

Bryan Schaaf: Welcome to Meat Speak, powered by the Certified Angus Beef Brand. Chances are, this is the first time that you are tuning in to this little space on the intra podcasting world. And we appreciate you joining us. We appreciate joining us, we appreciate you giving us your ear for a bit of time. My name is Bryan. With me is Chef Tony Biggs. Chef, how are you doing?

Tony Biggs: Bryan! It's great to see you. Wow, this is our first podcast.

Bryan Schaaf: This is our first podcast. It's exciting. I've intentionally not drank quite as much coffee this morning, just because I'm so excited about where we're headed, you know it... when you talk about meat, right, and I want to make sure that everybody understands we're here to discuss meat. And meat in general. And we're not here taking a stance. We're not here to shift your line of thinking around meat. If you love meat, if you don't love meat, we are here to embrace what reality is, right? We are here to talk about meat, how it's showcased in various corners of the world, from chefs to butchers to farmers to meat scientists, and bringing some of the personalities to you of some of the people who have built their livelihood, their reputations around the sanctity of meat and the time honored tradition that it is.

Bryan Schaaf: Chef you have cooked, I will say all corners of the world, but the world is round. So be that what you will, can you talk a little bit about where you have been?

Tony Biggs: Well, you know Bryan, God it all started, originally I'm a seafood guy. I grew up on the coast of Massachusetts in a beautiful little seashore town of Cohasset. I started as a dishwasher. Pot washer at the Hugo's Lighthouse. Boy this was a great seafood house. Thousand covers a day and I washed all the chef's pots and pans until 4:00 in the morning. Making minimum wage. This was my first job. And from there I never looked back. I learned, you know I was a sponge. I wanted to know everything about culinary. It was in my blood. I met my father when I was 15 years old and he opened a five star restaurant in Clarence Center New York called the Granary Inn. I have done everything in that restaurant from park cars to sing. I was a singing waiter. That was the hook of our restaurant. Not only the food. This is the first time I had a filet mignon, and let me tell you that was an epiphany.

Bryan Schaaf: So you started on filet mignon. Your career has taken you to an oil rig in the North Sea, to Tokyo American Club, to the Philippines with Imelda Marcos, to the Middle East, cooking for the King and Queen of Jordan, to post-Katrina New Orleans, and ultimately where we are here, if you happen to have access to your Google Maps and you would like to know, we are coming to you from the inner sanctum, from the basement of the World Headquarters of Certified Angus Beef, which is about 40 miles south of Cleveland, in a little town called Wooster Ohio where Chef, every day you get to deal with meat. You get to deal with steak.

Tony Biggs: I have cooked all around the world, not necessarily beef in those cultural places where I was at, but now I started doing that. Let's give you an example:

Indonesian beef [rendang 00:03:51]. That is an Indonesian beef stew stewed in coconut milk. [Galangal 00:03:58], which is a type of ginger, and different spices, and it is just aromatic, served with rice, cinnamon sticks, braised for hours, and it is absolutely magical. Okay? I did this at the culinary center and... we do not teach people how to cook or be chefs, we give them ideas with our beef, and that's what we do. Not only that, gosh, Argentina, Francis Mallmann, my hero, has opened my eyes to fire cooking, and according to Gary [Maxted 00:04:37] from NorCal Oven Works, who designs all our churrasco barbecue equipment, he is selling more and more Michelin Star chefs around the world churrasco barbecue equipment because now those guys want to cook with fire. That is magical.

Bryan Schaaf: You know it's funny you bring that up. If you look back through the history of mankind, I mean we're getting really deep here. You know, if you look back over the past two million years that humans have been on the Earth, before there were hunting tools, before there were things like that, humans would trap animals, right? I mean, they wouldn't use tools. I mean it sounds kind of funny now. They would literally ambush animals, wrestle them to the ground, and then harvest their meat. It wasn't until about 250 thousand years ago, and this is all just through research, and this is a notion that seems to be reasonably accepted across the scientific community. Scientists will surmise that it wasn't until humans began applying fire and heat to meat that we truly became human because by cooking that meat over fire, it actually made those cuts of meat that were once raw, more dense with calories, which gave the human body more energy which allowed our brains to develop to the point that they are now.

