind of depends on who's doing the cutting. And then it's sliced so that it's a piece small enough so it will fit in a—in a soup spoon.

00:33:31

DU: In a spoon.

00:33:32

SR: So cubes? Little cubes?

00:33:32

Diana: Yeah.

00:33:33

SR: And so I didn't totally follow how much—. And do you use equal amounts of celery and bell pepper, or less celery?

00:33:38

Diana: No, I use—no, we use less bell peppers. Bell peppers got much more flavor than the celery.

00:33:45

CU: And that's—that's another big differentiation between the people on the other side of the Atchafalaya and us. I've heard all kinds of people—*don't put too much celery; the celery takes over*—and they give you the three, two, one, you know: three onions, the two bell peppers, to one celery. Almost everybody I know along the bayou with food is just the opposite: they use more celery than bell pepper.

00:34:01

DU: And I hate celery.

00:34:04

SR: Even in your gumbo?

00:34:05

DU: I don't mind the taste of celery, but I don't like celery overpowering especially in things like tuna salad or chicken salad.

00:34:17

CU: Okay, this is a little off-topic. *[Laughs]*

00:34:22

Diana: But we found out—we cut our green onions out at the fair because *[Laughs]* they—they are so odorous.

00:34:30

CU: Yeah, they are strong and they—because they're so delicate. We have—until recently, we had a man—

00:34:34

DU: He died.

00:34:34

CU: —I know, I know. We had a man who planted the green onions just for us. He grew the green onions just for our gumbo every year. Well he passed on and now his wife, who is a formidable force, coerced some other old man to do the planting for her. *[Laughs]*

00:34:49

DU: No, her son-in-law.

00:34:50

CU: Her son-in-law, okay. And so we're still getting custom green onions.

00:34:53

DU: So every year on a Saturday—on a Friday morning the green onions were delivered, and Saturday morning and Sunday morning if we need, they deliver. You can't get any more fresh than that.

00:35:10

CU: No, 'cause they still have dirt on them. They put them out of the ground and bring us to—bring them to us in a box, so you have to scrub off all the dirt before you can even start cutting.

00:35:19

DU: So essentially what—what we do is fresh—

00:35:24

CU: Let's go back to the process for her. So we made the roux; we put it in the pot; we put the vegetables—we made the roux, we put the water in the pot and put the vegetables in the pot, and then we add the cool roux and that cooks for a while.

00:35:37

Diana: ‘Til the foam.

00:35:39

CU: ‘Til the foam rises.

00:35:42

DU: What happens with the boiled—instead of the—instead of sautéing the vegetables, you boil them. And in order for the vegetables to be—to be cooked, you know you have to—it has to cook and the scum will form. A foam will form on the water.

00:36:14

SR: Because of the—from the vegetables?

00:36:15

DU: From the vegetables, and until that foam subsides your onions are not cooked, your celery—. It’s very simple because the minute that you can see the foam—. We call it scum, and my wife said I’m crazy [*Laughs*].

00:36:34

CU: Foam.

00:36:34

DU: As the foam dissipates, you can see it. It's just—

00:36:42

SR: So you don't skim it off? It takes care of itself?

00:36:44

CU: Yeah, it cooks into the gumbo.

00:36:47

DU: And if there's any left, then you skim it.

00:36:51

CU: Most—most of the foam cooks down. It cooks right back in, and at that point you add peeled shrimp, crabmeat—picked crabmeat, you know.

00:37:07

Diana: And then you let that cook and the shrimp—

00:37:09

DU: And the oysters.

00:37:09

Diana: Oh the oysters, yeah.

00:37:12

CU: And ham and sausage—sausage and ham.

00:37:13

Diana: Well I put that in with the vegetables.

00:37:17

DU: And clam juice.

00:37:20

CU: And clam juice? Well there's another great schism in the gumbo family. Most people in South Louisiana will not do that, and they don't have to 'cause they're making small quantities. Because we're making huge pots and because we look for, you know, a consistent tasting product, you can't gauge how salty the oysters are going to be; you can't gauge how fully flavored your shrimp are going to be 'cause we do this in late October, so it's not as though we have access to fresh brown shrimp which have the best taste. We're using frozen shrimp provided most often by our neighbors who have a large shrimp processing facility on Grand Isle. So they're frozen shrimp, and you just can't always judge how seafoody—.

00:37:56

Andre: But the oysters—the commercial oysters are washed.

00:37:59

DU: You cannot buy unwashed oysters anymore.

00:38:03

CU: And that's where the real oyster flavor is.

00:38:04

Diana: When we first started making the gumbo it was legal to use oyster water.

00:38:09

CU: So you could buy a gallon of oysters and a gallon of oyster liquor—gallon of oyster water.

00:38:14

SR: You can't do that?

00:38:14

CU: No.

00:38:15

DU: It's against the law.

00:38:15

CU: No, vibrio [vibrio vulnificus], a harmful bacterium that lives in warm seawater] and all kinds of other nasty stuff.

00:38:19

DU: So what we had done in the last, I guess 10 years, 12 years—for a flavoring we've started using sea clam juice, you know, and it has—you know really the—.

00:38:38

SR: Ah, there it is [a can of clam juice]. I have so many pictures to take.

00:38:42

CU: But that—again, that's a work-around. You know in the best of all possible worlds you could still get oyster liquor. And the oyster liquor, if you're opening oysters yourself and you can save it, it's wonderful because it's kind of viscous and it acts to thicken the gumbo in addition to providing the good flavor. And I think you can really tell the difference in a gumbo that's made with very fresh oysters that have some oyster water in it.

00:39:05

DU: And see this gumbo today has no oysters simply because—

00:39:10

Diana: Too hot.

00:39:11

DU: —it's too hot right now. The month of August, you can't really get good oysters and—.

00:39:22

CU: And I asked Mama if she had oysters in the freezer, and she said they were from before Hurricane Katrina, so I suggested she might should throw them away.

00:39:29

SR: Did you lose electricity—lose power here?

00:39:31

CU: Uh-huh.

00:39:32

SR: Oh. [*Laughs*]

00:39:33

DU: We lost—we came back the day after. In other words, we were in—went in Port Allen, and when we came we were in the truck. We dodged downed trees and downed

power lines, and when we got here the power had been off not even 24 hours. It was like 20 hours, so we didn't lose anything in the outside freezer or the inside freezer.

00:40:06

Diana: Nobody had the nerve to eat them oysters, though.

00:40:09

CU: I'm not sure volunteering for it. *[Laughs]*

00:40:10

DU: We have a generator and the first thing we did when we got home, we cranked up the generator which allows us to run everything in the house except the main air-conditioner—all the lights, all the—

00:40:24

CU: Okay, that's not about food.

00:40:27

DU: —but, and we ran the generator for 14 days.

00:40:34

CU: As the person who cleaned out three refrigerators, be glad you didn't encounter the age-old Reddi Wip that blew up everywhere.

00:40:42

Diana: We cleaned out refrigerators; we ate everybody's food.

00:40:45

DU: So we—we were without energy power for 14 days exactly.

00:40:54

SR: That's a long time.

00:40:55

DU: Well we had—we had our generator, and one of the big problems post-Katrina was getting gasoline.

00:41:05

CU: She still lived in the city, so she has her own story.

00:41:07

Diana: Oh.

00:41:09

SR: Pardon me, what did you say, Andre?

00:41:13

Andre: My boat holds 60 gallons of gas, but we just didn't want to pump—we was too lazy to pump it out.

