



**Shane Castille**

**Thee Heavenly Doughnut - Baton Rouge, LA**

\*\*\*

Date: April 5, 2022

Location: Baton Rouge, LA

Interviewer: Phillip Norman Reid

Transcription: Sharp Copy Transcription, LLC

Length: Fifty-two minutes

Project: American Epiphany—King Cake Bakers of South Louisiana

0:00:00

**Phillip Norman Reid:** All right. We're here at Thee Heavenly Donut in Baton Rouge, Louisiana. Today is March 31st, 2022. I'm Phillip Norman and I'm here with Shane Castille. Mr. Castille, could you introduce yourself for the recording?

**Shane Castille:** My name is Shane Castille. I'm the owner/operator of Thee Heavenly Donut.

**Phillip Norman Reid:** Perfect. All right. Well, thank you for doing this Mr. Castille. I really appreciate it. And just to get started, learn a little bit about your personal history, could you just share a little bit about where you grew up and what your upbringing was like?

**Shane Castille:** Okay. I grew up in the Lafayette area, specifically Erath, Carencro, and Breaux Bridge.

**Phillip Norman Reid:** Okay.

**Shane Castille:** What else did you ask me? I'm sorry.

**Phillip Norman Reid:** Yeah. Where you grew up and what was your upbringing like.

**Shane Castille:** Oh, okay. Upbring was typical, I guess, Cajun upbringing.

0:01:00

**Phillip Norman Reid:** What does a typical Cajun upbringing entail? 'Cause I don't know anything about that. [Laughter]

**Shane Castille:** Growin' up just hunting, fishing, cooking.

**Phillip Norman Reid:** Cool.

**Shane Castille:** A lot of cooking.

**Phillip Norman Reid:** Gotcha. What's some of the stuff y'all would cook?

**Shane Castille:** A lot of meat and gravy, so chicken and gravy, pork chops and gravy, round steak and gravy, etouffees, meatball stews, stuff like that.

**Phillip Norman Reid:** Okay. Cool. Rattlesnake and gravy.

**Shane Castille:** Rattlesnake and gravy? No, I never said-- [Laughter]

**Phillip Norman Reid:** You didn't say that? [Laughter]

**Shane Castille:** No, no, no. Round steak.

**Phillip Norman Reid:** Round steak.

**Shane Castille:** That's right.

**Phillip Norman Reid:** Oh, I was, like, I hadn't heard of rattlesnake as being Cajun food. Okay. Round steak. Gotcha.

**Shane Castille:** For a while, and then when my mom got remarried my stepfather was actually a chef and he was from New Orleans and he was in the Coast Guard, so he cooked a lot of different things like pepper steak and potato pancakes and stuff like that, so it was a little different.

**Phillip Norman Reid:** Cool. And were you interested in cooking as a kid? Did you want to know what was going on or you were just interested in eating?

0:02:01

**Shane Castille:** No, not really. Not until I was about sixteen at my dad's house. My dad was single and so he just asked me if I knew how to cook and I said, "No." And he said, "Well, you need to learn."

**Phillip Norman Reid:** Yeah. [Laughter]

**Shane Castille:** So he's the one that really started me cookin'.

**Phillip Norman Reid:** Gotcha. And you told me last time you don't have much of a history of baking before you married into a bakery.

**Shane Castille:** That's correct. Right. So I went to school, and I got an associate's in electronics so I did a lot of electronics techs. I was a network engineer for a while, then I got into technical sales. And then, when I got married, this is what my wife has done since-- when she was four years old her mom started doing donuts, so she's done that all of her life.

**Phillip Norman Reid:** Okay. Cool. And I'll ask you to share a little more of her story. First, I'm just curious, Erath, Lafayette, what were those places like when you were growing up? What do you remember most?

0:03:03

**Shane Castille:** I just remember small town, everyone knew each other. Not a whole lot to do so I just stayed out in the woods basically. An adventure really.

**Phillip Norman Reid:** Right. Hunting, fishing you said.

**Shane Castille:** That's right.

**Phillip Norman Reid:** Very cool. So you were living with your dad. Who else was in the family? Who'd you grow up around?

**Shane Castille:** Well, I grew up with my mom, my stepdad, and my sister.

**Phillip Norman Reid:** Okay.

**Shane Castille:** And so I have some half brothers and sisters, but they grew up with my dad, and so a little later on in life when I became a teenager that's when I moved in with my dad.

**Phillip Norman Reid:** Okay. Gotcha. And what memories do you have of the way Mardi Gras was celebrated when you were growing up in that part of the state?

**Shane Castille:** Mardi Gras was a parade all the time.

Phillip Norman Reid: Okay.

**Shane Castille:** Basically king cakes, beads all the time.

0:04:02

We used to make Mardi Gras masks in school with glitter, green and purple and gold glitter. That was always fun.

**Phillip Norman Reid:** Right. Is that like the masks in Mamou they wear for the parade?

**Shane Castille:** No, no, no, no. That's a little different. Where they chase the chickens.

**Phillip Norman Reid:** Yeah. Right, right.

**Shane Castille:** No. I've actually never been to something like that, but you see it all the time on the news. But yeah, I think that's specifically Mamou.

**Phillip Norman Reid:** Right. That's different. So these are like grade school little [inaudible  
0:04:32] masks?

**Shane Castille:** Yeah, that's right.

**Phillip Norman Reid:** Okay. Oh, cool.

**Shane Castille:** Always made that.

**Phillip Norman Reid:** Gotcha. And do you remember the first time you ever tried king cake?

Did you have any major impression of it or remember who you were with or anything like that?

**Shane Castille:** No. I think it was in school probably. I just remember the baby, getting the baby and just wondering, what in the world is this and why is it in this cake?

**Phillip Norman Reid:** [Laughter] Right, right.

**Shane Castille:** Yeah.

0:05:01

**Phillip Norman Reid:** And you were saying earlier, and I read something about this too, that the baby used to be a bean but by the time--

**Shane Castille:** The baby used to be a bean, that's correct.

**Phillip Norman Reid:** Okay.

**Shane Castille:** I don't know how it changed to a baby. I don't know specifically when but, yeah, it used to be a bean that they used to bake inside the cake.

