

Bryan Schaaf: Back here on the Meat Speak podcast, powered by the Certified Angus Beef brand, Bryan Schaaf. With me here in studio, Chef Tony Biggs. How you doing?

Tony Biggs: Bryan, it's great to see you. Oh, my gosh. I've missed you terribly.

Bryan Schaaf: It's been so-

Tony Biggs: How have you been, my friend?

Bryan Schaaf: It's been good. Of course, we're all making preparations because 'tis the season. It is the Christmas season here.

Tony Biggs: Have you done all of your Christmas shopping? Or are you like me, the biggest procrastinator on the planet, wait last minute?

Bryan Schaaf: I, at one point, was the largest procrastinator on the planet, and then this thing called Amazon Prime was invented.

Tony Biggs: Thank goodness for Amazon Prime.

Bryan Schaaf: My gosh.

Tony Biggs: Oh, man.

Bryan Schaaf: Yeah, it has saved my bacon more than once.

Tony Biggs: I think I bought everybody a Lexus this year. Just put them in the thing, deliver them, and she'll sing to you 24/7, man.

Bryan Schaaf: That's right.

Tony Biggs: Beautiful.

Bryan Schaaf: That's right. Chef, because this is the Christmas season. It is the season of giving. It is the time to give back. It is a time where, if you look around, there is always need in the community 12 months out of the year, 365 days. But really, the Christmas season is when a lot of folks really take notice and a lot of people are a little bit more compelled to open up their wallets, to open up their hearts to reach out and to help those less fortunate.

Bryan Schaaf: So we wanted to take today's Meat Speak episode and talk about and talk to a few of you who as chefs have put your culinary talents to use to help those who are less privileged. And you... It's one of the subjects that we've mentioned in the past few months on the podcast, but we've never really gone in-depth. Of course, you've been around the world. Here in Wooster, Ohio. Here with the podcast. Here with the Certified Angus Beef brand. This is actually kind of your

second time coming back stateside from abroad. The first time you came back from the Philippines to New Orleans to post-Katrina to work with the Second Harvest Food Bank.

Tony Biggs: I did.

Bryan Schaaf: Can you tell us a little bit about that?

Tony Biggs: I look back on that experience and it kind of... Bryan, when I worked for Hyatt back in the '80s and the early '90s, it kind of all started there, believe it or not. And then it translated into, transformed into New Orleans later on. But back in the '80s, '90s, I was heavily involved with the Second Harvest Food Bank. I was able to gather all the clubs, chefs, restaurants, hotels to rescue what we call leftover food. It's not food that is going to be thrown out. It's food that is very, very nutritious, ready to eat. And I had every single body involved in Savannah that wanted to be part of this. It was so easy. Thank God. Thank God, because it was so easy. And then from there, it just blossomed into fundraisers, raising money for the food bank of Savannah into helping those less fortunate in the area. And for six years, it was just an amazing, amazing run.

Tony Biggs: When I left there, I think we left a legacy that's still doing a Chef's Table, which raises maybe a half a million dollars a year in Savannah to help those less needy. And so, I think we left a really great legacy. When I say we, all the chefs of Savannah, so hats off to those guys. I love you guys for doing that. It was just an amazing, amazing run.

Tony Biggs: My career took a different path and I worked overseas, as you know. I kept in touch with my friend, Natalie, Natalie Jayroe who I worked with in Savannah. Like we all do, sometimes we get transferred and where'd she go? She ended up in New Orleans as the chief executive officer of the Second Harvest Food Bank.

Tony Biggs: So, I was living in the Philippines with my family. We were ready to come back stateside and settle down. I reached out and she said, "Boy, you're just the one I was thinking about." This is right after Katrina and you know Katrina was just an absolute disaster for everybody. I mean and believe it or not, probably up to three years ago, people are still trying to recover from that storm. It was just kind of amazing. After that storm... During that storm, I think, I believe that the City of New Orleans was just not prepared for the devastation.

Tony Biggs: And so, the idea was to partner with Catholic Charities, Second Harvest Food Bank and construct a community kitchen that in the event that this would happen again, or a disaster, or anything... One in four children go hungry in the state of Louisiana, so this was a staggering number when you're trying to help those in need. It opened my eyes to, and my heart to a lot of different situations I was in, meeting those less fortunate. It was just... I love my time at the Second Harvest Food Bank. I spent two years there.

