

Bryan Schaaf:

Welcome back to another episode of Meat Speak powered by the Certified Angus Beef brand. I'm Bryan Schaaf, with me Chef Tony Biggs. Chef, how are you doing?

Tony Biggs:

Oh my gosh, you're looking dapper today in that tuxedo baby.

Bryan Schaaf:

You know, I always try and look my best.

Tony Biggs:

Oh my gosh, you must be going to the ballpark after this episode.

Bryan Schaaf:

You know, it's funny you mentioned that. So, you have a history among all of your culinary exploits as a singing waiter. So, I thought I would sing a few bars with you and you have to tell me what's missing here. So, are you ready for this?

Tony Biggs:

Okay. You're going to sing, right?

Bryan Schaaf:

Yeah. Are we good?

Tony Biggs:

Okay, okay.

Bryan Schaaf:

So it goes, take me out to the ball game, take me out with the crowd. Wait for it. Buy me some rocky mountain oysters and sashimi.

Tony Biggs:

Are you kidding me? I think I know where you're going here, baby.

Bryan Schaaf:

Right? You know, it's a funny thing. Stadium eats, right? You know, sports are certainly as popular as they've ever been, but it's funny, you go to the ballpark and there was always this idea that when you got to the ballpark you'd get your hot dog, right? You'd get your-

Tony Biggs:

Get your hot dogs here! Get your hot dogs here!

Bryan Schaaf:

In Cleveland you'd get your pop, right? Or if you're outside of Cleveland or in some other you'd get your soda, right? You'd sit down and you'd watch the game and that was part of the grand experience. But as you look around at stadiums, be they baseball stadiums, football stadiums, you name it. The food options are growing like crazy. You know, you're a-

Tony Biggs:

Amazing.

Bryan Schaaf:

You're a Boston guy. You grew up watching the Sox, right?

Tony Biggs:

Sox.

Bryan Schaaf:

Tell me about a wee Tony Biggs, right? You know, you went to the Fenway, right?

Tony Biggs:

Oh, Fenway. Get your hot nuts here! Get your hot nuts here! Are you kidding me? Wow. My mother is not going to want to hear this, but I'm 62 years old and she's probably going to listen to this podcast. But mom, there was times I would skip school with my buddies, take the train into Kenmore Square and buy Red Sox tickets, bleacher seats for \$2 a piece. Okay? And the greatest thing that I can remember is having that hot dog here. That hot dog in a little plastic bag that's in a steam box and when you open it up it is just steaming hot, and those are called Fenway Franks. And of course Goldens Mustard brown mustard. That's the official mustard of the Boston Red Sox.

Bryan Schaaf:

Hold on, I've got to stop you there because you said mustard, and that to me says you've been living in Ohio too long. Say it like a true Bostonian.

Tony Biggs:

Mustard.

Bryan Schaaf:

Mustard.

Tony Biggs:

Mustard.

Bryan Schaaf:

That's right.

Tony Biggs:

Mustard, baby. And you know what? You're so spot on. You know, when I grew up at the Garden and going to see the Celtics and the Red Sox, all you got was some hot nuts, hot dogs and a hot pretzel, okay?

Bryan Schaaf:

Yeah.

Tony Biggs:

And a hot pretzel, that would be it. But you know what? Food has changed and you're going to tell us what is the weirdest food at stadiums now.

Bryan Schaaf:

You know, it's kind of funny, people would complain about the stadium experience getting too expensive and rather than maybe lower those prices for those hot dogs that you've been buying, to their credit, stadiums have just up their game from a food standpoint.

Tony Biggs:

Big time.

Bryan Schaaf:

If you look around, and I'd like to say that I toured the circuit and pulled all these on my own, I did not, I did the simple thing and I used Google as my friend. But certainly some of the things that jump out, you can get Blue Smoke of course in New York city, the barbecue joint. If you go to City Field or if you go to Washington Nationals Stadium in Washington D.C., you can actually get bone in smoked beef short ribs. We're talking about the long bone short ribs at a baseball game, right? Now, it's not a weird food by any stretch, but certainly in the compounds of a baseball game it certainly is. But if you really take a tour around American stadiums right now, you'll find things like, if you go to a Safeco up in Seattle. I knew Safeco because they were the first stadium I can remember in the late nineties that offered sushi to their guests.