Bryan Schaaf: If you look at a human versus a gorilla, the human brain is much larger than it should be for our bodies, but you could surmise that going all the way back to live fire cooking honestly is a reason that we are humans today, which I know is, it kind of blew my mind, coming across facts like that, but it's an interesting school of thought that now you're looking at because of folks like Francis Mallmann, Michelin star chefs, people with tweezers in their chef coats are going back to this idea that existed 250 thousand years ago.

Tony Biggs: It's funny you should say that, because my new book that's going to come out is "From Tweezers to Pitchforks."

Bryan Schaaf: Okay.

Tony Biggs: That is the name of my new book, and two years ago when we were in San Antonio, I'm glad you brought this up, because one of our functions were at a ranch, but it was also an Indian burial ground. And it was up on a hill and we were given a tour of this area one day and the gentleman said to us, "You see this big hill up here, well the Indians, what they would do is they would get the buffalo at the edge of the cliff, and push them off, and they would fall and die. And that's how, they would come down the cliff and skin the buffalo and prepare their feast." So it's interesting that you would say that.

Bryan Schaaf: That's fascinating. You know when I think of ambushing an animal, and I'm not a hunter, not because I'm necessarily opposed to hunting, I'm opposed to waking up at four AM sitting in a tree when it's 20 below zero. But when I think of ambushing an animal, I think of peacefully waiting for a deer to walk below and then just pounce on him, right? And wrestle it to the ground, so I appreciate that you have changed what ambushing an animal speaks to my psyche at least.

Tony Biggs: Well there were no guns. It was natural. They had to eat. Folks had to eat back there. To your point, this was a way of survival. Okay, so you catch a chicken or a pheasant or a bird, or any kind of animal, a goat, and you prepare it as a feast for your family. We do it today but in a more civil way.

Bryan Schaaf: That's right, we do our hunting at the grocery store.

Tony Biggs: I love cooking with fire. When I picked up a Frances Mallmann book, you know I saw the things he was doing with fire, it was just a natural... you know he's a Michelin star chef and he just turned from the tweezers to the pitchfork and he does a marvelous job and he has restaurants all over the world. He's my hero.

Bryan Schaaf: Chef that's a fantastic segue. We are going to take a break and we are going to come back with a chat with one of our good friends, a chef who, if you follow the lore of the American chefs, I mean there are a handful of icons that you can list, from honestly by one name, from Thomas to Grant to Trotter to Danielle to you name it. And our guest coming up here in a moment is one who very much fits into that group and he has opened so many different restaurants, from Rochester, New York to New York City, to Chicago where he kind of built his name. And he's opened up all kinds of different concepts from steak houses, to Italian, to probably his coup de grace is one of the best known fine dining restaurants in Chicago for more than two decades, to his current iteration which is actually a Cajun Creole restaurant down in the French Quarter in New Orleans.

Bryan Schaaf: We're going to be joined by Chef Rick Tramonto, the two time James Beard Award winner. And he's going to talk a little bit about his journey from his early days in Rochester, New York and what it meant as a chef, regardless of that concept, the one thing he never did was a vegetarian concept. He will admit he did a few vegetarian tasting menus in his time. But Rick's going to take some time with us and Chef Tony and I will be back in a few.

Bryan Schaaf: Joining us on the Meat Speak Podcast here is our good friend, two time James Beard Award winner and Chef tell me if I leave anything out, I want to make sure I get it in there, right? Chef, author, television personality, connoisseur of caviar and large hunks of meat, Chef Rich Tramonto. Chef how are you doing?

Rick Tramonto: Oh yeah, you left out the metal fan, the heavy metal fan. You left that whole part out.

Bryan Schaaf: I can't believe I forgot the metal head portion of that as well. You know chef, as we were putting together sort of our list of things that we wanted to cover, we wanted to talk about, we wanted to launch with a big roll out of meat and why it's important and why it matters and why it's necessary and not necessarily getting into the why or the debate of whether you should or shouldn't eat meat, it's just more the idea that it's a fact of life and everywhere you go people eat meat.

Bryan Schaaf: You immediately came to mind because you've had such a diverse career, of course you are probably best known in the fine dining circuit at in Chicago which if you're not of the understanding, T-R-U actually so probably, Tramonto unlimited, correct?

Rick Tramonto: Correct. That's right.

Bryan Schaaf: But you know you've opened countless restaurants. Everything from [Austerios 00:12:11] to Italian, Fine Dining, Seafood, Cajun Creole down in New Orleans to the burger joints that you started on. And in every concept meat played a specific role both in terms of what you were cooking and what the menus were featured on, and I just wanted to see if you could give us a little bit of background on your journey because the more people who understand your background and where you're coming from, it's been quite the ride, yeah?