00:41:17

SR: Oh, to pump it out of your boat?

00:41:20

Andre: Yeah.

00:41:19

SR: Sixty gallons, that's a pretty big boat. And so, well I was going to ask about Katrina a little bit, but maybe we should come back to it.

00:41:32

Diana: Oh no, ask about Katrina because we were all scared to death. We had the fair; the Fair is in October. *Oh my God, what are we going to do? We have to have this fair. This is our largest money-raising event of the year, so we have to have it.* We raised more money after Katrina than ever—ever before.

00:41:56

SR: So you had the fair?

00:41:56

CU: It was insanity, right. We had—we had to have it. The thing generates—

00:42:00

Diana: We could have sold boiled potatoes that day and made money. I mean everything sold. Everybody sold out. It was wild.

00:42:10

Andre: Well yeah, it's the first big event after Katrina and everybody—

00:42:15

DU: Well you see, the thing was it's less than two months afterwards—

00:42:20

CU: Ah, can you say FEMA money? Can you say FEMA check? Everybody was spending like drunken sailors.

00:42:25

SR: And how many—how many vendors were back? Did everybody come back?

00:42:31

CU: Everybody was back.

00:42:29

DU: Everybody was back.

00:42:32

CU: And we had a little trouble getting product. We had trouble with the crabmeat, didn't we?

00:42:35

Diana: No, the oysters. We didn't get the oysters 'til the last day.

00:42:37

CU: Oh okay. I knew there was something that we had trouble—.

00:42:40

Diana: We had to get oysters for the oyster stand 'cause he couldn't find any.

00:42:43

CU: Well 'cause the oyster beds were closed after the storm. They were just starting to reopen some of the beds on the west side of Louisiana, and so it was—it was a struggle.

00:42:56

DU: But we got it.

00:42:57

Andre: Yeah, we did.

00:42:58

SR: And did you have a lot more, like, out-of-town visitors than usual, or—?

00:43:02

DU: No.

00:43:02

CU: No, it was all local. Probably more locals—

00:43:04

DU: Mostly locals.

00:43:06

CU: —than we had had in—

00:43:08

DU: Years.

00:43:07

CU: —years and years and years. We had almost zero tourists.

00:43:10

SR: And people were just eating up a storm, huh?

00:43:12

CU: Uh-hm, and—and drinking.

00:43:13

DU: Well they were spending money.

00:43:14

CU: And spending money and—.

00:43:18

Andre: There was nothing else to do.

00:43:18

Diana: It was going to blow away; might as well spend it.

00:43:20

CU: Well and I think there was a whole lot of people with some disposable cash 'cause we're on the—sort of the edge of the damaged area. There were people who had roof damage and fences, very—and people on Grand Isle who had total losses. But there was

also a whole lot of people walking around with insurance money and FEMA money in their pockets.

00:43:37

Diana: Yeah.

00:43:36

Andre: Plus you had a lot of influx of people from New Orleans.

00:43:40

Diana: Yeah.

00:43:41

SR: Living out here?

00:43:42

Andre: Right, that came out that you know—I guess that's what it was. I was working; I didn't—I couldn't pay attention.

00:43:50

SR: And what—where do you get—. Okay, so I know where you get your shrimp. So that's Louisiana shrimp even though it's frozen.

00:43:58

DU: Everything is from Louisiana.

00:43:58

CU: The crabmeat.

00:44:01

DU: Every—everything.

00:44:02

CU: The crabmeat comes from—

00:44:03

DU: Depending on who.

00:44:03

CU: Right, it depends on who has product because if—that's right.

00:44:06

Diana: Or who will give us the better product.

00:44:07

CU: As the weather is starting to change at that time of the year, so crabs are slowing down. Crab production is—is beginning to decline, and so it depends on you know, who has availability.

00:44:19

DU: I worked in the seafood business for seven years, so I still have a lot of contacts on getting all kinds of seafood.

00:44:28

CU: But it's usually Lafourche Parish, it's so local. In other words, it's not—we're not going more than 40-miles.

00:44:34

DU: Well the furthest we go, we go to Des Allemands right across the—

00:44:38

CU: You go into Saint Charles Parish.

00:44:38

Andre: Or you got to go to Dulac to pick up—.

00:44:44

SR: To Dulac—is that what you said?

00:44:46

Andre: Yeah, that's where—

00:44:46

CU: Southern Terrebonne Parish.

00:44:48

Andre: It's a processing plant.

00:44:49

Diana: There's no processing plants here for sure.

00:44:53

SR: And how long do you cook the gumbo then, after all the seafood is in there?

00:44:59

DU: Believe it or not, 'til it's done. [*Laughs*]

00:45:02

CU: Not very long.

00:45:05

Andre: Five hours from start to finish.

00:45:07

DU: No.

00:45:06

CU: It's about three and a half from start to finish, but that is including the time it takes you to make a roux, you know.

00:45:14

DU: In other words, from start—from say when we—we time it 8 o'clock in the morning on a Sunday morning—well, 7 o'clock Sunday morning from the time the burner is lit, and we have our first hogshead cheese sandwich.

00:45:40

Andre: Hogshead cheese sandwich. [*Laughs*]

00:45:41

CU: On fresh, fresh bread straight out of the bakery truck, and they make the hogshead cheese on-site. That's the best of all.

00:45:48

SR: Uh-uh.

00:45:48

Diana: Uh-huh.

00:45:50

DU: And about 11 o'clock it's ready to serve. You know, so three and a half to four hours.

00:46:00

CU: And I think it tastes better and hour later, you know. It just has that—we typically make three pots on Friday night, and we never—we rarely ever sell out all of those three pots on Friday night, and to me the best pot of gumbo we have is the leftover pot from Friday night that gets—that gets chilled and re-heated the next day. And what we typically do is incorporate it by halves into the existing pots from the next day—you know, to sort of thin it out. But I think that's the best pot, the one that sits overnight.

00:46:31

DU: The flours—excuse me; the flavors meld, you know. Yeah, well what—again, from the time that we normally have people hanging over the counter—

00:46:47

Diana: *Is it ready yet?*

00:46:50

DU: *Is it ready yet? When will it be ready? Daddy, is it ready yet? Always?*

00:46:59

CU: It's a running joke that we—this festival has never had a chicken gumbo.

00:47:03

DU: Never.

00:47:05

CU: It's been in existence for 34 years. There has never been a chicken gumbo. For 30 of those 34 years we have made a seafood gumbo that includes ham and sausage—30 of 34 years. The same elderly individual shows up every year on Friday and says—

00:47:18

DU: *Where's the chicken—?*

00:47:19

CU: *—but don't you have a chicken gumbo? I know I ate a chicken gumbo last year.*

[Laughs]

00:47:23

Andre: *Well it wasn't here.*

00:47:27

CU: Every year.

00:47:28

SR: Who—so was there gumbo the years before you got involved?

00:47:31

DU: I don't know. It was very small. The festival was relatively small the first two years, and it just—as time passed and people got—the community got more and more involved, it grew.

00:47:49

Diana: Well first off they didn't even have the property. The first three years they were having their festival on a public school grounds, and then when they finally got enough backing—

00:48:01

CU: And the civic club, the community center that the thing supports.

00:48:07

Diana: Right, and got enough money where they could buy property, then we moved over to the property 'cause we started having the festival on the property before we ever had a building. We didn't have anything but—

00:48:18

DU: We always had this huge circus tent, so the festival—which is anybody and everybody should come to a festival like that because the whole thing under the circus tent—music, food and drink—you know we have fun.