Tony Biggs:

Wow. Sushi.

Bryan Schaaf:

Today though, you can get toasted grasshoppers.

Tony Biggs:

Now that's new and different.

Bryan Schaaf:

Yeah. You know, Coors Field in Colorado where of course the Colorado Rockies play, they've always been known for having rocky mountain oysters. Which, if you aren't aware of a rocky mountain oyster, it's not seafood. We'll just say it's the ... If you're a male, it's the painful part of the bull, to picture in your head. They actually take them and make them into po' boys, right? And if you get out to Levi's Field in San Francisco, to their credit, they're using the local cuisine. They have Dungeness crab pretzels, which actually looks like a hoagie roll. It's a pretzel hoagie roll with Dungeness crab in it, which sounds tremendous.

Tony Biggs:

I can do that. I can do that.

Bryan Schaaf:

You know, as a chef and as somebody with some real culinary cred. For somebody in your shoes, if a stadium were to reach out to you, specifically a stadium of a team that you've supported very, very feverishly.

Tony Biggs:

New England Patriots.

Bryan Schaaf:

Yeah, right?

Tony Biggs:

No bones about it.

Bryan Schaaf:

Now, would you take that as a compliment or would you have to mull over that? Because as chefs in restaurants, the chefs that they're reaching out to are chefs who, well, they're not the C team, right?

Tony Biggs:

Yeah.

Bryan Schaaf:

They are the well known people.

Tony Biggs:

The A team.

Bryan Schaaf:

Yeah. They are the people who have built their reputation because they have restaurants of real quality and of real recognition in their marketplaces, right? We've got some right here, we're 40 miles south of Cleveland, we can list them off. As a chef, do you see ... First, do you take that as a compliment? And

two, is it something that you would really consider when you figure, that's not my staff that's going to be pulling this off? Those are my recipes, but I'm not there to give this the oversight. Is there a hesitation that you might worry about your reputation?

Tony Biggs:

You know, I think when you get into to these deals with the Aramark's of the world, the Delaware North's of the world who run these stadium foods. I think when you sit down with these folks and you give them a picture of your brand and what it means to you, they do a pretty darn good job of following what you want. I mean, it's been done all over around the world. Of course, you know ... Who's the hell's kitchen chef? What's his name?

Bryan Schaaf:

Gordon Ramsey.

Tony Biggs:

Yeah, Gordon Ramsey. He doesn't manage everything but he has folks that oversee the development and recipe, making sure that his recipes are being followed. And of course I'd be flattered. And these A chefs, of course they want to have their name out there all the time, and that's another reason why I feel they do that from a PR standpoint. And if the New England Patriots came today, I would do my New England steak bites with certified Angus beef sirloin flap that's marinated in A1 sauce, Coca Cola, and then I would probably deep fry those, a little bit of blue cheese dressing on those. Brian, can you just taste them now? Huh? Can you?

Bryan Schaaf:

You know, I would actually go to a Patriots game if that was on offer and I don't do the football. I don't do the football. Chef, we're going to take a break. We're going to come back here in a few minutes. We're going to sit down with a long, long, long time friend of ours who happens to be from Cleveland, from up the road. And when we were discussing this whole topic, he was the one that came to mind. His name is Matt Mytro and Matt Mytro along with his business partner and coach Chef Paul Mannillo operate a restaurant in Cleveland called Flour, which is very sort of old school meets new school Italian food. If you go to Quicken Loans Arena, well, now Rocket Mortgage Fieldhouse home of the Cleveland Cavaliers, you'll see Chef Mytro's picture on a kiosk and it's called Launch Kitchen.