Rick Tramonto: Yeah, it sure has. And meat is always home for me and it's always comforting because when I was 15 years old in 1977, I started at Wendy's Old Fashioned Hamburgers which was one of the first Wendy's outside of Cleveland, outside of Ohio, and in Rochester, New York. And that's back when Dave Thomas was still in the stores and Dick Fox, who's still to this day one of the largest franchise owners of that group. And those guys were just starting out. So my introduction to cooking other than just as a kid hanging around my grandmother and my mom who were always in the kitchen again making pastas and tripe, you know it's funny, all the Italian bracioles and all those kind of things were regulars in my house, but you know were weren't prime, "Let's have filet, let's throw something on the grill" kind of family growing up. It was a pretty modest family.

Rick Tramonto: My dad went to prison when I was a kid, and being an only child, I just needed to stick close to home. I didn't finish high school, I needed to start working, and working at a burger joint, it just kind of made sense. This was just one of the up and coming restaurants of that era coming up, so it just all kind of connected. So that's the first introduction. And they did everything on premise, I mean, they were grinding their own meat and pattying their own meats, and it was pretty amazing when they first started out on how they did stuff there, and it was very special.

Rick Tramonto: And then I had a chance to work at a place called the Scotch and Sirloin, which is just a famous old-school Rochester, Buffalo, Syracuse steakhouse that, again, a guy named Jim Kirk who was a Vietnam vet who came back and just loved to cook set up this amazing... they aged all their own stuff, they caught all their

own stuff, there was a full time butcher, there was dual broilers and prime rib stations, and for a whole year all I did was basically work the spud station. You bake potatoes, you mash potatoes, you do everything potatoes. Scallop potatoes, and you just work this potato station in order to get it to the level which would be working the prime rib station, and then working the broiler station, working the grill station. And if you were lucky, or you were hungry enough, you would come in during the day, because they weren't open for lunch, and you would just learn how to cut meat, and stand next to these butchers and trim, and grind, and slice meat, and wrap, and weigh, and just be an apprentice. And that was pretty eye-opening because I had never seen that.

Rick Tramonto: Timeline now, I'm about 18 and I get the opportunity to move to Manhattan and work with Alfred Portale at the Gotham and all of that started to come full circle, but through the journey meat has always been key. The interesting thing is probably five years of that, I worked a [plasinase 00:16:02] station, I worked a fish station, mainly in New York at the Tavern On the Green and in Gotham, and [lagen we 00:16:07], so I was always wanting to get on the meat station, wanting to get on the meat station, and once I had perfected, per se, the fish station, it was really the next step for me. It was love at first sear, right? It was just all about it. Again I think it's really been a huge part of my menu mixes, especially when I went to Europe and really started to interact with game and brazing all of that culture of that market of England and France and Italy. There's nothing like it.

Bryan Schaaf: You know as you look at... you mention working at Gotham, it was at a time, looking back, when you were one of several, I guess, young line cooks sort of cutting their teeth along with some others. You may know the name Bobby Flay, or Tom Colicchio. When you look back at those days, Gale Gand working the pastry station, do you look back at that as a pretty incredible time to be coming up, especially when you look at the culinary landscape now, to look back and say, "man, we were a pretty fantastic group that all pretty much came good."

Rick Tramonto: Yeah. I couldn't have asked for a better journey as far as a non-traditional... going to culinary school, going to apprentice, and just to go right into the field as an apprentice in '81, '82, and working in New York until '90. That whole period of time, you're right, there was just an amazing time of chefs coming on the scene like Larry Forgione and Johnathan Waxman and Alfred Portale, this powerhouse list of New York chefs that had all these powerhouse line cooks that were so passionate like Tom and Bobby and Gale. It was just incredible. And everybody knew that this was something special. I think if you ask any of those guys they will certainly say that it was a very electric time in cooking, especially in New York.

Rick Tramonto: And then when I finally got to Chicago, it was a whole other thing. I mean, it was like, Charlie Trotter and Jean Banchet and Gabino Sotelino and Jean Joho, and then just having the opportunity to start to do some of your own stuff. I did Trio and I did Tru.