**Phillip Norman Reid:** Gotcha. Okay. But by the time you were in school they were in baby territory?

**Shane Castille:** Oh, they were in-- yeah, that's right.

**Phillip Norman Reid:** Cool. All right.

**Shane Castille:** And they were still hiding the baby at the time. So now we don't, we just put it on top and whoever buys the cake if they want to hide the baby, they can hide it themselves, I guess for any type of legal liability.

**Phillip Norman Reid:** Right. Yeah, I was wondering about that. I was, like, some stupid person must've choked on that baby and now everyone has to leave the baby out.

**Shane Castille:** Probably so. [Laughter]

**Phillip Norman Reid:** Right, 'cause you do see that. That's funny. So yeah, you mentioned a little bit about your wife's history in baking so just tell me a little bit more about that story.

**Shane Castille:** Okay.

0:06:00

Well, her mom started working at a donut shop probably about thirty-five years ago and she owned her first donut shop about thirty years ago and she's owned I think three of them since then. That was a Meche's Donuts. And so they came out here in 2000 and opened up a Meche's out here in Baton Rouge. And then eventually they wanted to open up more shops and so, first of all, no one knew who Meche's was out in Baton Rouge. That's more of a Lafayette thing. And so, [redacted], they just came up with their own name. So Thee Heavenly Donut. And I think they made some type of donut with some type of cream and chocolate and caramel. And her mom said, "Oh, that's heavenly," and my wife said, "That's the new name of the shop, Heavenly Donut."

**Phillip Norman Reid:** Oh, okay. I was wondering the origin of the name.

**Shane Castille:** Yeah, so that's how they got that.

**Phillip Norman Reid:** Right. And your wife's name is Kara Castille?

0:06:59

**Shane Castille:** Kara Castille, that's right.

**Phillip Norman Reid:** And what's her mom's name?

**Shane Castille:** Catherine Estilette.

**Phillip Norman Reid:** Okay. Gotcha. So those two, they were the ones who started the shop originally in Baton Rouge?

**Shane Castille:** Oh, that's right. That's right.

**Phillip Norman Reid:** Gotcha. Okay.

**Shane Castille:** In fact, the one in Baton Rouge, my wife started that when she was eighteen. As soon as she graduated high school, she came out here and opened up that shop.

**Phillip Norman Reid:** She was ready to go in the family business right away.

**Shane Castille:** That's right. That's right.

**Phillip Norman Reid:** That's cool. Yeah, that's cool. I know a lot of folks who grow up in bakeries, it's, like, that's what you do, that's what you know, so you carry it on.

**Shane Castille:** That's right.

**Phillip Norman Reid:** That's cool.

**Shane Castille:** Her saying is that she grew up sleeping on the flour sacks.

Phillip Norman Reid: [Laughter] Right. Didn't get sick of it, I guess.

**Shane Castille:** No.

**Phillip Norman Reid:** That's awesome. For you just being exposed to their business-- and you can share again how you eventually ended up working here-- but what was it like not growing up baking, knowing much about baking, to becoming a baker?

**Shane Castille:** It was fun because I'd never done anything food related before.

0:08:01

And then, once we got married, I would just kind of help out in her mom's shop. Just something fun to do. And then, we actually moved away to Alabama for about two years and that's when the economy was really kind of going down. My job was kind of stagnate out there so her mom said, "Hey, look, I got a building. It would be a good spot for a new shop if y'all want to open one up." And my wife said, "You know what? I have always wanted to open up another one. Let's do it." So we moved back to Baton Rouge and opened up this one.

**Phillip Norman Reid:** Okay. And what year was that?

**Shane Castille:** Ooh, that was 2009.

**Phillip Norman Reid:** Okay.

**Shane Castille:** Yep.

**Phillip Norman Reid:** So your wife and her mother, they taught you how to bake. So take me into your first few days just trying to figure out this totally new thing.

0:09:02

**Shane Castille:** Okay. Well, I started off just frying donuts. I mean, you could pick up on frying in about ten, fifteen minutes. And so for a long time that's all I did. I would come in and I would fry. We had a cutter named Al and one day I came in, apparently Al had put in for vacation and it got mixed up where it was this weekend and we thought it was next weekend. So when I came in Al wasn't here. I was by myself. [Laughter]

**Phillip Norman Reid:** Thrown into a fire, yeah.

**Shane Castille:** And I said, "Hey, when's Al going on vacation?" She said, "Oh, Saturday and Sunday." I was, like, "I think it's this Saturday and Sunday." She's, like, "Is it?" I said, "Well, he's not here." She said, "Oh, my God." I said, "Tell me how to make a dough." And so she talked me through making a dough.

0:09:58

And I'd cut before a few times so I kinda—

**Phillip Norman Reid:** Is cutting just, like, making the rings?

**Shane Castille:** Yeah, that's right. Rolling out the dough, cutting out the donuts, rolling the cinnamon rolls out and stuff like that. So I kinda winged it and I did a pretty good job and so after that I told Al, I said, "Look, I just need to learn how to cut in case something like this happens again."

**Phillip Norman Reid:** Right, yeah.

**Shane Castille:** And he was older. He was in his seventies, so he eventually retired. And I'd just got laid off from a job. I was doing some outside technical sales. And I said, "You know what?

Instead of looking for a job why don't I just run the shop? I like doing that and you can stay home." We had a newborn. So I've been doing it ever since.

**Phillip Norman Reid:** Right. Worked out well, yeah.

**Shane Castille:** That's right.

Phillip Norman Reid: Right. So you kinda learned on the fly there initially.

Shane Castille: Yeah, that's right.

**Phillip Norman Reid:** Sometimes that's what it takes. [Laughter]

**Shane Castille:** Yeah.

**Phillip Norman Reid:** Just jump in the deep end and see if you can swim.

0:11:00

And then, when did king cakes come in? Did y'all make king cakes from the start or when did that take off?

**Shane Castille:** Oh, yeah. Yeah, they've always been making king cakes.

**Phillip Norman Reid:** Um-hm. Gotcha.

**Shane Castille:** King cakes are typically baked but we deep fry our king cakes. And supposedly back when she worked for Meche's somebody just said, "You know what, why don't we just try to fry a king cake?" And they did and it worked, and they been doing it ever since.