00:48:38

SR: So even if it rains it goes on?

00:48:38

DU: Oh yeah. We've had—we've had everything from—

00:48:44

CU: Once—the only year that the festival didn't happen—. It happened on the Friday night, and then on Saturday morning Hurricane Juan arrived, in 1987 or '86.

00:48:51

DU: Eighty-four.

00:48:53

CU: No, that wasn't '84—that was the World's Fair year. I think it was '87 or '86, and I remember you and I went out on—

00:49:00

DU: Sunday morning.

00:49:00

CU: —Sunday morning with the then-sheriff, who since went to jail and somebody tried to assassinate him and all sorts of other good stories behind him. I can—our booth—our festival stand is always in a corner of the tent because of the size of the pot and the heat of the propane and everything, and I can remember standing there and the wind was blowing so hard that it would blow under the tent, and of course the tent is supported by those giant metal poles. It—the whole tent would lift up into the air and all the poles would swing wildly. And he looked at me and I looked at him and we looked at the Sheriff and we all [*Laughs*]—.

00:49:34

DU: The Sheriff turned—

00:49:35

CU: We all ran out from under the tent, and a couple hours later it collapsed.

00:49:38

DU: The late-sheriff looked at me with his hands—he had a guayabera shirt and had his hands in his front pocket, and he said, *Uzee? You think we gonna to have the fair?* Seriously.

00:49:56

SR: And the answer was—?

00:49:57

DU: Well no. The—the tent blew up less than two hours later; I mean literally blew up.

00:50:04

Andre: And the next day everybody was in the house and it flooded.

00:50:09

SR: Oh it flooded here?

00:50:10

CU: Yeah. We are protected right now by our hurricane protection levees, but at that time it was incomplete, and they had built a section here and a section there, and—and of course it leaked at every seam. The same Corps of Engineers that protects us protects New Orleans.

00:50:26

Diana: No, we have our own levee—

00:50:27

CU: Yes, but it's the same Corps that approves the—.

00:50:30

Andre: Not anymore.

00:50:32

Diana: Not anymore.

00:50:34

SR: And so, okay, back to the gumbo for a second. *[Laughs]* The seafood is cooking, and I know you told me some of the seasonings that you use, but what kind of pepper do you use?

00:50:46

DU: We use a mixture of cayenne, black pepper—black pepper.

00:50:55

Andre: Liquid crab boil.

00:50:58

DU: Liquid crab boil—that's the only pepper.

00:51:01

CU: And I think it's the—one of the distinctive tastes in it is the liquid crab boil because it's red pepper, it's oil of cloves, it's oil of bay. It has all these funky herb oils in it that aren't in just the straight pepper, and so it provides a—a much more—.

00:51:21

Diana: But on our counter always is Tabasco and filé because a lot of people like extra filé, so we always have jarred—

00:51:32

DU: Don't open it.

00:51:37

SR: It's a decorative Tabasco bottle. So you have Tabasco for self-seasoning.

00:51:40

CU: Yeah.

00:51:43

SR: Do you—when y'all make gumbo at home, do you put the crab boil in there?

00:51:47**CU:** Uh-huh.**00:51:48****DU:** You'll taste it in there in a minute.**00:51:49**

CU: It's not—it's not real assertive. It's not like scary hot, but it definitely has—it definitely has those other flavors that go in it that are very distinct.

00:52:00

SR: And so do you—do you put filé in the gumbo at all?

00:52:07

DU: At the very end we put we put filé. Not a whole lot because you can take whatever amount of filé you want and put over your rice when you serve your own bowl.

00:52:16

CU: Yeah, we offer it—

00:52:18

DU: And it achieves—and it achieves the same thing.

00:52:19

CU: We offer salt, pepper, Tabasco sauce, and filé at the counter when the person gets their bowl. Most people will season with filé. Up and down Bayou Lafourche most people don't put the filé in the pot; it's unusual to find down here putting it in the pot.

00:52:34

DU: Because what happens with the filé, once you—if you—once you reheat, it tends to get stringy. If you reheat a pot that has filé in it, it—the liquid will get real stringy like okra.

00:52:54

Diana: And we use Zatarain's. The other ones, they just don't have the potency.

00:53:00

DU: That's just like Worcestershire that we use in the seasoning. Don't try anything but Lea & Perrins. The French's is horrible; it has no taste. In other words, it sounds like it's brand-sensitive but there is a great deal of difference in the—the taste.

00:53:23

CU: So it's seasoned with garlic—granular garlic in these large pots, although at home it's probably fresh garlic; Worcestershire—.

00:53:35

Andre: Many years of trial and error.

00:53:37

SR: Right.

00:53:38

Andre: The Hillshire Farms smoked sausage doesn't work.

00:53:39

CU: Who are they?

00:53:40

SR: Did you try Hillshire Farms?

00:53:44

Diana: Don't—

00:53:44

Andre: It won't work.

00:53:45

Diana: Your grandma always used it.

00:53:48

CU: They brought—they actually brought—the community organization brought us Hillshire because I think somebody donated it one year, and we said, *Uh-uh, you can have it. Just put it on a sausage po' boy; we're not using it.* And we went and bought our own.

00:54:01

SR: Not good, huh? What—so, but I'm just curious about the filé. So you do add a little bit to the pot?

00:54:06

DU: Not at the festival.

00:54:09

SR: Okay.

00:54:11

DU: We don't put any at the Festival because you don't know how much you'll have leftover, and if you reheat or bring to a hard boil a pot that has filé in it, it's not good.

00:54:22

CU: It's—it's got like a gelatinous texture. It's funny.

00:54:23

DU: Yeah, so you don't do that. You just—it's there and the whole idea is the thickening, and many, many people will just put—we have it in little shaker jars and we try our best to get very fresh filé. If it's not available that year—

00:54:48

Diana: That lady died, too. *[Laughs]*

00:54:49

DU: You know we do use old filé and it will work, but there is a distinct difference between fresh ground—.

00:54:57

Diana: Juan killed her trees, and then she died.

00:54:59

CU: Oh her trees were killed in Hurricane Juan?

00:55:02

SR: Oh the sassafras trees. So there was a woman that was making her own filé?

00:55:04

DU: Several people.

00:55:05

CU: Yeah, it's fairly common here. It's not, you know, unusual and most people—there's not a lot of lure around like when you have to pick it or how you dry it. Most of them whack a branch off, hang it up in the laundry room; when it's crumbly they stick it in the food processor—.

00:55:23

Diana: And then—then strain it out.

00:55:24

SR: So who is that from?

00:55:27

DU: That's what's on the counter.

00:55:29

SR: It's a little baby food jar of filé.

00:55:32

DU: Yeah, punch holes in the top and—.

00:55:34

Diana: Punch holes in the top.

00:55:35

SR: Oh those are good friends to have.

00:55:38

Diana: Well like I said, it's the whole community and they know, you know—
everybody's part is—even though whether it's great or small, it's good.

00:55:48

DU: Yeah, well that's a jar. There should be a pint jar.

00:55:53

SR: What does the money go to that's raised at this festival?

00:55:57

DU: The maintenance and operation of this center across the bayou.