Bryan Schaaf: Yeah. Chef, you mentioned Chicago and of course, everybody talks about Tru, which had a fantastic run. But before Tru you guys hooked up with this restaurant up in Evanston called Trio, which, if you look at the lineage that came through Trio, when you guys left, Shawn McClain came in, when Shawn McClain left, this guy named Grant Achatz, who you may have heard of, came in there before moving on to Alinea, and the rest is history.

Rick Tramonto: Yeah. It really was the perfect storm and the perfect timing of that time. Henry Adaniya, who was just coming out of Cafe Provencal in Ambria, had the opportunity to buy this space and to go into this space where Cafe Provencal was, to turn it into something very special. And he knew he really wanted a husband and wife team, a chef and pastry chef team. We all kind of had some knowledge of each other because we all worked for Lettuce Entertain You, and he was at Ambria and I was at Avanzare and Scoози at the time, and Gale was doing a bunch of stuff at The Pump Room and [in Corporate 00:20:18].

Rick Tramonto: So we knew each other and Henry just kind of reached out and said, "hey I've got this crazy idea. I don't have any money, but I have a space. Let's try to build something for a couple hundred thousand dollars and see what we can do." And me and Gale had just come back from Europe and it was like, man, you know, we're going to do this, how are we going to compete with all this amazing downtown talent? And we didn't have a seller, we didn't have [tino 00:20:43], there was just no money.

Rick Tramonto: So we just said, well, we'll go in and treat it like our first apartment. We'll put on our sweatpants and go in and start scrubbing and painting and buying used equipment and do everything we can. And towards the end we didn't have a lot if not any for china. And it was such an important piece for what we wanted to do, so we started to go to thrift shops, and we'd started to go to Builder's Square and these Home Depot places, and just started to buy slabs of granite and marble and glass and mirror, and just started to present our stuff on that. From a piece of Limoges that's 80 bucks a piece to a piece of marble or glass which was eight bucks a piece.

Rick Tramonto: Moving in, we started doing multi-course tasting menus and multiple-course dessert courses in our tasting menus. Henry ran an amazing dining room and we were able to procure some of the wine cellar that was already there, so we had an okay wine list. But man, by the time Bill Rice and people like Phil Vettel were coming in reviewing us... hell, it just exploded. We had gotten four stars across the board and people were starting to make pilgrimages up to Evanston like they were up to Wheeling to go to La Francais. We found ourselves six, eight, ten weeks out in reservations. It was a very cool time. It was a very special time, it was very pure. There was no fluff, it was all center of the plate kind of stuff. There from seven in the morning until one in the morning six days a week, grinding it out, and it really paid off.

Rick Tramonto: Gale got an opportunity on the Food Network to do a show called "Sweet Dreams," and then we got assigned our first two books, and then we did a

[brotherie 00:22:36] called "Brotherie T," did another book, and then I had an opportunity to do a huge deal with Lettuce to go down. Henry kind of went on with Shawn and me and Gale to do Tru, and the rest is kind of history. James Beard Awards and [relais chateaux 00:22:55], [relais gourmands 00:22:56], and everything just kind of happened because our budget in some ways was extraordinarily different. We opened one restaurant for \$250,000, we opened another for 5,000,000. Our china budget was \$100,000 at Tru. So we really had all the luxuries the second time around, but in a lot of ways the results are still the same. I mean, we won a Wine Spectator award at Tru where we weren't able to do that at Trio, but as far as the rest of the accolades and the rest of the grind and putting a much larger team together, because we were doing more volume... Trio we'd do 70 covers a night, Tru we were doing almost 200 covers a night but with 10 courses for each person so you're still grinding 1,000 plates out of that kitchen.

Rick Tramonto: And a lot of great people came out of that kitchen. Chris Pandel and Greg Biggers and Meg Galus and the list goes on and on. Graham Elliot. We had a very, almost like the the same thing that me and Gale had experienced in New York. I'm hoping a lot of the kids who came out of the kitchen and now have their own television shows and their own restaurants can now go back and say, "man, you remember our time at Tru? Remember our time at Trio?" We really produced a lot of good talent out of those kitchens. I think that's what we're most proud of, for sure.