Bryan Schaaf:

And for three or four years, the boys from Flour Restaurant have been serving up food or offering up food at the home of the Cavaliers to game goers and concert goers and you name it. And Matt's going to sit down with us and talk a little bit what that experience has been. The positives, the struggles, just the overall experience because we know there are a lot of people who get opportunities like this and maybe are in the process right now of thinking it over. So, stay tuned. We're going to be back in a couple minutes with Matt Mytro from Flour Restaurant in Cleveland.

Bryan Schaaf:

Back on the Meat Speak podcast coming to you from the east side of Cleveland. From Flour Restaurant with me my good man, chef Matt Mytro. How are you doing?

Matt Mytro:

I'm doing good Brian. Thanks for having me here, man.

Bryan Schaaf:

Man, thanks for having me. I'm halfway through a burger at an Italian joint. And let me tell you something, if you listen to the podcast for any amount of time, I will be the guy who goes into an Italian restaurant and orders the burger. And y'all are representing, I gotta tell ya. It's a fine burger.

Matt Mytro:

I appreciate that. You know, we're an Italian restaurant so we're not known for our burger, but I know that you've always given me a lot of love when it comes to the certified Angus beef burger that we have here.

Bryan Schaaf:

Man, it is much appreciated. Chef, I wanted to talk to you because you are very much in the thick of sort of this growing trend that's going around the country. It's happening here in Cleveland of course, but it's happening a lot of places where a lot of stadium concepts. Of course here in Cleveland we have the Cleveland Browns, Cleveland Indians, Cleveland Cavaliers who are turning a lot of their food service offerings during games, during concerts, anything in the stadium and they're looking for those local chefs with a strong reputation to bring in a concept. You have for the past several years, you've had Launch Kitchen at Quicken Loans Arena and you just launched, forgive me, it's Flour Pizza Company?

Matt Mytro:

Flour Pizza Company, yeah.

Bryan Schaaf:

And I saw on the banner it says by chef Matt Mytro. Very nice. Could you just talk us through that when, I guess, how long have you been doing this and how did this all get started? Did they approach you? Did you bring a business plan? How did this all come to be?

Matt Mytro:

Yeah, so definitely a really cool opportunity. The way this all came about actually is a good chef friend of mine, Chris Hutchens, was responsible for introducing me to the Aramark crew. They knew a lot about us and everything so we actually had a good reputation, and they were launching this thing called Launch Kitchen. So, the idea of launch kitchen basically was they were able to turn over that concession stand every, I'm not sure if they did it by quarter, but essentially every month or every two or three months or whenever they wanted to. And it was the first of its kind in stadiums because everything was digital so they were able to upload a lot of graphics on the spot. They could literally have a video camera there taking pictures and then take it down into their control room and upload it. It was really, really

cool.

Matt Mytro:

So that was the first process of the stadium. And so, we had one concept there that we did in the launch kitchen and then we did something with two other chefs where each chef had two or three items. It was a local chef, Karen Smalls from Flying Fig, and also Fabio Salerno from Lago, both dear friends of mine. And so, we had two items during the playoffs and that was really cool because not only is it cool to have your food there and your name and your brand and everything, but it was also just like some friendly competition going along because we would see the product mix after each game the next day and we would kind of bust each other's balls, like who sold the most of what and this and that. So, there's some good friendly wagers going on there and good comradery.

Matt Mytro:

So, that's kind of how that all started, and then I guess through the process of working with Aramark over the last couple of years, last year they were in the transition of building up some clubs. So they have, for those of you who don't know, the Cavaliers have I think six or seven, maybe less, maybe that's exaggerated, but whatever. They have X amount of new club levels and each club level is very unique and more expensive and et cetera. And they have, I guess, what do you want to call them, celebrity chefs or whatever you want to call it. And they're not doing just locally, they've been bringing some people from out of state and they're coming in there and allowing them to cook. So, we did that last year and that was a lot of fun.