Tony Biggs: Believe it or not, while our community kitchen which was about 12,000 square feet, the goal was to do two million meals a year out of this kitchen. We began at a place called Grace Church, off of Canal Street, and it was probably as big as what we're sitting in right now to do this podcast. So you can imagine one stove and we were doing 200 to 300 lunches a day out of this kitchen, okay? And we did it very, very successfully, because you're under the watchdog of the USDA to give credit for those meals back.

Tony Biggs: There's a certain criteria, certain service sides, sizes of protein, grains, vegetables, milks that you have to adhere to to get credit for the meals that you're serving. So it was just that we went from this small kitchen into the community kitchen where I was blessed to be able to have a lot of say in this kitchen. For chefs out there that are looking for that second, third career, food banks are always looking for you guys and gals that want to give back to the community, want to volunteer, but also want to run their kitchens. They need expertise in this area, because I vowed personally along with Natalie that we were not going to serve junk food to any of our children. It was going to be a made-from-scratch product, thanks to the donations of people in Louisiana and the grants that we got. And we were able to do some really fantastic meals.

Tony Biggs: Let me give you an example. We got some salmon donated one time, and we portioned up two ounce portions. We grilled them. We made a nice a beautiful white sauce with it, fresh green beans with almonds and a little bit of sweet potato pie. We got calls. I mean we'd always get calls. The kids loved the food. It was healthy. They were not eating out of convenience stores, which is a real problem for some families. They come down. They just think that a bag of chips is going to do it. It doesn't do it, okay? So they're looking for that nutritious meal. And this is what Second Harvest brings to the table. I mean the work they can do now and the work they continue to do, hats off to them, because Natalie and her staff have done a fabulous job with this program.

Bryan Schaaf: One of the things that our guest who we're going to hear from actually here a few minutes, Chef John Doherty from, of course, the Waldorf Astoria and Black Barn in New York City and his Heavenly Harvest. You're talking about a chef who spent a career feeding more dignitaries and royalty and U.S. Presidents than any other chef in history. Yourself following a similar path. Cooking for Imelda Marcos, being in the country of Jordan, cooking for the King and Queen and the Tokyo American Club. And you have... Chefs like yourself and Chef Doherty who have spent so long cooking for folks of that caliber, is there something just born in chefs that, although that may be where you're spending a lot of your days, the art of, or the concept of hospitality is about taking care of everybody. I mean does everybody have just that pull to do for those who can't or don't have access to?

Tony Biggs: It's a great question. And I think like everything, I think you would agree with this. It was how you were raised. It was how your parents were raised. I know your mother. She is like a superior lady and I love her laugh. Well, my

grandmother had a lot to do with it. My mother did too. And my mom, [Carmilla 00:10:16], I learned at a very... She's a single mom. We grew up in New England. She was a counselor at the East Boston Drug Clinic. And I can tell you she brought me to work one Saturday. I'll never forget it.

Tony Biggs: As we were headed up to New Hampshire to ski with some friends, she had to give the methadone out to heroin addicts. And let me tell you something. If you want to see something that's going to scare the living S out of you, is to see a line of people strung out on heroin, swearing at your mother every F bomb in the book. Every bad word, and I could hear it and it was so loud and it was so vicious. And I was in the back room of the drug clinic, and I was absolutely terrified. And then I'm hearing all this. My mother walks back and grabs her bag and goes, "Okay, are you ready to go?" Like nothing ever happened. That really... That was an eye-opener that I never wanted to ever see or hear again.

Tony Biggs: And so I think by my mom, my grandmother, she got a long with everybody. She was the most giving person. She would give you the shirt off her back. And I think that just rubbed off on me. I mean I... At the end of the day, they're materials. So I mean you got to help everybody. And feeding folks that are hungry and to help them be better educated with food, is my gift I guess. And we used to do something at Second Harvest called Cooking Matters. And we would take... It would be a three-week course where we'd take underprivileged families. We would teach them simple, quality and nutritious recipes. I would go in with an already lined out itinerary, a cookbook, a recipe they could follow. Not expensive dishes, but home-cooked quality meals for their family. The people that I had interaction with was just heart-wrenching and melted me.

Bryan Schaaf: It's amazing. It's amazing. New Orleans, every time I visit, it's one of those cities that seems to just go on and on and on. Cities like that, you can just imagine the amount of need, particularly when you throw in a Hurricane Katrina into the mix.

