

Bryan Schaaf:

Back here on the Meat Speak Podcast, powered by the Certified Angus Beef brand. Bryan Schaaf, Chef Tony Biggs, coming to you from across the table from each other. It's nice, safe, socially distanced set up.

Tony Biggs:

We are, we are.

Bryan Schaaf:

Yeah.

Tony Biggs:

I think we're six foot, right? We're about a six-footer, like an eight-foot table?

Bryan Schaaf:

Yeah.

Tony Biggs:

Yeah, we got a six-foot table in front of us.

Bryan Schaaf:

That's right.

Tony Biggs:

So it's legit.

Bryan Schaaf:

There's at least the size of an NBA point guard between us right now. We're not talking about the oversized, the Deron Williams.

Tony Biggs:

Oh, no.

Bryan Schaaf:

We're talking about the Kevin Ollie sized-

Tony Biggs:

Right, right.

Bryan Schaaf:

... NBA point guards here. That's the space that's between us. That means that we are coming to you in person from the studio in the basement of the world headquarters of premium beef, Certified Angus Beef, in Wooster, Ohio. Chef, I want to talk to you today about a topic that really, it was just kind of

something that we threw against the wall to see if it would stick, see if there would be interest in it. It's a deep dive down a rabbit hole. Once you start to crest the idea of food trucks and why they're successful, why they aren't successful, you start to realize that food trucks really run parallel to American cuisine, all the way back, I mean really to the days when America was founded.

Bryan Schaaf:

Tell me, when you talk about food trucks, it seems like they run this roller coaster of they're in vogue, they're not necessarily in vogue, they've got a poor reputation, they've got great reputations. Obviously, it seems like now food trucks are all over the place, right?

Tony Biggs:

They're just all over the place. I mean, I just can't believe the things that I've seen that are being done in food trucks, from giant chocolate chip cookies, okay? On the corner of a college, of University of Massachusetts, to babyBerk, which is also in Amherst, Massachusetts, and the food rivals restaurants. As you know, you've had the Garbos on here, and you could eat in a food truck in New York City and you think you're... You're not paying a tip, you're not paying a gratuity, but you're getting some amazing food. When you see that line, here's the secret, when you see that line that's a mile long looking for an Oreo cheesecake with a Guinness stout sauce, you know it's a good one, right?

Bryan Schaaf:

That's right. Lines draw crowds, right?

Tony Biggs:

Lines draw crowds.

Bryan Schaaf:

Yeah.

Tony Biggs:

I was born in Daytona and Daytona, you can drive on the beach, the sand is so hard. The first food trucks that I remember are these Volkswagen vans that they turned into, let's sell a snow cone out of it or let's have a steamed hot dog out of with a little tent. You could get everything in there, from candy to snow cones to hot dogs to cotton candy. The food truck has just evolved. It's amazing. I love them. When I go to New York and I'm on the run and I want something quick, if I want a falafel, I know the perfect guy on the corner of 57th that's going to be the greatest falafel sandwich of all time.

Bryan Schaaf:

Yeah, yeah. They're everywhere. It's funny, when you start to research, when you start to look at the evolution of the food truck, you realize that they've always just kind of been there. As America went through the Industrial Revolution, New York City is where the food truck is really credited with beginning. The old time roach coaches would pull up alongside when a lot of those Manhattan skyscrapers were being built. They'd feed the construction workers.

Bryan Schaaf:

At the same time, and this warms my heart working for Certified Angus Beef, where we actually get to work with farmers and ranchers, another version of the food truck was the chuckwagon out west, where they would roll in and feed the cowboys on the cattle drive. These are all different variations of the food truck up to present day. Of course, our pal Kent Rollins out in Hollis, Oklahoma, is still doing the chuckwagon thing, feeding cowboys. Food trucks, on the other end, for me they've almost taken on a mythical status.

Bryan Schaaf:

Some of my favorite ones, they're here in Northeast Ohio, but sometimes you know they're out there, but you don't see them because they're mobile, right? So maybe they're not there on certain days. I think about some of the most famous ones that come across. Of course, our pal Chris Hodgson up in Cleveland with the Hodge Podge Truck or it's predecessor, Dim and Den Some. You go to New York City, you can't miss the Big Gay Ice Cream Truck. They're everywhere.