**Phillip Norman Reid:** Okay. So y'all kind of took that inspiration from them?

**Shane Castille:** Right.

Phillip Norman Reid: Gotcha. Okay. And I know there's some controversy-- when I've read about Meche's it's, like, oh, can a donut be a king cake?

Shane Castille: Oh, can a donut be a king cake? Yeah.

Phillip Norman Reid: Yeah. Right.

**Shane Castille:** That's a big controversy but, I mean, if people actually look at what king cakes are, almost every culture has a version of it. There's a Spanish three kings cake, there's an English three kings cake.

0:12:00

All over the European continent there's different versions of king cakes. So a king cake, as long as it, I think, stays within the tradition of three braids, three colors, a type of bean or baby, who cares how you cook it?

**Phillip Norman Reid:** Right. You've got those basic components.

**Shane Castille:** Right, right.

**Phillip Norman Reid:** That's something I'm interested to explore with this project, because people have their ideas of what makes a king cake a real king cake.

**Shane Castille:** Right. You go to a carnival, and you get a fried pound cake. It's still a pound cake.

**Phillip Norman Reid:** Right.

Shane Castille: A fried Snicker bar is still a Snicker bar, it's just fried.

Phillip Norman Reid: Right. Different preparation.

**Shane Castille:** Yeah.

**Phillip Norman Reid:** So that's just kind of that Lafayette area's contribution to the king cake tradition.

**Shane Castille:** Right.

**Phillip Norman Reid:** That's cool. And then, we were just talking about this, but tell us something about when the boudin king cake came in 'cause that's been popular with y'all.

**Shane Castille:** The boudin, right. So they invented that out in Lafayette at Twins, and it was all over the news.

0:12:59

And my wife just said, "I think we need to make it." And I just thought, I don't know. That just looks kinda weird.

**Phillip Norman Reid:** [Laughter]

**Shane Castille:** And she said, "No. We need to jump on this." So we figured out and so we used the same exact dough, so the donut dough that we used to make the king cakes, we just bake it instead of fry it. So yeah, so we just figured it out, made it. And the news had heard about it, that we were doing it in Baton Rouge, so they wanted to come. They filmed her making it. And the next day it just went insane. We couldn't stop making it 'cause people were just calling and calling and calling. We eventually had to stop answering the phone.

**Phillip Norman Reid:** [Laughter]

**Shane Castille:** And it's been really good, so a lot of people, they have to have it every year.

**Phillip Norman Reid:** Wow. That's like the new tradition. Yeah, that's interesting.

**Shane Castille:** That's right.

**Phillip Norman Reid:** So the demand has kinda still stayed pretty high for that one?

**Shane Castille:** Oh, yeah.

**Phillip Norman Reid:** Okay. 'Cause sometimes something like that, it's, like, initially everyone wants it and kinda wears off, but people are sticking with it.

0:14:04

**Shane Castille:** Yeah. We got companies that will buy, like, a hundred just to give out to their clients. So it's pretty fun to do.

**Phillip Norman Reid:** Right. Well, walk me through what are the components of that one.

**Shane Castille:** Of the boudin king cake?

**Phillip Norman Reid:** Yeah.

**Shane Castille:** Okay. Well, just our donut dough and roll it out and we just fill it up with boudin and pepper jack, and you bake it up. And then we cover it with pepper jelly and Steen's syrup and crumbled bacon.

**Phillip Norman Reid:** Okay. Gotcha. Very cool. And what are some of the other specialty king cakes y'all offer? What are some of your favorites that y'all do?

**Shane Castille:** Oh, we do-- the most popular one is a pecan praline. It's got a cream cheese filling with caramel pecans on top. That's probably the most popular one we do. We do a turtle.

0:14:58

She does an Almond Joy with coconut and almond flavoring and chocolate and almonds on the top, so that's pretty popular. Maple bacon, maple pecan, stuff like that. I'm trying to think. Oh, there's a Cajun mud that is-- that's probably the newest one she's invented, which it's like a Mississippi Mud but there's Bavarian cream, chocolate, cream cheese, and pecans. That's extremely rich but people seem to love it.

**Phillip Norman Reid:** Right. That does sound rich. Sounds good though.

**Shane Castille:** Yeah. [Laughter]

**Phillip Norman Reid:** Definitely. So is your wife usually the one who will come up with the new recipes and stuff like that?

**Shane Castille:** She likes to come up with a new one every year. It's kind of her thing. When I first got married to her, I don't think there was anybody really doing the specialty type-- it was basic cream cheese or strawberry cream cheese type king cakes. But with the turtles and the pecan pralines that was something that people weren't really doing a whole lot of.

0:16:02

And now, all of a sudden, it's exploded. Everybody is doing some type of-- they try to come up with the craziest combinations you can think of.

**Phillip Norman Reid:** Right. Now everyone's gotta try them all.

**Shane Castille:** That's right.

**Phillip Norman Reid:** So y'all were doing that pretty early on?

**Shane Castille:** Oh, yeah.

**Phillip Norman Reid:** That's cool. And another thing, from what I've read, that y'all were on the front end of is doing king cakes outside of carnival season?

**Shane Castille:** Oh, yeah. We do a tiered king cake for weddings, a lot of groom's cakes. They'll say, "Well, the groom doesn't like cake, but he likes king cake." So we'll do that. We'll do them in the shapes of numbers for birthdays. Yeah, anything. Right now we're doing an Easter basket king cake where it's got the Easter colors, it's got the malt ball or chocolate eggs. We got edible grass in the middle with Peeps, so it looks like a nest.

0:17:00

**Phillip Norman Reid:** Right. That's awesome. So when did y'all start doing it outside of just strictly carnival?

**Shane Castille:** I think we started first off with the Christmas king cakes which I think in some places it's called a Kringle or Kris Kringle cake, but we call them Christmas king cakes. And that kind of extended that. And then she started thinking, maybe we can do some Easter ones. St. Patrick's Day is big, so we do a green and white and yellow king cake for that.

**Phillip Norman Reid:** I've heard those called patty cakes.

**Shane Castille:** Oh, I've never heard that before but yeah.

**Phillip Norman Reid:** I saw that the other day, the St. Patrick's Day one.

**Shane Castille:** That would be good.

**Phillip Norman Reid:** Right. And what was the motivation to make it not just a strictly carnival season thing? Just 'cause it was good seller?