Tony Biggs: It's just amazing. And I have to say too. I met a lot of really astonishing people, Emeril Lagasse there. I was on... I was happened to be on Chopped because of the food bank. I was chopped, ladies and gentlemen. So if you want to go to Unsung Heroes 13, you can see the Biggs go down in flames, okay? But I was able to go to the White House and meet Michelle Obama on the White House lawn. And I just met so many unbelievable people that just Americans that just want to give back to their communities. And I have to say Natalie has done an unbelievable job and her staff to make the Second Harvest Food Bank New Orleans probably one of the largest in the world. And the work that she does is just... She deserves a medal.

Bryan Schaaf: Outstanding. Chef, we're going to take a break. We're going to switch gears and come back with Chef John Doherty, formerly of the Waldorf Astoria, now Black Barn New York City. And the context of what we're talking about here the founder and, of course, the culinary mind behind the Heavenly Harvest Food

Bank and food items that are distributed nationwide for less-privileged folks. And then you and I will come back. So after this, stick around on the Meat Speak podcast, powered by the Certified Angus Beef brand.

Bryan Schaaf: Back here on the Meat Speak podcast, Bryan Schaaf. With me on the line all the way from New York City, one of the iconic culinary talents from the Big Apple, Chef John Doherty. Chef, how you doing, sir?

John Doherty: I'm doing great, Bryan. How are you?

Bryan Schaaf: Excellent, excellent. For those of you who probably know the name John Doherty, but are still sort of sealing up those loose ends, of course, Chef, you spent 30-ish years of your life, a good number of those as the Executive Chef at the iconic Waldorf Astoria, Bull and Bear, Peacock Alley, you name it. Now you have a restaurant down in NoMad, called Black Barn?

John Doherty: Yes, correct.

Bryan Schaaf: Yeah, can you tell us a little bit about I guess your career? How you got started? I believe you're a New York native, right?

John Doherty: I am, I am. I was born and raised on Long Island. And when I was 15, like so many chefs today, got a job washing dishes in a restaurant to make some money. And that led to being a prep cook, and that led to being a line cook. And I just fell in love with the craft, making food for... Making people happy with food. I worked in an open kitchen back then, and I saw the husband and wife chef team really put so much love and energy into the food to make people happy. That's when I discovered the art of hospitality. And that's really what we do today. It's a labor of love. Our goal is to make people happy, and hopefully we can make some money out of it. Not everybody does. It's a tough business.

Bryan Schaaf: Especially where you are shacking up nowadays in the big city. Can you talk to us a little bit... Obviously, everybody is familiar with the Waldorf. And at one point in time and probably still to this day, you had cooked for I mean more Presidents and dignitaries from around the world, because I mean when people come to New York City, they're staying in your place. I mean can you talk a little bit about some of the folks that you've cooked for?

John Doherty: Yeah. So you know, the amazing thing is at the time... Sometimes my wife at the time would say, "My gosh, you work so long and so hard." And I'd say, "Yeah, but the guy at the hotel down the street, he's working just as long and just as hard, but he doesn't get to cook for the President. He doesn't get to do the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame." He doesn't get to. Everybody's once in a year VIP event took place at the Waldorf. They might have their other events somewhere else throughout the year, but the product launch, the show launch, whatever the special occasion was, people went to the Waldorf. So everything we did had such importance to the client. And therefore, it raised the level of expectation

for what we did. It made everything special, and it brought a greater sense of purpose behind what we did.

John Doherty: Now every September when you had the United Nations in session, not only did we have the United States President since Hubert Hoover stay at the Waldorf. But we had the President or Prime Minister or Head of State of 25 other countries staying at the Waldorf during that same period of time. So it wasn't hard for me to guard the title of the chef that's cooked for more Heads of State than anybody else. It was really by default. They all came and stayed at the Waldorf, and I was executive chef for 23 years. So 23 years times 20 to 25 Heads of State, it was a big number, but I had such a terrific team. My chefs were so inspired and the cooks that did such great work. It was just an exciting time in my life. I loved every minute of it.

Bryan Schaaf: So you were at the Waldorf I believe the date's roughly 1986 through 2009?

John Doherty: 1978, I started when I was 19 years old as a cook. I became the executive chef in 1985, and then left in 2009.

Bryan Schaaf: Gotcha, gotcha. You left, yet you had a spell in NoMad now, of course, Black Barn. It is a... It's an anomaly to a lot of restaurants that you see in New York City. I mean it is a beast of a space. I mean it's one of the largest restaurants in the city I've ever seen. Can you tell us about the food that you guys are pulling off at Black Barn?