00:56:02

CU: The festival is put on by the Bayou Civic Club, which is a non-profit 501-c-3 that
operates a 77-acre regional park. The centerpiece of that park is a community center with
an Olympic swimming pool, a gymnasium and performance stage, catering kitchen,
meeting rooms; it has tenants, including the local Council on Aging and the Recreation

District and the Public Library. And it also has tennis courts, soccer fields; you know it's—

00:56:31

Diana: Football fields, baseball fields.

CU: Scout shelter.

00:56:34

SR: What kind of shelter?

00:56:37

DU: Scout shelter.

00:56:40

SR: Do you have any idea how much the festival raises?

00:56:43

DU: It can be as little as \$25,000 and as much as \$300,000.

00:56:48

CU: It hasn't been as little as \$25,000 in quite a few years.

00:56:50

DU: In years, but that's when it started—that's all it was.

00:56:54

SR: That's still a lot of money, right? [*Laughs*]

00:56:55

Diana: Yeah, yeah.

00:56:57

DU: That center—

00:56:59

Andre: For one year—for one month—.

00:57:01

SR: The utilities?

00:57:02

Andre: The utilities.

00:57:03

DU: The Center costs what? About—about \$3,200 a month to operate.

00:57:11

CU: Oh, more than that now. Post—post-9/11 their insurance rates like tripled and they went through this crazy general liability insurance, for a public facility and a public park that does public events is just scary—scary-high.

00:57:24

SR: Wow.

00:57:24

CU: Because they're—the important thing to know about that particular facility is that, first of all, it's not tax-supported in any significant way. It does have—it does have public tenants, you know, who are tax-supported. It does receive a little money from a tax-funded recreation district, but it's non-sectarian and non-membership driven. In other words, if you wanted to go swim in the pool and you drove in here to this community today, you could go down there and pay your \$3.00 and swim in the pool. It's not like a YMCA. It's not like—you don't have to prove anything to be there. Every person in the community is welcome. Every person in the community can participate. All of their activities have—if any fees are associated they're very modest, you know. You can go to ladies exercise on Thursday mornings for—

00:58:09

DU: Not anymore.

00:58:09

CU: —two fifty [\$2.50]. All very, very modest, and again non-sectarian, non-religious, non-governmental—completely community-driven.

00:58:18

DU: Now the only thing that costs if you use the facility is if you want to have a wedding reception.

00:58:24

CU: Right. It—it acts as a great third space, you know, because it's a non-governmental third space so there's no rules about—. So if you want to have a beer party, you can have one. It's not like renting a school or renting a—

00:58:36

DU: In the past, the property was owned by the Catholic Church—the property. And in the ensuing years Bayou Civic has bought it. They wouldn't let us have—just leave it there—

00:58:56

Andre: Alcoholic beverages.

00:58:55

DU: —they wouldn't let you have a non-Catholic wedding; you couldn't have anything that was contrary to the Catholic religion, so we bought it. We bought the property. It took many years, but—

00:59:13

CU: And again, it's a 77-acre park. It's a huge building. The budget—the whole budget is probably right, I would say right at \$1,000,000 a year for the entire facility stem to stern. I mean including utilities and liability insurance and all that, and this is in a town of 5,000 people.

00:59:35

SR: That's amazing.

00:59:36

CU: I mean it draws from the larger area. They consider their entire service region to have a population of about 15,000, but in terms of core supporters who provide financial backing for the entity, it's about 5,000.

00:59:48

SR: And is that where the festival is held?

00:59:48

CU: Yes, on the grounds of that facility. They paved a portion of the parking lot. The portion that's under the festival tent is what's paved, which is silly because it's the—it's not the front entrance to the building. So you drive up and you think, *Why is there a random paved parking lot [Laughs] out here in the middle of nowhere?* But they've paved their festival site, as opposed to paving the front entrance and main parking lot.

01:00:14

SR: That's funny. And what—tell me about the other kinds of foods that people make for this festival.

01:00:17

Diana: One thing we need to say is, like our family is not unusual in this. There's several other groups that have been there almost as long doing the same thing that are individual families—or not individual, because in South Louisiana you don't have individual families. We just have massive family groups.

01:00:39

CU: Okay, let's see, we can go—I'll go around my mental map. Right next to us on one side a beignet booth that also makes funnel cakes and hot coffee, and that's the Dufresne family. And well it used to be the Dufresne family—

01:00:50

Andre: Yeah, it still is.

01:00:52

CU: And I think the wife operates like the beauty pageant that picks the Festival Queen. Next door to them is a fried shrimp stand, and they also make shrimp boulettes, yeah. Right next to the shrimp—right next to the shrimp boulettes gang is fried crab claws: cocktail claw fingers deep-fried. And then there's—

01:01:13

DU: Tell her who started that.

01:01:15

CU: We started that, but boy, that was a miserable existence.

01:01:17

DU: At the same time with the gumbo.

01:01:22

Diana: You can make a fortune in crab claws.

01:01:24

CU: I'm trying to go around the tent here.

01:01:28

Andre: We've developed three or four different booths.

01:01:29

CU: Tangential, tangential people: red beans and rice, crawfish étouffée.

Andre: Acostas.

01:01:35

SR: Acostas?

01:01:37

CU: Acosta. It's an Isleño name. They're related to us some kind of way. Don't even—don't even start; we don't have enough tape for that. And then there's fried fish, and the fried fish is all local caught, donated fish. Somebody goes fishing, they have extra fish, it goes into the freezer. And people save fish all year for this, and—and it's fried up so you never going to know what you're going to get. You bite into a piece and maybe it's red fish, and sometimes it's snapper, and sometimes it's speckled trout and—. Next door to them is alligator sauce piquant. Right over from alligator sauce piquant are fried meat pies and fried crawfish pies—there's a heavy fried theme developing here, isn't there?

[Laughs] Oh, and they also have stuffed pistolettes—the stuffed seafood pistolettes. And then there's a giant bar across one end, and in the corner shish kebabs.

01:02:33

Diana: Seafood shish kebabs.

01:02:35

CU: Right, like shrimp—and big shrimp, sausage, peppers, onions on a shish kebab.
And there's a shrimp fettuccine, jambalaya—that's a chicken and sausage jambalaya.
And then there's fried oysters. There's something else back over there. Oh, they do a
white oyster soup with a blond roux and sort of like a classic oyster stew.

01:03:03

DU: Hotdogs.

01:03:03

CU: Hotdogs, hamburgers, chicken nuggets. You know there's all that—

01:03:08

DU: Kids' food.

01:03:10

Diana: Then you got the whole boucherie.

01:03:10

DU: And there's a boucherie.

01:03:12**SR:** There's a boucherie?**01:03:14****CU:** Uh-hm, and they make cracklings on site.**01:03:17****Diana:** They make the hogshead cheese early. It's—it's the same people because—**01:03:21****DU:** The day before.**01:03:22**

Diana: —it's just too labor-intensive, and then it wouldn't have time to gel if you made it on site, so they make it sometime during that week so it will have time to gel and all. But that—during that weekend, they're doing cracklings the whole weekend.

01:03:36**SR:** Do they do boudin?**01:03:37****DU:** No.

01:03:39**CU:** They do.**01:03:40****DU:** No.**01:03:41****CU:** It's on the boucherie plate.**01:03:44****DU:** They don't make the boudin.**01:03:45****CU:** Oh, somebody provides the boudin for them?**01:03:46****DU:** They buy it.**01:03:49****Andre:** They buy it.**01:03:50****SR:** So what else is on the boucherie plate?

01:03:51

Andre: Grillades, baked beans.