**Shane Castille:** Yeah, it's a good seller.

**Phillip Norman Reid:** 'Cause that's what I've found, being a bakery in Louisiana, those two months are the money maker when you're selling king cakes, so it fully makes sense to extend it.

0:18:02

**Shane Castille:** Exactly. It's like a whole new business.

**Phillip Norman Reid:** Right. Totally. So with that, I know things get really busy. Just take me through a day here in the shop trying to keep up with demand during king cake season. Do you hire additional staff or what does it look like?

**Shane Castille:** Oh, yeah, absolutely. We hire king cake decorators. It's still me in the fryer that make 'em, except we probably work seven days a week. I usually come in a couple hours earlier so I'm usually coming in about eleven o'clock at night and then I'm staying until twelve or one, so I'm workin' twelve, thirteen, fourteen-- closer to Mardi Gras I'm working fifteen, sixteen hours a day.

**Phillip Norman Reid:** Wow.

**Shane Castille:** So it gets pretty crazy.

**Phillip Norman Reid:** Pretty intense, yeah. Are you able to catch your breath those first few weeks after Mardi Gras? [Laughter]

**Shane Castille:** Yeah.

0:19:00

Well, we used to close up two days after but now I have a contract with the university so I can't close up now, so I'm obligated to that. And we do a lot of wholesale stuff now with other bakeries that we're just obligated to them so I can't close up.

**Phillip Norman Reid:** Gotcha.

**Shane Castille:** But used to. It was nice having those two days just to kind of rest. So now I just kinda rest when I can. [Laughter]

**Phillip Norman Reid:** Yeah, just keep grinding away. So on an average day in the lead up to Mardi Gras how many king cakes do you make?

**Shane Castille:** We probably do about-- each location at the beginning probably about fifty a day, and then it'll get up to a hundred, and then closer to Mardi Gras two, three hundred a day.

**Phillip Norman Reid:** Okay.

**Shane Castille:** Yeah.

**Phillip Norman Reid:** And which one's your favorite?

**Shane Castille:** Which one is my favorite? The Bavarian cream. Keep it simple but I like that sweetness.

0:20:01

**Phillip Norman Reid:** Right. And then, I had another question just about selling year-round. So I've heard that also be controversial. Can a king cake still be a king cake if it's sold outside of carnival season?

**Shane Castille:** Right. It all depends on how you look at it 'cause traditionally a king cake is eaten one day out of the year on the twelfth night, or the Epiphany is what it's called, so twelve days after Christmas is the day that a lot of cultures eat king cake. That one day. And somehow Louisiana has extended it all throughout Mardi Gras season. So really, eatin' it after the twelfth night would be kinda controversial in itself, so it all depends on what you consider tradition.

**Phillip Norman Reid:** Once you open up the box, yeah, it's like— [Laughter]

**Shane Castille:** That's right. Yeah.

0:21:00

Tradition is personal, so whatever you think tradition is-- I have a lot of customers that only eat it that one day, "I eat it that one day and that's it."

**Phillip Norman Reid:** Interesting. Yeah, they're strict about it.

**Shane Castille:** Right.

**Phillip Norman Reid:** Just on the topic of tradition, what were some of your favorite traditions, king cake related or not, just related to Mardi Gras growing up and now?

**Shane Castille:** I'm trying to think. The only thing I can think of would be parades, but really after Mardi Gras that's the traditions I think of is Lent.

**Phillip Norman Reid:** Okay.

**Shane Castille:** So Mardi Gras is leading up to Lent and you can't eat meat on Fridays after that. You have Ash Wednesday, that's the day after Mardi Gras, everybody goes to church and gets the ashes on their foreheads. You probably don't see that a whole lot in Colorado.

**Phillip Norman Reid:** Not a whole lot but I've seen it here. Yeah, definitely.

**Shane Castille:** [Laughter] Yeah.

0:22:00

So that's what I think of, I think of Lent and leading up to Easter when I'm making king cakes.

**Phillip Norman Reid:** Gotcha. So did you have a pretty Catholic upbringing? Was there a pretty big focus on that?

**Shane Castille:** Pretty strict Catholic upbringing, right.

**Phillip Norman Reid:** Okay. Gotcha.

**Shane Castille:** Back when I was in public school, we took one day out of the week and went to religion class across the street at the Catholic church. You can't do that now, but that's how it was when I was a kid. So yeah, pretty strict Catholic upbringing.

**Phillip Norman Reid:** Right. So you were more concerned about, not the period of celebration but afterwards when there were these restrictions on you and this kind of stuff.

**Shane Castille:** That's right.

**Phillip Norman Reid:** Right. And just the emphasis on the religious teaching. That's interesting. Well, cool. Let's see. Just going through the grind of king cakes or just being a baker in general, what have been some of the biggest challenges and what have been some of the biggest surprises that you've faced?

0:23:02

**Shane Castille:** I would say that the biggest challenges-- well, at the beginning I was just kinda taught how to make everything, so I just kinda followed directions and didn't really understand what I was doing. And so through the years, I've spoken to-- trainers come down from-- we use Pillsbury products. They'll come down and I've spoken to these guys. A guy came down a few months ago because of the supply chain crisis, some of the ingredients that we get we weren't able to get, or they had to substitute stuff. And so he had to come down and show us new recipes.

0:23:58

And so he really taught me a lot about making doughs and why a dough does this and why do you have to let it rise, the scientific purpose of doing things. So it's really helped me to understand why a dough does what it does and how I can make it better. And my best friend, he works for Flowers Bakery and so he makes bread all day, and he's really come in here and we just like to talk about making bread and so he's taught me a lot of stuff, too. So the challenge at the beginning was not knowing why I was doing what I was doing.

**Phillip Norman Reid:** Um-hm.

**Shane Castille:** And so now that I know why I'm able to make things a lot better.

**Phillip Norman Reid:** Right. That's interesting. 'Cause you just had that weekend where you had to make it happen and you can't have a full-blown tutorial and know all the--

**Shane Castille:** Right. and then, another challenge would be just employees, so trying to get somebody in here early in the morning.