John Doherty: It's food that I want to eat, Bryan. So for me, after spending so many years at the Waldorf where it's pretty opulent. Every room was carpeted, white-glove service, drapes. Everything had a table cloth, silver service. I just didn't want to... I didn't want any part of that anymore. I was done with it. I didn't think the public was so in love with that, at least, most people. I wanted a restaurant, when I worked with the designer, I said, "I want to see concrete, steel, metal, wood, leather. I want texture. I want it to be rustic. I want it to be grounded. I want people to feel very comfortable where they're sitting."

John Doherty: And yet I want to deliver refined food, not fussy food. I want the refinement of my cuisine. I want the balance of textures, the intricacy of flavors, and acid in sweet and sour. Complexity is what I go for and big flavor. But I didn't... I don't have... You don't see here pretty, pretty plates that go out. It's really straight-forward, great food that I want to eat, with a great wine list that isn't over priced. Great service, because it's really about... Hospitality is how we make people feel. So we have such a strong emphasis on service and connecting with people and making them feel welcome. Making them feel cared for, and then you combine that in an environment where you're comfortable and with great food and really great wines, it's just been terrific. People really enjoy it.

Bryan Schaaf: Excellent. And a shameless plug here. I'm a bit of a burger freak. I will say that last time... I mean it's one of the best burgers you'll find in New York City. On a

menu that has everything else imaginable, I'm the guy that comes in and gets the burger.

John Doherty: So, all right. So wait. Here you go. So about... I'd say about four or five weeks ago, one of the servers comes to me and says, "There's a gentleman out in the Tavern. He said he eats so many burgers that his nickname is Burger." And he said, "This is the best... He said he told me, "This is the best burger he's ever had in his life." I said "Well, I've got to go see this guy." So I go out. I come back from the kitchen. I go out and I talk to him. I said, "I hear you enjoyed your burger." He says, "That's an understatement." He said, "This burger." He was lost for, as I said, "It's engineered, isn't it?" He says, "Exactly."

John Doherty: And it is, it's engineered. The roll is a perfect softness. It's got a little bit of cheese on it. The tomato inside isn't a raw tomato. It's confit tomato. It's baked slowly. We use the Certified Angus Beef blend of just the right blend of beef, so that's perfect. We make our own pork belly instead of bacon. We cook that for 12, 14 hours. The cheese is Tarentaise cheese. So it's really engineered for perfection. And now I can't really have a burger anywhere but here, which is unfortunate, because I don't like to eat in my own place, because it's work.

Bryan Schaaf: You can never go out for... Well, you've cursed yourself really.

John Doherty: Right, yes. But we're very proud of it. People do come here for the burger.

Bryan Schaaf: That's right. I give my parents grief, because they're from Amish country and when they travel, they always end up at the local Cracker Barrel, no matter where they're at. So anytime I'm going anywhere, I always end up getting the burger. I guess I'm just the same. So there was a spell between the end of your career at the Waldorf and Black Barn opening. And in that time you got really interesting in and you started this Bible 1-2-3, Heavenly Harvest. Correct?

John Doherty: Yes, yes.

Bryan Schaaf: Where you're making... Yeah, I mean which is feeding thousands and thousands and thousands of people. Can you tell us a little bit about that? Especially this time of year is probably the time of year that we at least recognize how much need there is out there. Although it truly exists 12 months out of the year, but how does a guy with the credentials that you have, coming from where you've been, I guess how did you weave your way into the idea of starting a nonprofit? And making these nutritious meals for underprivileged folks?

John Doherty: Well, it's an interesting story. And I've never told you this. So in between the Waldorf and Black Barn, I was doing some consulting. One of my projects was to make, create a line of food for the book, Chicken Soup for the Soul. Many people have heard of it.

Bryan Schaaf: Yeah.

John Doherty: And they wanted to do a line of food, so they hired me to do it. And we actually came up with about 80 different products, and we got 28 of them out to market before they decided to change directions and just stick with publishing. But during that process as I would go and constantly see and look through stores and see where the white space was or what the public could use or what's missing, that's where I would focus my energy on creating new stuff. I saw Uncle Ben's Ready Cooked Rice. And I said, "That's... I don't get it." This rice is cooked in a bag. It's room temperature. I didn't understand the chemistry behind it or how it would not go bad. I mean if you or I put rice in a baggie and put it on the shelf, it would ferment, right?