01:03:53

CU: Grillades, which are not New Orleans-style round steak or veal cooked down in a mush. They're thin, thin, thin slices of either pork loin or pork shoulder. Paper thin, like put on a slicer.

01:04:04

DU: Boston butt—Boston butt.

01:04:07

CU: Boston butt.

01:04:07

DU: You know where that—

01:04:09

CU: Sliced on a slicer, heavily seasoned, and flash-grilled, yeah.

01:04:14

DU: Do you know where that—?

01:04:14

CU: Second cousin to like [inaudible]. I mean like real thin.

01:04:19

DU: Do you know where that originated?

01:04:19

CU: No.

01:04:19

DU: In Indiana. I saw a thing on the food channel that—

01:04:25

CU: Well forget it. You lost me ‘cause they make stuff up. Did you see that Alton Brown thing where he ate on the sidewalk in Mulate’s? Don’t even talk to me about those people.

01:04:36

Andre: It was—

01:04:39

CU: They also do white beans and rice on the boucherie plate. They do a little link—they do a little link of boudin, and then they do a roti, which is a fresh pork stew. It's one of those like boucherie-only foods, you know. When—when you do a hog killing, there's certain things that you make then that you don't really make any other time. And it's real, real, real simple, and I don't know, it might be the most unhealthy thing. It makes all the fried food look healthy because it's cubes of pork and fat cooked down until all the fat renders and the pork kind of caramelizes. And it falls apart, and it's irregular chunks, and it has you know onions and garlic and like a little bit of maybe parsley on it, a little green pepper. But it's pretty much as simple as you can get.

01:05:22

SR: You only make that if you also have the fat.

01:05:26

CU: Right, right, right, because it's the—

01:05:27

DU: You can go to any large-scale supermarket and buy the fat.

01:05:31

SR: Well yeah, that's true.

01:05:33

CU: And they don't actually kill the hogs. They buy the half-hogs dressed. You know, so they're not totally hard-core. Nobody is raising the pig in the backyard and scraping the bristles and all that.

01:05:41

DU: We used to.

01:05:43

Diana: But the next booth is, the senior citizens do the sweet shop. And it's all locally done thing—everywhere from brownies to cakes to pralines to bouille to tartes à la bouilles.

01:06:04

DU: One of the biggest sellers is something that's a tradition in this area. It's called bouille.

01:06:14

CU: It's just egg custard.

01:06:13

DU: You know—not egg custard, just—

01:06:15

CU: You put an egg in it. It's not a baked egg custard; it's a—it's a pudding, thin custard.

01:06:20

SR: Oh, like a stove-top [custard]?

01:06:23

CU: Yeah.

01:06:23

DU: And they make it right there, and people are in line to buy it when it's still hot, in a cup.

01:06:37

Diana: When they see the old ladies are coming in with the pot like this, they're, *Oh! Bouille's here, bouille's here!* So everybody is here running to get—.

01:06:44

CU: It's the same custard, if ever had one of those sweet dough custard tarts? It's that custard except liquid, because in—

01:06:49

SR: And warm?

01:06:49

CU: Yeah, in that Cajun custard, you cook it on the stove-top and you put it in the pie and then you bake it so that it sets firm. Well if you don't bake it, it's a liquid; it's sort of like Jell-O pudding out of a box before you let it get cold, you know. It's all runny.

01:07:06

Andre: Better than that.

01:07:07

CU: And it's just an egg, sugar, milk, little bit of corn starch.

01:07:12

Andre: Come—come in October and you can try it.

01:07:13

SR: Wish I could.

01:07:16

Diana: And then we always have the children food: fried chicken, the hotdog—

01:07:20

CU: Hotdogs, hamburgers.

01:07:20

Andre: Oh yeah, and the shrimp next door to us.

01:07:23

DU: Fried shrimp.

01:07:25

CU: Shrimp fettuccine.

01:07:26

Andre: We got the Italian shrimp next to us.

01:07:30

SR: Do you get to eat all this stuff?

01:07:31

Diana: Uh-huh, oh yeah, all weekend. Nothing wrong with that.

01:07:33

Andre: Every year I pick somebody.

01:07:37

SR: Every year you pick what?

01:07:36

Andre: Well every year we have people from out of town come in and help us, and I bet them \$20 and I give them the whole weekend to try to make it around the tent. And they don't have to eat it; they just have to taste everything. And I've yet to lose my \$20.

01:07:55

SR: It's too much.

01:07:56

Andre: You find something you like and you go—and you can't make the rest of the tent.

01:08:03

DU: They have people from all over the country and all over the world that visit this festival. We've had people from Spain, from Austria, from Australia—.

01:08:19

CU: It's such an old festival and it's been promoted consistently for such a long time.

01:08:30

Diana: New Jersey, Minnesota [looking through old festival logs].

01:08:30

CU: And we're only 72 miles from downtown New Orleans, so we pull in a tourist crowd, whereas if you were further out in Acadiana, you know the people would have to make a special trip to get to you. It's very easy to make a day trip and be back in time for your dinner reservations.

01:08:45

DU: We used to put this out but it got to be too much of a hassle, but we asked people to sign in.

01:08:51

SR: Oh, there's a little sign-in book here.

01:08:51

Diana: Oh, Ken!

01:08:54

SR: Ah, people from Paris.

01:08:56

DU: Montague.

01:08:57

CU: East Rutherford, New Jersey.

01:08:59

Diana: We had a couple that came from California.

01:09:03

SR: Minneapolis.

01:09:03

Diana: And they loved it so much, and then I guess their second year out here they came by and talked to us a whole lot. So now the years they can come, they come back in with their camper and all, and they've brought—

01:09:14

DU: I got an email from them this week.

01:09:15

Diana: And they brought in some more people from other parts of the state and all, and so they come back every year.

01:09:21

DU: This lady that's she's talking about, they were getting ready to leave and she came up to me with a piece of paper. She said, *Donald, I got all of these ingredients, got the red beans, and I got—but I can't find anybody that sells crab oil.* **[Laughs]** *What in the world do you mean?* She said, *Well somebody told me that we need to get some crab oil.* I said, *Didn't they tell you crab boil?* [She said] *But it's a liquid?* [I said] *Yes, ma'am. It is a liquid. It's crab boil. I'll give you a bottle.* And I reached down, and I—but she was looking for crab oil.

01:10:03

SR: That's funny. Well, how many people do you have helping make the gumbo and serve the gumbo?

01:10:10

Diana: Working all the weekend, the choppers and all—probably about 35; 35 to 40.

01:10:17

DU: Just working with us.

01:10:21

SR: And a lot—like what percentage of that is family?

01:10:22

Diana: About a third, yeah.

01:10:26**DU:** Or more.**01:10:26****CU:** I would have said 50-percent—40-percent.**01:10:29****DU:** Yeah.**01:10:29****SR:** It seems like the whole town would be working that weekend.**01:10:31****Diana:** They are.**01:10:31****CU:** They are.**01:10:32****Diana:** But that's good because if they're all working, then nobody is home cooking and everybody has to eat at the fair.

01:10:40

CU: That's right. If your mama is running the shrimp stand and nobody is cooking Sunday dinner, and they all show up after Mass to get their take-out lunches or feed Grandma—.