0:25:01

People will apply and then when you tell 'em, "Oh, you gotta be here at three o'clock." "Oh, in the afternoon?" "No, in the morning." "Oh, I don't want to do that."

**Phillip Norman Reid:** [Laughter] Right, right.

**Shane Castille:** So that's tough.

**Phillip Norman Reid:** 'Cause you were telling me when we first met that you were trying to get a little more help so you can maybe not have to be on that schedule as much, but you're struggling to get someone to take that over.

Shane Castille: That's right. Well, we've got a good crew now.

Phillip Norman Reid: Yeah. That's good.

Shane Castille: For now, so we'll see.

Phillip Norman Reid: Right. If they stick around. I think I told you this but that's what I'm learning. I've done another oral history project about community organizing and I thought community organizers were the hardest-working people I knew, but then when I heard about bakers I was, like, I don't know. [Laughter] That's a close call 'cause those are some crazy hours.

**Shane Castille:** Yeah.

**Phillip Norman Reid:** And like you said, with Mardi Gras, eleven, twelve hours a day. That's what I like to do with a project like this is just highlight the labor that goes into this stuff.

**Shane Castille:** Right.

0:25:59

**Phillip Norman Reid:** Because people see a king cake on their table or whatever and it's, like, you don't always appreciate what has to happen for that to get there.

**Shane Castille:** That's right.

**Phillip Norman Reid:** That is some hard work for sure, so I like to emphasize that. Yeah, I think bakers are such a huge part of our communities. Just growing up, those are my fondest memories are a lot of the family-owned bakeries wherever I was living. That's what people look forward to on Sunday morning, donuts or whatever it is, king cakes here.

**Shane Castille:** Right.

**Phillip Norman Reid:** It's just such a big part of the community fabric, so it's cool. To you what is the importance of having a bakery in the community?

**Shane Castille:** Really, I would say families. Knowing our customers and just seeing the families that come in here. And it's fun to watch kids that are in college come in, and somebody came in and said, "You know what? I used to come over as a kid all the time. This is my favorite place."

0:27:03

And so I just thought that was pretty cool. Like, "Okay. So you actually grew up in the village, huh?" "Yeah."

**Phillip Norman Reid:** Yeah.

**Shane Castille:** And I'll see dads and daughters come every Friday before school and have donuts in the morning, and that's their tradition. I had one guy cry because they were coming every Friday morning and so she went off to college. And I said, "Yeah, I don't see you too often." I said, "She went off to college, huh?" And he, [sighing] "Yeah." And he had a tear coming out of his eye. I was, like, whoa, okay. Wow.

**Phillip Norman Reid:** Right. These places mean something to people. Sure.

**Shane Castille:** That's right. Yeah.

**Phillip Norman Reid:** That's cool to see. Maybe that makes the twelve-hour days a little easier sometimes knowing that you're having an impact.

**Shane Castille:** Right.

**Phillip Norman Reid:** So you and your wife have kids, correct?

**Shane Castille:** That's right.

**Phillip Norman Reid:** Are you raising them in the bakery or what's that gonna be like?

0:28:00

**Shane Castille:** Well, I have a seventeen-year-old and she's been coming to work for me since she's fifteen years old.

**Phillip Norman Reid:** Okay. Yeah.

**Shane Castille:** Not all the time but for a little while she did it pretty often in the summertime. She wanted to make some money. So yeah, that's pretty cool. I have a ten-year-old. She hasn't come work for me yet, but she's gone to her grandmother's shop over in Henderson and she works over there, and she just loves it. 'Cause when they find out that that's her grandmother's shop, they like to tip her.

**Phillip Norman Reid:** Oh, okay. Gotcha.

**Shane Castille:** So she always calls me up, "Dad, I made this much money." [Laughter]

**Phillip Norman Reid:** Right.

**Shane Castille:** So yeah, she gets excited. And I think she wants to bake, 'cause she'll just bake at home. Like the other day she made some gluten-free cookies, and I was, like, "Oh, that's pretty good. Did you use a mix?" She said, "No, I just made it up."

**Phillip Norman Reid:** Oh, wow!

0:29:01

**Shane Castille:** So she likes to bake. The seventeen-year-old, she wants to go into something different.

**Phillip Norman Reid:** But she wanted the paycheck, yeah. [Laughter]

**Shane Castille:** Yeah. And she sees how hard we work. She said, "I just don't want to work that hard." [Laughter]

**Phillip Norman Reid:** Well, there you go. What are their names, each of the kids?

**Shane Castille:** Lundy is the seventeen-year-old and Lola [sp] is the ten-year-old.

**Phillip Norman Reid:** Okay. Cool. Miss Lola, wow, baking at ten. That's crazy.

**Shane Castille:** That's right. Oh, she loves it, yeah.

**Phillip Norman Reid:** So you grew up eating king cake, you're aware of the traditions. What does it mean to now kind of be a part of the legacy, one of the major places where folks get king cake in Baton Rouge, and just achieving that popularity?

**Shane Castille:** Yeah. It's pretty exciting. Sometimes you forget how popular you are in Baton Rouge and then you'll see it.

0:30:02

Like somebody was saying the other day, "Oh, they were talkin' about you on the news." And I said, "Oh, really?" 'Cause usually they'll come in and they'll film. And I didn't know what he was talkin' about. And so I saw a clip of the broadcast and they were talkin' about-- there was some disaster and people were going out and feeding 'em. And they said, "What would you send?" And somebody said, "Oh, I would bring some gumbo." And then, one of the ladies, she said-- these are the newscasters-- she said, "Oh, I would bring king cake." He said, "Oh, okay." And he

said, "Whose king cake would you bring?" And the two ladies looked at each other and said, "Thee Heavenly Donut."

**Phillip Norman Reid:** Oh, wow.

**Shane Castille:** I was, like, "Oh, I love it. I love the free press."

**Phillip Norman Reid:** Right. For sure. That's a pretty high compliment for a disaster.

**Shane Castille:** Yeah.

**Phillip Norman Reid:** Like, that's the relief. That's awesome. Just being new here, y'all were one of the first places I heard of for sure, so definitely have the name recognition.

0:31:03

**Shane Castille:** Yeah.

**Phillip Norman Reid:** That's cool. So with achieving that success, you just mentioned the location in Henderson, I know that's pretty new, but what are y'all's hopes just for the future of the business as you continue to grow?