John Doherty: So I reached out to a couple of my food scientist friends and they said, "Oh, yeah. It's like canning or a jar. It goes through a heat chamber. It sterilizes and it's good. And I said, "Well, if I put chicken or fish or vegetables and sauce in there, would that work?" And they said, "Sure." And I said, "Well, how come nobody's doing it?" Nobody knew. Nobody had an answer. Maybe it was too expensive. Nobody knew.

John Doherty: So I had my thought was to do it, but not for sale. It was really just to give to people who needed it. I thought it was an amazing way to pack nutrition into a pouch that doesn't have to be refrigerated. It can be fully cooked. It's fully cooked. It cooks in the bag at the plant and then just reheats for 90 seconds either in the skillet or the microwave oven. And there's no reason why any of these foods need to have artificial ingredients or color or preservatives. The only reason they have those things in there is to make it less expensive. And this... I was not looking to make an inexpensive product, because I wasn't looking to sell it. So there you have it.

Bryan Schaaf: No kidding.

John Doherty: Yeah.

Bryan Schaaf: Yeah.

John Doherty: We just made 50,000 meals in July. We've distributed probably about 35,000 right now to different food banks in Boston, Chicago, New York, Baltimore, Hudson Valley, New York. We've got a few left where those are all scheduled to go and we'll be doing another run probably in February with a new recipe, Asian Stir-Fry. So it's very exciting. We've been getting lots of support. But Bryan, honestly, I rely... We did a fundraising event which was great, but I rely on donations, sponsors. And I make at least 80... Probably 85% of the money I make, I have very little overhead. 85% of what I make goes into the meals and the more money we raise, the more meals we can make. And the need is much greater than the supply.

John Doherty: And I'm hoping this continues to grow and we can make an impact, not just in this country, but internationally. It's very sad. Some of the stories that we hear...



And my goal is to get this to the working poor. There are so many people, Bryan, that have to decide whether they're going to pay rent or go food shopping. And they have children, so they send their kids to school so they'll get a meal. It's terrible. And this doesn't solve the problem, but we're putting a dent in it. It helps a lot. It's easy for a kid to come home from school and pop one of these in the microwave and eat it, while their parents are working. It's been so well received so far.

Bryan Schaaf: That's amazing, Chef. Now can you talk a little bit about I guess numbers? Any idea how many, since you guys founded the nonprofit, I guess how many meals have you guys cranked out in total? Because it's been a number of years right now.

John Doherty: Well, I did start it for a number of years, but it also took a long time. Running this restaurant, I wasn't the fastest guy out there, right? So there's a lot of legal work to be done, a lot of... We had to raise money, develop the product. So we really put it all together. Really came together just in mid... I guess early 2018, where I was able to run my first of run of 50,000 meals. So we really just launched those 50,000 meals. That was our first run. Now we're getting ready to do our second one. And we need all the help we can get, because they're going to go fast. They're going to go fast.

Bryan Schaaf: That's amazing. And Chef, one of the things I caught and you already touched upon it a little bit, the ingredients that it's made with. A lot of times it seems like... I mean you've seen it played out in documentaries and things like that is a lot of times the cheapest, most accessible foodstuffs that people can get are generally not the best thing for you that's out there. You guys, these things are super high in protein and-

John Doherty: Yes.

Bryan Schaaf: Yeah.

John Doherty: Well, that was my goal. Each meal, I know what I need. I need to eat protein throughout the day to feel good, to have the energy. And generally, 20 to 25 grams of protein will make my headache go away and give me the energy I need to get going. So I made sure that each of these meals has at least 20 grams of protein. We get them through the use of beans, vegetables and meat. So it's... Yeah, even the macaroni and cheese, the sauce is made from cauliflower and you would never know it. But the cauliflower and the cheese... Oh, and stick in with white beans. So you have this macaroni and cheese, and you think you're eating macaroni and cheese. But there's 20 grams of protein in the entire dish. It's great.

Bryan Schaaf: And it's made from the palate of John Doherty. So, of course, it's going to be good, right?

John Doherty: Yeah, yeah.

Bryan Schaaf: Oh, that's awesome. You know, Chef, you talked about it a little bit already. Of course, the more help you guys can get, the better. Can you give us some avenues of how people can assist you guys?