Bryan Schaaf: Yeah, yeah. Can you talk about getting into Tru a little bit? I remember sitting around a table actually at Spencer's in Omaha, Nebraska with you and Gale. You were telling stories that would happen at Tru and it's something that the culinary world sort of has moved away from, from fine dining. But when you think about, you know, before Tru, there's all the stories from the old Pump Room in Chicago. But some of the stories that you have come out with, be they the Chicago Bulls in their heyday or whatever at Tru, were just mind-blowing. Can you talk about some of those nights and did you-

Rick Tramonto: Yeah, I mean it was really became a celebrity haunt. We had a great relationship with all the hotels in the neighborhood and we would always hold reservations for them. Like the Peninsula and the Ritz and the Four Seasons, and we had great concierge relationships. So any time celebrities or musicians or athletes were in town and they wanted to come we would always try to accommodate. For sure, we would hold tables for them. And it was a very sought-after table.

Rick Tramonto: You'd have wacky experiences like, there was a night where Robin Williams came in and was there promoting Bicentennial Man with his producer and director. Very, very kind man, he came into the kitchen, loved the meal, and wanted to know if he could serve the last set of desserts to the table that was there. And me and Gale just kind of looked at each other and chuckled, but he said, "oh no, no, I can do it." And he put on his best French accent and started to pick up plates like a professional. He looked like a professional waiter. Walked around the table and Gale explained what it was and he was able to recite it

verbatim to the table. People were looking up going, "is that Robin Williams?" Start looking like, "is this Candid Camera? What's going on?" But he never broke character. So I think there was this confusion of either this is Robin Williams, or this is the most incredible lookalike of Robin Williams and he just did the whole spiel and walked away, and then turned around and gave them a smirk and broke character and started cracking up, and they realized who he was.

Rick Tramonto: Those are the moments in a restaurant where you remember and you laugh and people get it. It is food and hospitality. Michael Jordan would come in, Oprah Winfrey would come in, the list is just too long to spit. It was fun for my crew, because most of those folks would come back and just show the respect and the gratitude. It was a blast. That part was pretty extraordinary for that restaurant, and it was a busy, busy restaurant. We said at Trio, we were six to eight weeks in advance, but at Tru, we were six to eight months in advance all the time. I was proud of it. It was a 10-year run and it was really an amazing time.

Bryan Schaaf: That's incredible. You know chef, one of the links from Tru that still continues with you to this day was, you had a young cook named Jana Billiot who is now of course the chef at your restaurant located in the French Quarter of New Orleans called Restaurant R'evolution. Can you talk a little bit about that project and how that came to be post-Hurricane Katrina, and if people go in now? What is the story behind Restaurant R'evolution?

Rick Tramonto: Yeah, it's actually really amazing steps of events. Me and John Folse had known each other for quite a long time, and we would see each other at NRA shows and fancy food shows, and John was in a whole different set of chefs. He was very much in with food manufacturing chefs, but he was also the president of the ACF and many, many other chef organizations. So every year when there was a restaurant show or a [shen 00:28:42] dinner, John would always show up at Tru, and we'd always have a lot of fun, and then he'd invite me down to New Orleans to his Bittersweet Plantation.

Rick Tramonto: All of that was just a great camaraderie of years, and one day you're sitting at home and watching The Today Show and Katrina is unfolding, and my wife Eileen had said, "hey, you should call John and see how he's doing," and I'm like, "oh, they have those hurricanes all the time down there, it's probably no big shake." But as one hour turned into four hours and you start to see the whole thing unfold, I'm like, "yeah, I should probably call him and see how he's doing."

Rick Tramonto: You call John... and anybody that speaks to John, he's always a very upbeat, a very positive guy from the second he picks up the phone. You could just tell when I tried to call him, he didn't answer, tried to call him, he didn't answer, he finally answered, said, "hey man, how you doing?" And there was this long pause, and that's not like John at all. And he says, "well, not good." I said, "what can I do to help you?" And he said, "well, would you come down?" And I said, "what do you mean?"

Rick Tramonto: He said, "would you get on a plane and come down? I have all the contract feeding for FEMA and the National Guard, we're going to go right down into ground zero and the hurricane zone in Saint Bernard's Parish and set up mobile kitchens, and just start cooking for all the rescue workers, and I would love to have somebody help me lead that."

Rick Tramonto: I said, "yeah, can you get me in?" And John's so connected to that world, he said, "yeah, I'll get you a ticket, I'll make sure you get in tomorrow, I'll be there to pick you up. You know, the airport is a triage center, so you'll have the National Guard escorting you down into Saint Bernard's Parish." And I said, "yeah okay, great." And I've never been to war, I've been in a war zone to cook a few times in Afghanistan and stuff, so I kind of had the gist of what I was walking into, but you still don't really know what you're walking into, right?