**Shane Castille:** That Henderson location is fairly new. That's my mother-in-law's deal. She wanted to go back to the Lafayette area, so she had a good opportunity to do that. And it's a gold mine because it's right next to a campground and they are really just hustling and bustling out there. So we took over the one on Sherwood, so I've got two now. So I'm trying to really build the business to where we can open up some multiple shops in Baton Rouge. It would be nice.

**Phillip Norman Reid:** Right. Try to be the Meche's of Baton Rouge some day? [Laughter]

0:32:00

**Shane Castille:** No, not really. Just have a few more. I don't want to be too big 'cause you see a lot of franchises that they're huge and the quality is just not really there.

**Phillip Norman Reid:** Right. So you want to be able to keep that balance?

**Shane Castille:** Yeah.

**Phillip Norman Reid:** Right. Definitely. I mean, on that aspect, just the business side and growing a business outside the baking, what have been the challenges of that?

**Shane Castille:** Challenges of growing the business? Well, we're finding out now that owning more than one it's a challenge 'cause you can't be at both locations, so you have to find people that are just as passionate about the product as you are, and that's the biggest challenge. 'Cause some people just want a job, and some people just really like doing what they do. And I think I've found that with the guy that cuts at the other shop.

0:33:01

He really likes doing what he does, so he's got a good product.

**Phillip Norman Reid:** Right. Those folks can be hard to find sometimes.

**Shane Castille:** That's right. Yeah.

**Phillip Norman Reid:** And we covered this a little bit, but I just wanted to be sure, just what would you say are the characteristics that make y'all's king cakes special and kind of set them apart?

**Shane Castille:** I would say, well, first of all it's a fried king cake, so that's different.

**Phillip Norman Reid:** Right.

**Shane Castille:** The different flavors. I don't even know how many flavors we have but I usually say we got over thirty different flavors.

**Phillip Norman Reid:** Wow.

**Shane Castille:** So people will call and say, "What kinds do you have?" And I'll say, "We got whatever kind you want."

**Phillip Norman Reid:** Look on the website, yeah.

**Shane Castille:** "Whatever kind you want, just name it." And then, customers will custom make, "Hey, I want this." I'm, like, "Oh, okay. You sure you want that?" "Yeah, that's what I want." So we'll do it for 'em.

0:34:01

I forgot what the question was.

**Phillip Norman Reid:** Yeah. What sets them apart?

**Shane Castille:** Oh, yeah. Unique. Yeah. Basically that and just the following that we have. A lot of people come in and they'll say, "This is the only king cake that I eat." And my wife does a great job at social media and just getting people to really become a fan.

**Phillip Norman Reid:** Right, proof is in the pudding kind of thing.

**Shane Castille:** That's right.

**Phillip Norman Reid:** People keep coming, they must be good, right?

**Shane Castille:** That's right.

**Phillip Norman Reid:** Exactly. And then, you spoke to this a little bit earlier, too, but we were talking about people have different definitions of what makes a king cake a king cake. But what to you are those core things that every king cake's gotta have?

**Shane Castille:** Okay. It's got to have three braids.

**Phillip Norman Reid:** Okay.

**Shane Castille:** It's gotta have three colors.

**Phillip Norman Reid:** Um-hm.

**Shane Castille:** And it's gotta have-- well, cinnamon. Of course, we do have people that are allergic to cinnamon, so we'll make it without cinnamon. Cinnamon, the three colors, the three braids, and the baby.

0:35:04

That's a king cake.

**Phillip Norman Reid:** Gotcha. And then, beyond that you can interpret however you want, bake it however you want, all that kind of –

**Shane Castille:** Do whatever you want with it.

**Phillip Norman Reid:** You can put boudin in it or whatever you want to do.

**Shane Castille:** That's right.

**Phillip Norman Reid:** Very cool. And you said the boudin one y'all baked.

**Shane Castille:** Yeah, we bake that. Right.

**Phillip Norman Reid:** Okay. Gotcha. And were do y'all get your boudin from for those?

**Shane Castille:** We get ours from out in St. Martinville. It's called Baudin's.

**Phillip Norman Reid:** Okay.

**Shane Castille:** Baudin's boudin. Yep.

**Phillip Norman Reid:** All right. Good deal. Let's see here. Is there anything I missed? Anything else you want to add about the story of the business, about what it's like to be a baker, about king cakes?

**Shane Castille:** I was just thinking about how the king cakes became so popular.

0:35:59

It was really kinda accidental. I think the Saints were in the playoffs in Chicago and the news was out there and they saw this king cake. They were, like, what is that? And somebody said, "Oh, it's a fried king cake." And they said, "A fried king cake? I've never heard of that before." So they called us and said, "Hey, do y'all do a fried king cake." Said, "Yeah, we do." Said, "'Cause we seen one out in Chicago and it was from Louisiana. The guy didn't know exactly where he got it from, but somebody said they think he might've got it from over here." I said, "Oh, could've been, yeah." And it was called Tumey's [sp] Travels. So Tumey has since retired. So they came out and they just did a special on the fried king cake.

0:37:00

And the next day there was just a line outside wrapped around the building wanting a fried king cake.

**Phillip Norman Reid:** Oh, wow.

**Shane Castille:** So that began the popularity of the fried king cake.

**Phillip Norman Reid:** Legend, right. What year was that?

**Shane Castille:** Ooh, that was probably around-- I don't even know, but it was before I got married or right when I got married, so around early 2000s.

**Phillip Norman Reid:** Okay.

**Shane Castille:** Whenever the Saints went to the Super Bowl, played in Chicago at the playoffs.

**Phillip Norman Reid:** Gotcha. So people were tailgating out there from Louisiana and had fried king cake.

**Shane Castille:** Yeah.

**Phillip Norman Reid:** Okay. Interesting. And then, I remember seeing, yeah, with Joe Burrow, they were having-- bakeries all across the country started making king cakes.