John Doherty: Yeah, so it's through our website, HeavenlyHarvest.org, is a great way to make donations. Also we just signed up for AmazonSmiles. So every time if you sign up for that, every time you make a purchase, Amazon actually donates half a percent to Heavenly Harvest. Of course, there's many other charities as well you could support. But we're in there, Heavenly Harvest. And those are really the best ways to do that.

Bryan Schaaf: Excellent, excellent. And Chef, just so you know, when this episode goes live, we'll put all the links up and everything as well. There was a statistic. And I can't remember what it was, but it was something that it was like \$20 will feed so many people for so many days through this. I mean it's... Do you remember those numbers off the top of your head?

John Doherty: Well, each... No I don't, but each meal cost me \$1.40 to make. So if you donate \$10.00, you're going to make about seven meals. So that's one meal per day for a week for somebody. That's tremendous, right? I mean that's amazing. And it's so much better for a person than fast food, which is really what they can afford. Actually, fast food is cheaper than going to the grocery store and buying the ingredients for you to make. So they don't have the money for that, but there's just no nutritional value behind most of the fast food that is available to people.

Bryan Schaaf: Excellent, excellent. Well, for our listeners out there, I would highly encourage you, again, that website is HeavenlyHarvest.org, not to be confused with .com. That actually is another company out there that I came across and said you know?

John Doherty: Yeah.

Bryan Schaaf: Do make the difference. It is HeavenlyHarvest.org. And especially, really anytime at all, but especially now the Christmas season, the season of giving, man, take some time and do your best to help Chef Doherty in this mission. So-

John Doherty: Well, I appreciate that. Thank you, Bryan.

Bryan Schaaf: Thank you, Chef. We appreciate all that you can do. The chef who's cooked for more Presidents and dignitaries from around the world is now also doing his best to help those very, very much in need. So Chef, we appreciate you, not just for taking time to join us here on the Meat Speak podcast, but certainly for all you do for humanity in general. Thank you, Chef.

John Doherty: Thank you, Bryan.

Bryan Schaaf: Merry Christmas, sir.

John Doherty: Same to you, same to you. Bye bye.

Bryan Schaaf: Back here on the Meat Speak podcast, powered by the Certified Angus Beef brand, Bryan Schaaf, Chef Tony Biggs, talking about the season of giving, right? It's the Christmas season.

Tony Biggs: Season of giving.

Bryan Schaaf: Right?

Tony Biggs: Yep.

Bryan Schaaf: So we just heard from Chef John Doherty of Heavenly Harvest in New York City and, of course, his restaurant Black Barn. And, of course, his former restaurant. Of course, we've all heard of the Waldorf Astoria, Bull and Bear, Peacock Alley, right?

Tony Biggs: I love it.

Bryan Schaaf: I mean it's an icon in New York City.

Tony Biggs: Historic.

Bryan Schaaf: You know, Chef, we spent some time earlier discussing your involvement with the Second Harvest Food Bank in New Orleans, post Hurricane Katrina. I mean you talk about something that what would have sprung up as a result of Katrina, this is obviously, an example. One of the things that we didn't touch on, you'd mentioned the geographic proximity of the food bank. They built this... They built the kitchen there, but the fact that you had some pretty heavy hitters next door-

Tony Biggs: Oh, gosh.

Bryan Schaaf: Also helped the cause, right?

Tony Biggs: Wow. Not only did we have the late Paul Prudhomme of Spice Factory Company right across the street who would donate spices to our cause when we'd doing big batch cooker of the gumbo, okay? And other dishes. But we had Sysco New Orleans right next door. I mean... Hey, a big shout out to them, because they are an incredible group. And as you know, Bryan, we've dealt with Sysco for a long time. But I'll tell you what, they give back to the community. It's amazing. Okay? Yeah.

Bryan Schaaf: That's amazing. That's amazing. And I mean.

Tony Biggs: And of course, Mardi Gras World across the street. So you don't have to go downtown and buy all your Mardi Gras paraphernalia. You can go right across the street.

Bryan Schaaf: I'll tell you what, as a... I was going to call you a Yankee, but as a Bostonian, I know that's probably not appropriate. As a Northerner, did you have any... How long did it take you to get up the nerve to make gumbo in New Orleans?