Rick Tramonto: And by the time I got there and we got into John's vehicle and we started going down into the city, it was... I don't even know how to describe it. It was empty. There was no one on the highway, it was eerie, it was dark, it was a mess, it was... We pulled up over onto the overpass and he stops his vehicle, and he says, "get out." And I'm like, "okay." So we get out and we walk in front of the front of his car, and we're standing in the middle of the expressway, and he's pointing to the dome, and roof of the dome is flopping off, and he's like, "look around." And you couldn't see any cars, anybody for miles or miles except for our little caravan that we were stopped, and he says, "you'll never see this again." And I still have footage of that and photos of that.

Rick Tramonto: We get back in the vehicle, we go down in Saint Bernard's Parish and, you know, for three weeks we cook for rescue workers. John has a food manufacturing plant, so we had access to just trucks. Starbucks and Kraft. That was a pretty extraordinary time, and when we were done, four weeks later per se, John drops me off at the airport, and I said, "life's never going to be the same, man." And he goes, "this is a life-changing time. Yes, when we start to rebuild this city, you'll be the first I call." And about a year, almost to the date, later, he called and said, "hey, I have this incredible opportunity, they're starting to rebuild. The Royal Sonesta wants us to give them a signature restaurant in there, and you pretty much have carte blanche to go in and we'll concept the seven nations, and we'll do all the Louisiana historical food, put your twist on it and all your stuff from your modern age Tru and Trio, and let's come up with something special and try to reopen the city with a bang."

Rick Tramonto: And we ended up doing Restaurant R'evolution. It's been eight years now we've been down there. Restaurant of the year and many, many accolades from that restaurant, but my crew at Tru was... I came back and told them all these stories and Jana was a sous-chef at Tru at that time. And she said, "hey Chef, I don't know if you know this, but I'm from that area." And I said, "yeah I knew you were kind of from New Orleans, and Louisiana." She goes, "no, I mean like, I'm really from the bayou and I went to John Folse's culinary school. And I would love to move back home if there's any opportunity for you to take me with you, I would love to do that." And I had brought five people with me from Chicago to

go down and do that opening: a pastry chef, a [somme 00:33:29], a GM, and Jana. And we all went and did this R&D up in John's plantation for a year almost, a year, eight months, before we opened, and Jana relocated down there and she's been there ever since.

Bryan Schaaf: If you have an opportunity to get down to Restaurant R'evolution, it really is everything it's ever been cracked up to be. For you I'd imagine it's got to be pretty gratifying when you look at some of those historical New Orleans restaurants, the Commander's Palaces, the places like that, then you see Restaurant R'evolution which, by comparison is still in its infancy. Showing up on a lot of those same lists, that certainly has-

Rick Tramonto: Yeah, but when you see the Galatoire's, and the Antione's, and the Commander's, and the Mr. B's, those are institutions that have been there 20, 30, 40 years. A hundred years for some of them, its extraordinary. Yeah, it's been multiple rides at multiple times in multiple cities, and to tie it all in, meat has been there every step of the way.

Bryan Schaaf: That's right! So coming back full circle and where we're at now. You've crafted, I don't know how many dishes over the years. Many, many, many, many, right? Too many to count, but when you think about, what are some of those, we'll say "meat-centric" dishes, that really stick out in your mind that have hit your menu? When I think of you the first thing that pops into my head is of course the caviar staircase, right? But beyond that, what are some of your favorite things to cook?

Rick Tramonto: You know it's just old school. Braised short rib has been on my menu since Trio. I've always had a short rib and there's just something romantic about that cut and about that presentation. It's timeless, it will always be timeless, it goes back forever into the cellars of cooking time, and it's just been a very special dish for me. I'll always have that as part of my repertoire. And I always love to go classic everything, and going back to Larousse and going back to Escoffier, going back to Bocuse, and really seeing some of the meat fabrication, but just the meat techniques is so much braised, from odd cuts and non-primal cuts that I just love it. Just love it, love it.

Bryan Schaaf: Excellent. Chef, I appreciate you taking time out of your very busy schedule to get with us this week.

Rick Tramonto: Any time man, any time. Love you guys and appreciate you and every single [inaudible 00:36:12] do, and stay well.