Matt Mytro:

We did a couple different pasta dishes and a couple of different clubs and then with the transformation of which used to be the Q, now the Rocket Mortgage Fieldhouse, they came to us and asked us to do a pizza concept, which was kind of interesting on its own because pizza there has always been a corporate sponsorship. And so, because Dominoes or Rascal House or whatever corporate style pizza it would be, they would actually pay the team in order to get their brand and product in there. And since just with everybody wanting local and being more focused around that, that's kind of dissolved. So, that's kind of where, when they approached us, we're like this is kind of like a once in a lifetime opportunity and we were just ecstatic.

Bryan Schaaf:

As you launched this new concept, as you were at launch, I mean obviously you're coming from Flour Restaurant, which we were just talking before we started recording. I mean, for as long as I've known you, Flour has been in the Cleveland vernacular as one of the four best restaurants in Cleveland. Really, since you guys opened. I mean it's you, it's Paul Manila who's of course is the godfather of Cleveland cuisine.

Matt Mytro:

The OG. He's the OG.

Bryan Schaaf:

But how has it been being able to take something that, I won't disclose how many times I've eaten here, we'll say more than a few. How has it been being able to translate what you guys do out here, which is a very high level of execution menu in terms of the things that you guys put on a plate. How do you take that, or do you even attempt to translate that to a stadium setting? I mean, how do you craft those dishes at the stadium that are going to be a good representation of who you guys are but it's not necessarily you or Paul or David Shin in the kitchen doing it?

Matt Mytro:

Yeah, that's a good question. We just , we have a good relationship with Aramark and the team that they have at Aramark, Chef Joe, and everyone else there from the GM, Adam Zane, and the president Kevin. Those guys are all, they know what they're doing and so there's a lot of trust there with us. We sent our recipes over to them. I mean, they facilitated the whole build out. I mean, I was a part of the process in terms of picking things out with them and they always would defer to me, you know, are you okay with this and do you believe in this and whatever. But, they were always, they allowed us to have control, but we don't really necessarily have to have 100% control because there's a lot of trust there. We're allowed to pop into the stadium whenever we need to.

Matt Mytro:

So for example, last week was their ... We actually, I mean technically we're still kind of modifying things. I mean, I'm not going to sit here and say it's perfect over there yet, but we literally weren't even able to really get in there and actually start spinning dough and testing out the pizza oven or anything until Sunday of about a week and a half ago. And then the grand opening was a week later, and then the Black Keys concert and Modest Mouse concert, which was awesome. That was on Monday, but that's how skillful the staff is. That's how knowledgeable chef Joe Backman is. You know, it's just a lot of trust. These are the ingredients I want. So, a good example, we use McKinsey Goat Cheese, it's a local goat cheese producer here. Same thing with, we get a fromage blanc from this Rowdy Cow Creamery. So, I'm like this is what we want for the pizzas, they made sure we got it. They're grinding whole wheels of Cranachan, they're making the pizza dough, they're slicing the pepperoni, they're making Paul's sausage. I mean, they're doing it exactly to our spec.

Bryan Schaaf:

So, in terms of the people that you would get to interact with, the client time. You guys are out here on the east side of Cleveland, and I mean east side. You're pretty far out here. Do you guys look at that or do you see a lift in what happens here? Because you're probably exposed to a lot of people down there that maybe don't make the trek out here or have never been here before. I mean, have you guys gotten much feedback? Do you guys get people who come in and say, "Hey, shoot, I saw your picture on the Jumbotron at old Quicken Loans Arena", and come out here because that was their foray into Flour.

Matt Mytro:

So, I mean it's hard to tell. When we had the Launch Kitchen it was only for a period of time, so it wasn't for a full season. This is going to be for a full five seasons. So, we haven't really been able to evaluate



that yet. I mean, I think the brand awareness is there. Obviously people from the East side, since the inception of that stand which was a little over a week and a half ago or so, just through social media and all that, definitely people are talking and saying congrats and that stuff. So, it's definitely resonating.