Tony Biggs: Well, you know, it's funny you should say that, because we had a gumbo cook-off, all right? All the employees had to bring their gumbo. And I've got to tell you. I have to tell you. I have lived around the world, and nobody and no culture is passionate about their food but the New Orleans culture and people. I got to tell you. You could talk to somebody 15-years-old, and they can tell you what's exactly in a gumbo, how to steam crawfish. And they know who John Folse is, okay?

Bryan Schaaf: Chef Folse.

Tony Biggs: Chef Folse,

Bryan Schaaf: That's right.

Tony Biggs: Right? I mean the passion for food and I mean the King Cake, oh legendary King Cakes. I love King Cake. Hey, February's coming up. I'm going to buy you a King Cake.

Bryan Schaaf: I'm always afraid I'm going to eat the little baby, Jesus?

Tony Biggs: Yeah. Okay, I don't think they put him in there anymore. So we're going to put out little baby cows here. It's a Certified Angus Beef, and we'll see if you get one of those.

Bryan Schaaf: Excellent, excellent.

Tony Biggs: But you know, I got to tell you. I got to... We've been talking about food banks. We can't do it alone. It's a huge food bank. We were doing three... Some days 3600 to 4,000 meals a day. You can't do this with limited resources. You have to rely a lot of folks who volunteer. And I got to tell you. I used to have 40 volunteers to produce those 3600 to 4,000 meals a day. Amazing.

Bryan Schaaf: Yeah.

Tony Biggs: We would have drivers. So some people drove the meals. We would have people on the line, right? Like dishing up, ready to go into a hot box. Chefs, do you know what I'm talking about? And at the same time, we had people prepping for the next day, right? They're bagging apples and oranges and

getting the milk ready and getting everything for distribution. So 40 folks a day and different folks, okay? It was like Groundhog Day, right?

Bryan Schaaf: So when you translate that to working in a restaurant with the same line cooks and the issues they have, you're retraining people every single day.

Tony Biggs: Every single day, right? So I learned how to run a huge... I thought I knew banquets. And this is why I succeeded too is because... And this is where, you Chefs out there if you're listening, that you're going to succeed, because you're doing 3,000, 4,000 meals a day. And if you have that banquet experience in large hotels, large properties, this is just a piece of cake, because you have the... It's easy. It's in your sleep. So I miss it because it was an adrenalin rush everyday to get 4,000 meals out. I'd be there at 3:00 in the morning.

Bryan Schaaf: Really? That's amazing.

Tony Biggs: That's amazing.

Bryan Schaaf: That's amazing. You know, Chef, and you already touched on it. There are lots of people out there looking, thinking, asking, what can I do? How can I do this? And, of course, the easy way is to say, well, obviously funding is always an issue for these things. So if you can write a check, sweet. Write a check.

Tony Biggs: Sure.

Bryan Schaaf: But even if you're somebody who doesn't come from a culinary background, who isn't a Tony Biggs or who isn't a John Doherty, you mentioned volunteering. Just show up. Use the gifts. Even if you don't know how to cook, there is a job for you, right?

Tony Biggs: I've got to tell you. This is another heart-wrenching thing. I had folks there that actually had terminal cancer, as my volunteers. I've had people there that I knew and six months later, God rest their soul, they were deceased. But they were volunteering to the last minute. They knew what was happening to them, but they had the love of giving back. It's all about love, ladies and gentlemen, chefs and boys and girls. It's about love. If you want to give your heart to something, if you want to give back to folks who are totally unfortunate, this is the way to do it. You can volunteer. You can call the food bank. They are always looking for volunteers. They will put you on a schedule immediately. Trust me.

Bryan Schaaf: Excellent. Well said, Chef. And on that note, I believe it is time. We appreciate-

Tony Biggs: Well, listen.

Bryan Schaaf: You look like you've got something to say.

This transcript was exported on Dec 23, 2019 - view latest version [here](#).

Tony Biggs: I just want to say, season greetings, Season Greetings and Happy Hollandaise to everyone.

Bryan Schaaf: You were waiting to drop that one in there.

Tony Biggs: I was.

Bryan Schaaf: If this is your first time tuning in to the Meat Speak podcast, powered by the Certified Angus Beef brand, know that you can catch us across most major podcasting platforms including Apple, Google Play, Spotify or simply by going to [CertifiedAngusBeef.com/podcast](https://CertifiedAngusBeef.com/podcast). And you'll see Chef Tony and my faces looking right back at you. Until next time, I do believe this is the last podcast of the year 2019. We'll see you all in 2020. See you next year, Chef.

Tony Biggs: Bye bye.