**Shane Castille:** Yeah, that's right.

**Phillip Norman Reid:** 'Cause it lines up well with Super Bowl season too usually. That's interesting.

**Shane Castille:** Yeah. We did very well with that king cake.

**Phillip Norman Reid:** Okay. Did y'all do a Bengals themed one?

**Shane Castille:** Yeah, that's right.

**Phillip Norman Reid:** Oh, okay. What were the components of that?

0:38:01

**Shane Castille:** It was basically chocolate icing and we used orange icing for the stripes.

**Phillip Norman Reid:** Okay.

**Shane Castille:** She got a special bead and had a big football on it.

**Phillip Norman Reid:** That's awesome.

**Shane Castille:** That was fun.

**Phillip Norman Reid:** That's a fun chapter, definitely. Yeah, just talking about LSU, I know that's a big part of the culture here in Baton Rouge. What are some of the things that y'all enjoy about being a business especially in Baton Rouge and just raising a family here?

**Shane Castille:** I love Baton Rouge. I grew up in Lafayette and Baton Rouge is a city but it's still a small town, so everybody still kinda knows everybody. And the people here are just super nice. Of course, we have a contract with the university, so we bring donuts there every day.

0:38:59

**Phillip Norman Reid:** Oh, okay.

**Shane Castille:** And then, they order king cakes through us.

**Phillip Norman Reid:** So in the dining hall they have the donuts?

**Shane Castille:** Oh, yeah. We have six locations that we bring to, yeah.

**Phillip Norman Reid:** Oh, okay. All throughout LSU's campus?

**Shane Castille:** Right. Yeah.

**Phillip Norman Reid:** Oh, cool. Good deal.

**Shane Castille:** Yeah, five days a week, sometimes six.

**Phillip Norman Reid:** When did y'all secure that contract? How'd that come about?

**Shane Castille:** Ooh, probably about-- I think we said it's been four years. Just an accident. My wife was at le Madeleine's, and it was late at night. Was it after a cheer competition? I don't remember. But they were at le Madeleine's talking to a lady and the lady said that she had worked at LSU. And my wife said, "Oh, I've been trying to get in there. That would be nice."

0:40:00

She goes, "Well, I work for the executive chef of the dining." And so she said, "I'll put a word in. I'll see if he's lookin' for something." And so it was, like, probably three months later I get a call and she said, "Hey, I talked to your wife about three months ago. Can you call the executive chef, 'cause he's been on me? And I told him that they don't want to do anything right now 'cause it's king cake season. They're way too busy. So now king cake season is over with. Could you give him a call?" I said, "Uh, okay." [Laughter] And it was, like, three o'clock in the morning so I called my wife, and she was, like, "Yeah, I talked to the lady a long time ago." And they said, "Yeah, we've been wanting to get --" 'Cause they've been wanting to do a lot of local stuff and were gettin' a lot of local places in the dining hall and in the union. Yeah, that's how it started.

0:41:00

**Phillip Norman Reid:** That's awesome. That's a good contract to have. [Laughter]

**Shane Castille:** That's right.

**Phillip Norman Reid:** A lot of hungry students.

**Shane Castille:** Yeah.

**Phillip Norman Reid:** I definitely liked donuts as a college kid for sure. We would always have donuts on Sundays in the dining hall. That was, like, the special thing.

**Shane Castille:** Oh, yeah.

**Phillip Norman Reid:** No, it's cool what you said about Baton Rouge, too, being-- I went to school outside Philadelphia and I was sick of a big city by the time I was done.

**Shane Castille:** Right.

**Phillip Norman Reid:** This was the perfect place to come 'cause, like you said, it's like a city but it feels like a small town which is kinda like where I grew up in a smaller town.

**Shane Castille:** Yeah.

**Phillip Norman Reid:** I'm just curious, we talked a little bit about Lafayette but anything else you want to add just about what it was like growing up there, or do you miss home?

**Shane Castille:** No, not really. I'm trying to think. I liked growing up in Lafayette but when you're in Lafayette it's kind of secluded from the rest of the world, so it wasn't until I was about twenty six or twenty seven when I got a job as a network engineer and it was on the road.

0:42:05

So I worked the East Coast, so it was the first time I had left the area, besides going to Mississippi or Texas. So they sent me to-- I was stationed in Atlanta and I just worked the East Coast from Atlanta all the way up to New York.

**Phillip Norman Reid:** Wow. Okay.

**Shane Castille:** And so it was a lot different. So my eyes were opened up to a lot more stuff.

And so when I finished that-- that lasted for probably a little over a year-- came back and I was in Parks, Louisiana, population seven hundred.

**Phillip Norman Reid:** [Laughter]

**Shane Castille:** And so the first job I found was in Baton Rouge. And I said, oh, okay. Baton Rouge, okay. And so I was, like, okay, I kinda like it here. So I ended up just movin' here. And my wife was actually from Breaux Bridge, so we were from the same area, but we never knew each other.

0:43:01

But we met each other in Baton Rouge, so it was kind of interesting.

**Phillip Norman Reid:** Oh, wow. So kinda shows you how these communities are real tight knit, the smaller areas.

**Shane Castille:** Yeah.

**Phillip Norman Reid:** No, I know what you mean. I grew up initially in a small town, and once you go see other places it's hard to-- you need something a little bit bigger.

**Shane Castille:** Yeah.

**Phillip Norman Reid:** So it sounds like Baton Rouge is a good happy medium for sure.

**Shane Castille:** It's fun to go visit. So we go back to Breaux Bridge, or I went to Lafayette the other day and it's fun to kind of be nostalgic.

**Phillip Norman Reid:** Right.

**Shane Castille:** Where did we go? We went to Erath, and I wanted to show my wife where I grew up and stuff like that, so it was pretty interesting just to see stuff from as a kid.

**Phillip Norman Reid:** Sure. And remember, right. I was gonna ask you, how did you and your wife meet, since this is a family business and it all came out of that, right? [Laughter]

**Shane Castille:** That's right.

0:43:59

Well, I worked at Verizon Wireless on Sherwood Forest, and they said, "Go get some donuts." And I said, "Where is there a donut shop?" Said, "Down the road there's a 'Meechee's'." And I said, "A 'Meechee's'?" He said, "Yeah, 'Meechee'." I was, like, "Okay." And so drivin' down the road and I said, oh, Meche's. I said, oh, they're just mispronouncing Meche's. So I said, okay, they got a Meche's in Baton Rouge. So I went in and got donuts and I was bringin' donuts to church every Sunday, but I was gettin' it from Jay's donuts. And so I said, oh, but I like to support somebody from back home, so I started going to the Meche's every Sunday. And so I started talkin' to her mom. We were just talkin', my accent, "Where are you from?" I said, "Oh, Breaux Bridge." She said, "Oh, you know, I have the Meche's in Breaux Bridge, too." I said, "No, I didn't know that." And so just started talking about people we knew and stuff like that.