Matt Mytro:

It's hard to know if like ... I mean, my thought process is our current customers are able to get a pizza. They know the brand, they don't have to worry if it's going to be good or not. And then people who are on the west side hopefully that ... We don't ever plan on opening another restaurant, or at least another flower. So, hopefully people who are on the west side that are unable to make that trek they can at least say, "Hey, you know what, this is Flour". And then they're able to enjoy that. But we haven't had any actual analytics or anything.

Bryan Schaaf:

When you guys were proposed with this idea, I mean, you've got Flour, which is going gangbusters for years and years and years now. You have a new pasta company, right? And now you have this. Was there any hesitation, or when you and Paul got together and talked about this, was this just a no brainer?

Matt Mytro:

Yeah, it was a no brainer. And Paul, like you said in the beginning, he's the OG. So, he's like the Don, right? So, what he says goes, and in my younger years I was like, "Let's do another restaurant", you know? And he's always like, "F\*\*k no". So, you know, the Pasta Company has been good. It's been a new way for us to build our brand and to allow staff to grow and everything like that. But with the pizza shop, it really is, it's no brainer. The marketing value that we get for our brand is huge. I mean there's a minimum of over 20,000 people walking through that door per game. So, that's 40 games a year, another 10 to 15 events a year. I know that now with this new stadium they're really trying to push to do even more. So, the just a brand recognition is a no brainer. And then on top of that, it does allow us to ... We're not going to get rich off of it but, you know, there's a little extra income coming in and it helps too, you know?

Bryan Schaaf:

Excellent. One last thing just before we run out of time. Flour Restaurant, Flour Pasta Company, Flour Pizza Company by Matt Mytra at Rocket Mortgage Fieldhouse. It's going to take me a while to get used to that. I still call Progressive Field the Jake. So, it's going to take about 20 years.

Matt Mytro:

The Rocket.

Bryan Schaaf:

Yeah, The Rocket, The Rock. Give us some plugs, man. Tell us what people can expect, whether they come here, whether they get your pasta that you guys are making that seems to be more and more readily available at retail and where can they find it and what are some of the pizzas that you guys have

down at the Feildhouse?

Matt Mytro:

Well, I mean, at Four it's just all about integrity here and about quality. As a chef we just try to pursue perfection as best as we can. It's simple food, there's nothing over the top here. It's pizzas, pastas, some of your basic Italian entrees. And then with the Pasta Company, same thing. We just try to translate that chef-driven integrity into our brand. All our pastas are made fresh on demand so that you can get them in mostly some local grocery stores, a couple of places in Michigan and in Illinois. So, some of our Midwest listeners definitely see if you can hook a brother up.

Matt Mytro:

But same thing wholesale too. Some of the restaurants are buying and that's great. You know, with this whole evolution of extruders here it's popular and we definitely can provide that style of pasta to those who can't afford an extruder or don't have the staff for it or whatever. And then with The Pizza Company we just got, I think we have four pizzas over there right now. We have our fungi pizza, so it's just a real simple mushroom pizza, and then pepperoni pizza, cheese pizza and a sausage pizza. And there's a Caesar salad, which we only sold one last week of those. So, we'll see. We'll see if that stays on the menu. But yeah, that's what the people can expect.

Bryan Schaaf:

One last question. Cavalier's season is about to start. Are we making the playoffs?

Matt Mytro:

Let's see. I don't know. I'm focused on the Browns right now.

Bryan Schaaf:

Chef Matt Mytro, Flour Restaurant on the east side of Cleveland. Flour Pasta Company, Flour Pizza Company. And by the way, that's F-L-O-U-R, just in case you're searching on the world wide internet. Chef, thanks for taking time brother.

Bryan Schaaf:

Back here on the Meat Speak podcast, powered by the certified Angus beef brand. Here, about 40 miles South of that fine gentleman's restaurant, Matt Mytro from Flour Cleveland. There's a lot of pride wrapped up in those two. So, you know, chef as somebody who is a rabid sports fan, right?