01:10:49

Diana: Look, let me tell you one of the good things about the festival is like our family—and I know several other families that are there—we go out and we tell people, *Look, we're having the Festival. Would you like to donate some money to us?* And maybe they'll give us \$100. And maybe this one will give us \$200, and this one will say, *Well I'll give you a better price on your shrimp* for what we're doing. So then we get—collect up all this money and give it to the civic center and all. Then we have a backer who remains anonymous who says, *Whatever y'all can't find paid for, I'll cover your costs.* So everything we're making is pure profit for the civic center. And some of the other stands do the same thing.

01:11:34

SR: You have a benefactor?

01:11:35

Diana: Yeah, a sponsor.

01:11:38

Andre: Well I mean—

01:11:40

SR: That's—that's awesome.

01:11:40

Diana: But we have several. We have a major one and several sponsors. Like one year the man that's in the crab business, he could afford to. He gave us like all the crabmeat that year.

01:11:52

Andre: Hundred and fifty-pounds.

01:11:55

Diana: Now that's—that's, say, \$400, \$500 donation you know. Again, it's not just us; it's—

01:12:01

CU: Other people working the same way, and so you have this multiplier effect rather than this being, again, a commercial festival where you're renting space to a guy who has paid for everything and is paying people—paying people minimum wage to stand there and serve you a bowl of Prejean's gumbo. No slight to Prejean's gumbo. This is all volunteer labor. Every single person out there, every person is—

01:12:23

DU: And most of these people are going to smile at you and talk to you. We have—we've been to festivals throughout Louisiana and Mississippi, and at many festivals you walk up to a booth and you're looking at somebody's back.

01:12:39

CU: Or, like my favorite, the Jazz Fest model. There's a little gun turret through which you buy food. You hand money in and someone hands out food. You've never seen their face; you don't know who you're—who they are.

01:12:50

DU: This is the first year y'all missed the Jazz Fest.

01:12:53

Diana: Another thing, we—we're really lucky is because the local sheriff's office comes down and works with us, 'cause you can imagine the amount of trash that we have. They come out very early in the morning and they clean the whole grounds—

01:13:13

CU: Not the sheriff's office. It's the prison labor.

01:13:17

Diana: If the high sheriff didn't say they could come, they wouldn't be there.

01:13:21

Andre: The trustees come out and clean the whole grounds.

01:13:22

Diana: They come out and clean the whole grounds, and then they'll come out like after the festival is over and clean all the grounds and help tear down and that kind of stuff.

01:13:30

CU: Well he is an elected official.

01:13:33

Diana: Well yes, and he also eats that gumbo, but still you know.

01:13:37

SR: Well how much do you charge these days for the gumbo—for a portion of gumbo?

01:13:43

Diana: Four dollars.

01:13:42

SR: Four dollars?

01:13:46

DU: Bowl of gumbo.

01:13:45

Diana: I'm going to serve you in the bowl—

01:13:49

CU: Every year I try to make them increase the price, and every year I lose.

01:13:53

Diana: I'm going to serve you a bowl of gumbo in the actual container that you would get like at the festival so you can see what the \$4.00 portion is like. We like to keep it at \$4.00 because—

01:14:05

DU: For years—

01:14:08

Diana: Most people want to eat gumbo and then they want to eat their food, and if you made it too expensive or too large a bowl then they—they're not going to spend money someplace else. So you keep this down low because we're not—it's not costing us anything. We got it covered.

01:14:25

DU: You have to figure that this gumbo costs—

01:14:35

Diana: About a dollar and a half.

01:14:37

DU: —costs about \$2,000 to prepare—\$2,100, \$2,200. In other words—

01:14:44

Andre: We figured it up. Didn't we figure it up?

01:14:48

DU: Yeah, \$2,200 depending on the price of the product.

01:14:51

CU: 'Cause all that seafood fluctuates, you know. It depends on the weather; it's so weather-dependent. If the weather has been warm all the way into late fall, then crabs are still cheap. If we get an early cool snap—. When does that ever happen? [*Laughs*] It turns cool in September.

01:15:07

Diana: One year—

01:15:08

Andre: No, that's the thing about this festival. One—one day it can be 80, and the next day it can be 50.

01:15:15

SR: And what—so if it costs \$2,200 to make [*Laughs*], how much—so you're saying it costs about \$1.50 a bowl?

01:15:25

DU: Right.

01:15:25

SR: So you're—you're tripling—?

01:15:27

DU: We don't—it don't cost anything to the Center, because it's all donated. Just—see, we have 25 years of receipts.

01:15:39

SR: All your paperwork.

01:15:42

Diana: Don't you like my paperwork, oh yeah?

01:15:44

SR: How much—how much did you charge the first year? Do you remember?

01:15:50

DU: Dollar and a half?

01:15:52

CU: No, I don't know. I was only five.

01:15:53

Diana: No, I want to say \$3.00. I don't think it was ever cheaper than \$3.00.

01:15:59

DU: Diana, it was—

01:16:00

CU: We got stuck at \$3.50 for a long time, too long. Probably five years too long.

01:16:06

Andre: Oh now that's a good one.

01:16:10

Diana: Y'all talking about my paperwork.

01:16:12

SR: It's a piece of paper towel.

01:16:13

Diana: *[Reading]: Dear Y'all: we won first place, best theme. Shrimp won grand champion. Half a pint gumbo on the ice. We set it—shut it up at 12 Midnight. See y'all later, The Evening Crew.*

01:16:27

SR: They left you a note written on a little piece of paper towel?

01:16:30

Diana: On a paper towel. *[Laughs]*

01:16:31

Andre: Yes, you see—

01:16:34

Diana: We have the same people who has been doing this for years.

01:16:36

Andre: This core group besides Celeste—she lives out of town—but we will in the morning, us three and usually we have some other friends that help in the morning and go at 5 o'clock in the morning or 6:00 and start. On Friday night I'll stay late and close the stand. That's my night.

01:16:57

Diana: Me too.

01:17:00

Andre: To close, and Celeste helps. The next morning I get up with Mom and Dad, and we start two more pots. And then as the day progresses—from Saturday night I'm tired—we start two more pots in that afternoon. But I'll go home and maybe go back to the fair to eat. My sister, my older sister and her friends have—like I said, a night crew come in and they sell what they can and shut down, and they have—the festival is fun for us all. So they have a good time. Sunday morning we get up, us three, and that's the weekend the time changes—fall back. So it's the last—. And we get up early again, dark-thirty in the morning since the time changes, and start again. And then we have an afternoon crew to close up. So we all—it's all choreographed. Everybody has got their job and knows when you come in and when you got to be there. And then we—we get people, our friends that come in for maybe two or three years and then they have enough of it. We always have our family that have their own, you know, their jobs.

01:18:28

SR: And it's consistent year to year?

01:18:29

Andre: And it's consistent year to year.

01:18:30

Diana: Well Donald and I being old, we don't have the taste buds that other people do so we always make sure Celeste gets there early enough to taste it before it goes out. So she gets to put the final seasonings in.

01:18:44

SR: And is there a competition?

01:18:46

Diana: No.

01:18:48

SR: Oh okay.

01:18:48

CU: Decorating competition.

01:18:50

Diana: Well there's a competition—we decorate—every one of the food booths—

01:18:52

CU: Each little individual doohickey has décor.

01:18:57

Andre: When we first—when we first started, one of our—well he still works with us—is an architect. And he got into it really heavy, and he started designing these elaborate booths. Like one year we were—we had a little Cajun house we were selling out of, and everybody fed off of that. And everybody started to try to outdo each other in the—in the decorations. And so then they decided, well since y'all are convinced we're going—we're going to give out prizes. But of course there's so many categories and so many prizes, everybody wins something. They don't want to slight anybody in the—because it's all volunteer.