0:45:00

And then, yeah, her daughter worked in there. So we just kinda talked a little bit. And then-- what had happened? She had gotten a coupon-- she made a king cake for the chef/owner of Fleming's Steakhouse.

**Phillip Norman Reid:** Um-hm.

**Shane Castille:** And she hand-delivered it because her parents were, like, "We usually bring it to 'em, but we can't come down to bring it to 'em." So she said, "Oh, I'll bring it to 'em." So she did. And so he was impressed and so gave her a gift certificate. And so her mom was, like, "She got a gift certificate to Fleming's, but she doesn't have anybody to go with." And she said, "I said to her, 'You need to take that nice young man that gets the donuts for church.'"

**Phillip Norman Reid:** [Laughter]

**Shane Castille:** And I said, "Oh, yeah. Fleming's, yeah. I want to get me a steak." So that's how we started.

**Phillip Norman Reid:** Oh, okay. Right. So mom was kinda the matchmaker?

**Shane Castille:** Yeah.

**Phillip Norman Reid:** All right. And you met in the donut shop. I love it!

**Shane Castille:** That's right.

**Phillip Norman Reid:** That's awesome.

0:46:00

From the very beginning. That's super cool. Oh, man! I love that story. So any other moments or memories you want to share just from being a baker?

**Shane Castille:** Ooh, I don't know. I'm trying to think. I know later on in life I found out that my grandparents actually owned a bakery before I was born but it had burned down. So maybe baking is in my blood, and I didn't know it.

**Phillip Norman Reid:** Interesting. What was the cause of the fire? What happened?

**Shane Castille:** I don't know. That was a long time ago.

**Phillip Norman Reid:** This was in Erath?

**Shane Castille:** That was in Parks, Louisiana.

**Phillip Norman Reid:** Oh, okay. So you had a hidden baking gene waiting to be awakened.

[Laughter]

**Shane Castille:** That's right.

**Phillip Norman Reid:** I love the story you told about the man and his daughter. So any other things like that of just moments where you realized how much of an impact you have?

0:47:00

**Shane Castille:** I'm trying to think. There was a guy and his son who used to play cards here, so he used to come once a week and just play cards at the table. And his son got a job at Disney and so he's been working at Disney trying to get into the Wide World of Sports 'cause he wants to do some type of sports broadcasting. But every year when he comes out this is the place he has to come to for sure.

**Phillip Norman Reid:** Yeah.

**Shane Castille:** And just seeing a lot of families that they'll move away and when they come down to visit, they have to come over here, so that's pretty fun.

**Phillip Norman Reid:** You're always drawing people back here.

**Shane Castille:** That's right. Or people that move away and then they'll pay eighty bucks to get a king cake shipped to 'em.

**Phillip Norman Reid:** Okay. So y'all do the shipping, too?

**Shane Castille:** Oh, yeah.

0:48:01

And shipping prices are just increasing every year, but they'll-- "I gotta have my king cake."

Eighty bucks.

**Phillip Norman Reid:** Right. They know the price. Okay. [Laughter]

**Shane Castille:** Yeah. Gotta have it.

**Phillip Norman Reid:** How many will y'all ship typically week to week?

**Shane Castille:** I'd say we probably ship-- it all depends. We didn't ship a whole lot this year, but we usually ship two to three thousand a year.

**Phillip Norman Reid:** Okay. Wow. That's a lot. My goodness. And one other thing you mentioned that just came back to my mind, I'd love to hear-- what was the first time you did the king cake groom's cake or wedding cake? What was it like to unveil that?

**Shane Castille:** I don't remember the first time, but, yeah, I think the first one we did they wanted to do a Louisiana-- like a fishing theme.

0:49:02

The guy liked to fish. And the picture is on our Facebook, but it was green and brown. She had a little fisherman on there. They made some little-- looked like cattails and a fishing pole all on the top of the king cake, so it was very Cajun. I was, like, well-- But it looked really, really cool.

**Phillip Norman Reid:** [Laughter] That's awesome. It makes sense because I remember my sister had her wedding, like, my sister doesn't even like cake. A lot of people don't even like just plain cake but that totally makes sense, especially here. It's, like, well, have a king cake, it's what people actually want to eat.

**Shane Castille:** Yeah. I know a couple of months ago, probably about six months ago, there was a lady who called said-- it was the craziest thing-- she said, "I forgot to order the cake for the wedding."

**Phillip Norman Reid:** Oh, wow.

0:50:00

**Shane Castille:** And they wanted the groom's cake king cake-- not the groom's cake but the actual cake for the wedding. So it wasn't a groom's cake, it was the actual cake for the wedding, and she ordered it, like, five days before the wedding.

**Phillip Norman Reid:** Oh, wow.

**Shane Castille:** And my wife was, like, "Well, yeah, we normally don't do that." [Laughter] But it was, like, "Well, okay. I actually don't have any orders that day so maybe, yeah, I guess we can do it." And we did it and the woman just sent an awesome message and was, like, "You did it! Thank you."

**Phillip Norman Reid:** Saved the day.

**Shane Castille:** "I can't believe I forgot to order the cake." I was, like, oh, my God.

**Phillip Norman Reid:** Right. That's crazy. Y'all really saved the day. That would've been a disaster. That's awesome, man. Well, that might be a good one to end on unless you have anything else I missed.

**Shane Castille:** Not that I can think of.

0:50:59

**Phillip Norman Reid:** Well, yeah, thank you so much again for your time.

**Shane Castille:** Thank you.

**Phillip Norman Reid:** I've enjoyed hearing the stories. This is real interesting. It's been a great interview to start on, so I appreciate it. Off to a strong start. And like I said, we'll just let it run for, like, thirty seconds to get some dead noise, so if you just want to fill out the form there.

**Shane Castille:** Okay.

0:52:01

[End]