Tony Biggs:

Yes.

Bryan Schaaf:

Right. What is your favorite bite that you've ever had in a stadium?

Tony Biggs:

Wow. You know, I got to tell you, I lived in New Orleans for two years, and this is when I was associated with the Second Harvest Food Bank.

Bryan Schaaf:

Yeah.

Tony Biggs:

And what a great organization that is. I had a great chance to open that kitchen, that 10,000 square foot community kitchen that produced 2 million meals a year. The Saints would come in, Drew Brees, all these guys would come in and volunteer and pack food and occasionally they'd slip us a few tickets and we'd be able to go to the games. And I have to tell you, I was just blown away by the Mercedes Benz Superdome food. I mean, one of the things they did was a seafood nacho. Are you kidding me? Okay. With crab, shrimp, scallops, loaded with cheese. It was just amazing. And the gumbos and beignets with Cafe Dumont coffee. It was just, I mean, everything that you could find outside the stadium was inside the stadium, it was just really special. And that's the beauty about New Orleans. They just don't serve a hot dog. They make sure the hot dogs first-class New Orleans style.

Bryan Schaaf:

That's right. New Orleans people are very proud of their culture.

Tony Biggs:

My gosh, crayfish and everything.

Bryan Schaaf:

Yeah. You know, it is funny is you do see that. Stadiums everywhere are looking to incorporate flavors of that-

Tony Biggs:

Indigenous to the area.

Bryan Schaaf:

Yeah. You know, it's not just roll in and grab a dog, grab a burger.

Tony Biggs:

Now this one kind of threw me back. The goat dumplings at Houston Texans stadium.

Bryan Schaaf:

Yeah.

Tony Biggs:

Okay.

Bryan Schaaf:

Right.

Tony Biggs:

It's a little different. A little different, but I'd like to try those.

Bryan Schaaf:

Yeah.

Tony Biggs:

Right? Would you?

Bryan Schaaf:

Oh, I have never shied away from goat. You know, if I see a goat, I know that either I'm going to eat that or he and I are going to be friends, right?

Tony Biggs:

Or he's going to mow your grass, okay? That's what's going to happen.

Bryan Schaaf:

I am always in favor of goats in any variety. You know, one of the best tastes I think I ever had at a stadium, and it's funny, it actually happened outside of this country. But it was a dish that is, you know, for me it's the most American thing there is, right? It's starch, it's cheese, it's bacon, it's gravy. It's poutine.

Tony Biggs:

Equals poutine.

Bryan Schaaf:

Right, yeah. So, I was at Le Stade Olympique, or Olympic Stadium in Montreal, Canada. For, actually it was a weekend series in 2004 where the Montreal Expos just weeks before they were going to pack up and head to Washington D.C. to become the nationals. One of the most memorable things about that was sitting behind the first base dugout watching Frank Robinson and just having my face and every other surface area available just covered with grease from poutine.

Tony Biggs:

I can picture this. Did you save your ticket stub? That's historic, right?

Bryan Schaaf:

Absolutely.

Tony Biggs:

Okay, that's good.

Bryan Schaaf:

Absolutely. Yeah. And so, I did my best to represent America on that day in Canada with the amount of poutine that I ate.

Tony Biggs:

Poutine, I love it.

Bryan Schaaf:

Right? Nobody consumes-

Tony Biggs:

Cheese curds, cheese curds on there? Yeah?

Bryan Schaaf:

All day long my friend, all day long.

Tony Biggs:

Oh my gosh.

Bryan Schaaf:

So Chef, that is about all we have time for this week. If this is your first time tuning in to the Meat Speak podcast, we invite you to continue to find us. You can find us across all major podcasting platforms, including Google Play, Apple, and Spotify. But just do a search for Meat Speak or you can simply search for certified Angus beef podcast and you will find our delightful logo staring back at you. So, until next time Chef, we appreciate-

Tony Biggs:

Bon appetite Brian. You look great and see you next time.

Bryan Schaaf:

Go Patriots.