01:19:37

DU: We used to have a whole bunch of ribbons for booth—not for gumbo prizes but for booth decorations.

01:19:49

CU: I think our best décor—we had, okay the wharf back here *[looking at photos]*—

01:19:54

SR: Wharf theme, yeah.

01:19:56

CU: Well there was a wharf on either side, but right in the middle of the wharf where it came together was the prow of a shrimp boat with the wheelhouse. That was the best. I don't know why we don't have any pictures of that.

01:20:04

DU: There's a picture in there.

01:20:05

CU: I don't think so.

01:20:07

Diana: No, it is not.

01:20:08

Andre: And Don Juan right there.

01:20:10

CU: Yeah, and the second best was in the year that the tent blew down, the year that the weather was so bad for the hurricane. We had Grauman's Chinese Theater—we were the Greatest Gumbo on Earth, and we had a theater marquis all lit up.

01:20:21

Andre: Well that's the year it blew down, right?

01:20:23

Diana: And then the next year after Juan, we had Don Juan's Gumbo Emporium. That was—

01:20:29

SR: I like that one.

01:20:31

Diana: That was the name of our thing, but now we have a new crew that comes in and decorates, and they're getting more artsy than—

01:20:40

Andre: William is a tattoo artist that does our signs and all of our stuff. He's a tattoo artist that comes in and does all the stuff.

01:20:50

SR: Who is that?

01:20:50

DU: [*Laughs*] That's Nutsy Squirrel.

01:20:53

SR: I'm looking at a photo.

01:20:57

Diana: That's Donald and Bob Faulk. Bob Faulk makes gumbo for a whole lot of events here, and we always have a kind of a discussion because Bob doesn't believe in much greens, and we always say you can tell our gumbo from Bob's 'cause Bob's doesn't have any greens in it.

01:21:13

Andre: Well it's not bad. It's good gumbo.

01:21:14

Diana: It's good gumbo. But it's just—

01:21:16

CU: Danielle's doesn't have any greens either.

01:21:17

Diana: But it's just—it's just done a different way.

01:21:19

DU: But that—what are you doing?

01:21:24

SR: Looking at photos. So how many—do you have any idea how many gallons you make a weekend?

01:21:28

DU: Yeah.

01:21:30

CU: Eight 60-quart pots.

01:21:33

DU: Four hundred and eighty quarts; divide that by four—.

01:21:40

Andre: It's 160 gallons.

01:21:41

SR: Wow.

01:21:41

CU: Don't look at me. I can't do math.

01:21:43

SR: And do you have leftovers on the last day?

01:21:44

DU: Leftovers?

01:21:46

Diana: They beg for us to have leftovers. *If y'all have any leftovers just bring them back in the kitchen.* But there's all these people who are coming in to clean up after the fair 'cause there's as much activity going on after the fair as far as cleanup and all as before when it was set up. We have to feed all those people that come in.

01:22:00

CU: The trustees—you get the trustees for free.

01:22:04

Diana: Well trustees and volunteers.

01:22:04

CU: Well mostly the trustees. You get the trustee crew for free and you have to feed them, and so they use leftover gumbo to feed them. But most often we don't have leftovers. We usually sell out, but we—we calibrate it so that we do that.

01:22:18

DU: Yeah.

01:22:17

CU: Because it's a pain in the butt to deal with leftovers, so we—we gauge how much we make on how big the crowd is and how quick it's selling.

01:22:26

DU: Some years when we've had—

01:22:26

Diana: Had as much as a half a pot.

01:22:30

DU: We've never had a half a pot except during storms.

01:22:33

Andre: Well then I got in a fight one year. That cost \$2,000 to make.

01:22:35**SR:** What did?**01:22:37****CU:** The gumbo.**01:22:39****Andre:** Gumbo—one pot.**01:22:40****SR:** Wait, one pot costs \$2,000?**01:22:43****Andre:** Well the whole thing.**01:22:41****DU:** No.**01:22:43**

Andre: But what I'm saying is one—one pot cost—. You know, you going to lose it if you don't sell. But there's 29 other booths in the festival, so we make enough that out of everybody there—. So it's—Sunday afternoon I don't have a pot that's not made, the

ingredients for it. *Sell out? Okay, well you—we out. Go buy you a fried pie.* And they can open the case that's frozen.

01:23:17

CU: There's not a profit motive in it for us. We make as much as we have product for and if we run out—if we run out they can eat other foods that we're not losing their money. We're not going to make another pot so we can sell gumbo because it all—I mean if you're already there and you bought \$20 worth of festival tickets, you're going to spend your money on something else.

01:23:33

SR: Right.

01:23:33

CU: So we don't feel compelled to, you know, crank out as much product as we can because that's not the point.

01:23:40

Andre: I've seen us making as many as nine—.

01:23:42

Diana: One year we made nine pots.

01:23:44

Andre: Nine pots.

01:23:46

SR: You could probably sell out of whatever you make.

01:23:48

DU: There's a lot of—believe it or not—

01:23:50

CU: It depends on the weather.

01:23:50

DU: —the weather is—

01:23:53

CU: If it's weather like this into late October, nobody wants to eat a steaming hot bowl of gumbo. You might eat one during the weekend. But boy, if it's 65 and gumbo weather and the first breath of fall is in the air, you're going to come back and eat three bowls.

01:24:05

DU: We've had as many—we've had people come from certain communities not too far from here that start on one end of the tent and work their way around by areas and end up

back at the gumbo. We've had people that come three and four times in a given day to eat the gumbo because they like our gumbo.

01:24:33

CU: And we also package to-go. It's primarily a local crowd, so these people are not to-going to sit at their hotel room on the balcony. Again, it's to-go for Grandma after Mass, or it's to-go—they'll get a cardboard box and go from booth to booth and fill up their whole [box].

01:24:48

Andre: That's right.

01:24:52

CU: And go home to watch the LSU game or go home and watch the Saints game.

01:24:53

Andre: Watch the LSU game on Friday night, and then the same game on Sunday, but they come and buy food so they don't have to cook. Go to Mass in the—up the street—

01:25:01

Diana: And sometimes they don't want your take-out containers. They'll come with their own pot and their own containers. They don't want the rice mixed in with the gumbo; they—'cause they're not going to serve it right away or something, and—.

01:25:14

SR: What about—so I’m also working on a project about boudin. It sounds like that’s not really—is that a big thing in this part of Acadiana?

01:25:23

DU: Not really. This is not Acadiana.

01:25:25

SR: It’s not? Well that’s the other thing—

01:25:26

CU: It is Acadiana.

01:25:25

SR: —I was going to ask.

01:25:27

DU: It’s not Acadiana.

01:25:28

CU: It absolutely is Acadiana.

01:25:29

Andre: Okay, I told y'all not to argue.

01:25:34

CU: If you pull out your Louisiana State Highway map, we're going to be in canary yellow.

01:25:39

DU: Okay, get—there's a map next to the computer.

01:25:41

Andre: What you need to know about our booth, we start in the morning and we got all these people like yourself coming from out of town, and you're early. You want to see what the festival is like when you're talking about prepping on Wednesday night before. We need some prep, so if someone like yourself wants to come in and help, we got the whole prep table in the back of the booth. Hey, you want to clean crab claws? You want to dig in the oysters and make sure there's no shells in them? You want to stir when we put the roux together? You're more than welcome to do it.