Bryan Schaaf: Back here in the studio, Bryan Schaaf, Chef Tony Biggs on the Meat & Greet Podcast, being brought to you by the Certified Angus Beef brand. Now Chef, one of the things I want to make sure everybody understands is that, although we are here, although we are in the building of the world's foremost beef company that exists here in Northeast Ohio, you know we're not just all about beef, but

we do love the beef. And you are one who has gotten to rack up a lot of frequent flier miles traveling the world and when I think of beef in its raw state, two things pop to mind with me: tartare, which I would step over my own grandmother to get to. Especially my favorite tartare is Jonathon Sawyer's at The Greenhouse Tavern in Cleveland because it's made with Cleveland Stadium mustard which is near and dear to my heart; and of course, beef carpaccio which, if you are not a raw beef person, beef carpaccio should be your jumping off point. Because it's kind of like deli meat I guess. I mean, it's raw, but it doesn't feel like it's raw.

Bryan Schaaf: Chef, what are your go-tos when you talk about raw meat?

Tony Biggs: Did you know around the world there's so many different variations of raw beef there's being served here today around the world? It's... in Korea it's called [yukhoe 00:37:48] which is a raw beef with soy sauce and ginger and garlic and sesame oil and it's beautiful, it's delicious, it's an asian steak tartare, right? In Japan it's called [tataki 00:38:03]. It's marinated lightly, [ponzu 00:38:06] and radish. It's lovely, it's light, it's beautiful. In France of course, steak tartare is served with beautiful pickles and some [steak frites 00:38:19] which is a very thin cut french fry, and that's beautiful over there, but my favorite is the Belgian toast cannibal!

Tony Biggs: Now we're not eating real people here, okay, we're eating filet mignon, but in Belgian it is called, "Belgian toast cannibal."

Bryan Schaaf: Not exactly wizards of menu names in Belgium. So why not cannibal toast? Why not?

Tony Biggs: Why not, right? But I wonder... I don't think a lot of folks know that a raw beef was not invented in America or France. It's served all around the world and blended with the right spice blends, like the [kibbeh nayyeh 00:39:00] in the Middle East, with different spices and peppers and the seven spice Mediterranean spice, this is magical when it's on the right vehicle for crunch.

Bryan Schaaf: I would actually argue not only was the idea of eating raw meat in a formalized setting, not talking about caveman days anymore, not only was it not invented in America, America is probably one of the most difficult places to make that sell to the general population. If you go to Japan and you're American, it kind of can evolve into a game of "let's see what the American will eat." And we're talking raw chicken and raw... I mean, you kind of name it. And it's widely accepted.

Tony Biggs: I won my wife's hand! Do you know how I won my wife's hand?

Bryan Schaaf: Tell us.

Tony Biggs: I was sitting at the dinner table with her Chinese father Paul. And we're on a laureate, that's a round, circular table that you can spin around, most likely in a

Chinese restaurant. Well, they had this in their living room. I was the guest for dinner, and Paul said the following: "do you like exotic food, Tony?" And I was being bold, I knew there was no exotic food around, I said, "of course, Paul! I'm a chef!" He gave five dollars to the guy next to him and he goes, "go get 15 [balut 00:40:25]. Now." So, this gentleman ran out, I'm going to myself, "I'm in big trouble here."

Tony Biggs: Do you know what balut is, Bryan? Balut is a Fear Factor cuisine. It's a duck embryo, okay? And when you peel it, all the little feet, the legs, the beak are showing. He challenged me to eat the balut to win his daughter's hand. I said, "Paul, the only way I'm going to do this is, I need a bottle of Jack Daniel's here so I can take three shots." And I consumed three balut in a matter of minutes with three shots of Jack Daniel's, looked him in the eye and said, "Take that brother."

Bryan Schaaf: The big question now is, since that date, how many balut have you consumed?

Tony Biggs: Since that date, ZERO! Zero balut.

Bryan Schaaf: So if you were questioning, we're not saying balut is delicious or not. You can read between the lines.

Tony Biggs: In the Philippines, it's a delicacy usually found on streets steamed. So if you're talking to the Filipino culture... let me back up. My wife is Filipino, so I can say these things. That is a delicacy there. It's one of those street foods.

Bryan Schaaf: If this is your first foray into the Meet Speak Podcast, please know that you can find us across most major podcasting platforms by typing in M-E-A-T S-P-E-A-K, or simply by searching "Certified Angus Beef podcast," and you should see us looking right back at you.

Bryan Schaaf: That's all we've got for this week, Chef! Until next week, we'll see you later.