01:26:20

SR: Do people do it?

01:26:21

DU: Yes.

01:26:22

Andre: We got people coming now—we got a crew coming from Florida.

01:26:25

CU: Some of our cousins come in from Florida every year, and they don't come just to visit; they come to work. They want to actually do something.

01:26:31

Diana: And they bring people with them. They never just come by themselves; they always bring five or six people with them. *Don't worry about it; they going to get it done. Y'all go sit down!* And [we say], *Okay, okay*. Because in our gumbo, the crab claws that we buy, we go through each one of those crab claws individually and make sure all those little pieces of shells that are left on get taken off and all. So each one of them is—

01:26:58

Andre: So they don't fall in the bottom of the pot.

01:27:00

CU: 'Cause if you got a six or eight or—pounds of crab claws in the bottom of the pot, and you're going to have to serve all the way to the bottom, if you don't clean them, you get a bowl with totally shells 'cause all that shell breaks off. So it's—

01:27:11

SR: It is labor-intensive.

01:27:13

Diana: Oh yes, very. Everybody runs and hides.

01:27:16

DU: This is—this is a prep picture.

01:27:19

Diana: That's the onions. Everything is—is measured. Like I know I have to have a gallon bag of white onions that goes in each pot, so it's already put in the gallon bag, each one of them. Like I know I'm having eight pots of gumbo so I've got bell peppers. I double the celery, so I got 16 celery. I'll have eight white onions, and I don't do the green. I used to do the green onions too, but now we do them out under the tent because of the smell. But everything is all ready. You know I'll have eight hams, eight sausage bags.

01:27:53

SR: And that's your measurement, is the gallon Ziploc?

01:27:53

Diana: Well in onions. On the other it's not; we go by weight.

01:27:59

SR: Oh okay. So what does that map say?

01:28:02

CU: We're in Acadiana.

01:28:03

DU: We're not. [*Whispers*]

01:28:05

SR: Are you from here?

01:28:05

DU: I'm from Raceland. It's about 20 miles north.

01:28:09

CU: Still in Lafourche Parish.

01:28:12

SR: So there is a little bit of disagreement about whether—?

01:28:15

DU: There is—

01:28:17

CU: No, we're in Acadiana. The parishes were designated Acadiana in '72 by—when Edwin Edwards was governor. It's always been in Acadiana. There's no question.

01:28:27

SR: But you don't consider yourself Cajun?

01:28:30

DU: Oh no.

01:28:29

CU: Well what do you consider yourself?

01:28:34

Andre: Well you don't want me to tell you—.

01:28:35

CU: Besides being ornery, yes, he's Cajun.

01:28:39

DU: Both of my parents.

01:28:39

Diana: What language did you speak first?

01:28:40

DU: Both of my parents traced their ancestry to Acadia. Our family can go to the—I don't know if you've ever been there, in Saint Martinville, the wall that has got the seven ships. So many people don't know that the Acadians that came primarily to Louisiana didn't come directly from Nova Scotia. This group went—went back to France in 1755, and they couldn't adjust to the European way of life—

01:29:24

CU: No, they were broke, they were poor, they had no money, they had no land, and somebody offered them free land if they got on a boat and went to Louisiana. That's why they—

01:29:34

DU: But they took 30 years to do that.

01:29:34

CU: Yeah, well still—. [*Laughs*]

01:29:36

DU: In 1785 the King of France gave them seven ships—seven ships.

01:29:39

CU: I don't think it was 1785.

01:29:42

DU: It was.

01:29:43

CU: Seventeen sixty-four.

01:29:46

DU: No, it wasn't.

01:29:46

Andre: That's a long time ago.

01:29:49

DU: In 17—in 1785 the King of France gave them seven ships, and some went to the East Coast, some went to the Florida area, and some came to Louisiana. Two of the ships had some of our ancestors on it. In other words, on my father's—my mother's side, her family was on the—what, the Bon Papa?

01:30:18

CU: No, that was the Uzees that were on the Bon Papa.

01:30:22

DU: Le Caroline, the Caroline. The other one was a—the Bon Papa. And the name—our family name is listed there, but it's spelled E-u—

01:30:42

CU: H-e—

01:30:41

DU: H-e-u-z-e—and you pronounce it Uzee [you-zay]. If you hear it phonetic—H-e-u-z-e. Uzee. And then the spelling was corrupted over the years by whoever was the most educated person in the community.

01:31:03

CU: Usually the priest.

01:31:05

DU: Usually the priest. If it was a French priest it got a French spelling. If it was a Spanish priest it got a Spanish spelling.

01:31:11

CU: But the Uzees were on the 1800 census of Lafourche Parish.

01:31:16

DU: Not spelled with the H.

01:31:18

SR: Spelled how you spell it?

01:31:22

DU: No.

01:31:22

CU: No, I think in the 1800s it still has the H. It doesn't lose the H until like 1820, you know. They started—when they became American we got the—

01:31:29

DU: Okay, but another aside here: one of my older uncles, my daddy's—one of my daddy's brothers—was in World War I, and he went to Europe during the big one, and he found out that there was a duchy in France where our family supposedly came from called Duchy of Uzee—U-s-e with an accent. So when he came back to America he legally changed his name from U-z-e-e to U-s-e. So how many there were—.

01:32:11

CU: I don't know what any of this has to do with gumbo.

01:32:14

DU: Well I mean, you can delete all of that.

01:32:17

SR: No, no. I like to ask people about their ancestry.

01:32:19

CU: Oh you're in trouble. If you're going all around Acadiana you're going to get nothing but genealogy, then. And so Uncle Charlie and all of his children are not Uzees; they're Uses.

01:32:32

SR: U-s-e?

01:32:35

DU: Uh-huh. So I've got a first cousin who's not a U-z-e-e; he's a U-s-e. I had an uncle who was not a U-z-e-e; he was a U-s-e.

01:32:47

SR: So I saw—driving here I saw a Uzee Lane.

01:32:50

DU: Yeah, that's in Lockwood.

01:32:51

CU: Did you see Numa Uzee Street?

01:32:53

SR: Yeah.

01:32:55

CU: 'Cause there's Uzee Lane and then there's Numa Uzee Street.

01:32:58

SR: I think I might have seen both. I don't know.

01:32:59

DU: Yeah, well that's one of our relatives.

01:33:02

SR: You have a lot of relatives?

01:33:03

Diana: No.

01:33:04

DU: Not a whole lot.

01:33:07

CU: Not as, yeah. I was going to say not compared to many Acadian families. I would say it was sort of average. More than the American average, but less than the Cajun average.

01:33:16

SR: Right. But you consider yourself Cajun?

01:33:19

CU: Uh-hm, yeah.

01:33:20

Andre: He is Cajun. He's just—he's giving you a hard time.

01:33:18

Diana: And half cracker.

01:33:23

SR: Oh okay.

01:33:23

DU: He should have explained that before you started interviewing.

01:33:28

SR: I can handle it. Let me see. I just want—so I have other questions that seemed relevant before we started talking.

01:33:41

CU: We can take a break and eat some gumbo if you want.

01:33:41

DU: Go ahead and we can start again.

01:33:44

SR: Well that sounds good. We'll see if I have more questions after that.

01:33:45

DU: Okay.

01:33:47

SR: Thank you.

01:33:50

[End Uzee Gumbo Trail Interview]