Bryan Schaaf:

Chef, I'm curious to get your perspective, because there was a time when it seemed like food trucks were a way to get your foot into the culinary world. You start on a food truck, you build your brand. Our pal, Alvin Cailan, who would have been on the podcast last year, started the Eggslut Food Truck out in Los Angeles. The idea was that eventually you grow out of it, you get your brick and mortar and you're home free. It seems like that's kind of been turned on its head, though. Would you agree? You're seeing a lot of established chefs, former podcast guests like Anthony DiBernardo who's got the Swig Rig at Swig & Swine in Charleston, or our guest coming up here in about 10 minutes, Greg Gaardbo, Chicago Culinary Kitchen. They've just added a food truck. They've already got a successful restaurant. To you, why has that happened?

Tony Biggs:

Well, the one thing great about food trucks, it's very mobile. There's quite a few different types of food trucks. There's one that can be pulled by a suburban and so it's a standalone food truck that you can work out of. You can put a smoker in there. I've seen this guy down in Asheville, South Carolina, it's equipped with a beautiful smoker to do Certified Angus Beef briskets. He's got a fryer in there. He has a flattop grill, an eight-burner propane stove. This guy is ready for bear. He can do everything from burger to a beautiful brisket sandwich. It's amazing.

Tony Biggs:

It's kind of like, yes, they have their brick and mortar. Kristina and Greg, they go down to the Bears football every Sunday and they just open up their food truck. There's something about food trucks. It's the wrapping and the personality of the truck as well. Everybody's got their own creative juices into the wrapping of the food truck, which I find really fascinating, because it's not just an old truck. They've thought it out. They have the wrapping. They have the food. They have the service, too.

Tony Biggs:

A lot of these guys and gals, it's kind of tough work, because they have little commissaries off the food truck where they prepare everything in advance and then bring it to the food truck. There's behind-the-scene preparation that people don't really understand about food trucks.

Bryan Schaaf:

Yeah.

Tony Biggs:

If you go to San Francisco and it's lunch time, you could see 10 different food trucks from dessert to appetizers to Pho to pot stickers to sandwiches. It's just amazing. You can do a potpourri. You can go around. It's a dine around of food trucks and it's just amazing. Guess what, it's a quarter of the price you would pay in a freestanding restaurant.

Bryan Schaaf:

Yeah, and that's my question for you. Used to be, it seems like there was a school of thought. You get your foot in the door with a food truck and then you go. With restaurants comes all of these added things or opportunities that you can do, plating and different cooking. With a food truck, you're very limited and you're limited to what you can fit on the truck, what you can secure that's not going to fly around when you're driving around the corner, but is there an element of cooking that, because you're limited to those, that's almost a little bit more freeing, because you don't have to put out a perfectly plated dish? You just have to put out something that's delicious.

Tony Biggs:

No. I think it goes back to Greg and Kristina. They do an unbelievable slider. They have a very nice flattop grill, maybe four to seven feet in their rig, and they're able to pop out some unbelievable sliders, like traditional, and of course they bring it to a new level, their sliders. So, yeah. As long as it's really good, tasty, and affordable, people will come back. You do not have to have a center of the plate. It doesn't have to look like a five star Michelin star restaurant. It can be good and people just want to, they'll come back and come back and come back.

Tony Biggs:

There's a place in New England, around Boston, that serves chowder. I mean, that's it. Chowder with some oyster crackers on top, Tabasco. It's just magical. I've ordered two or three at one time, right? Yeah, just all I want is good food, I want an affordable price, and I want it quick.

Bryan Schaaf:

Yeah, well said. Chef, on that note, we are going to take a break and turn it over. We are going to sit down with probably, pound for pound, along with we'll say Jeremy Umansky and Alvin Cailan, one of the most referenced individuals who appears in this podcast through our first two seasons, Greg Gaardbo, who's the Dos Equis man of food. He's got a print business, he's got restaurants, he sets things on fire, he's got... I just saw them post on the Facebook, they've got a lounge chair that's been in their living room that's got a skeleton sitting in it.

Tony Biggs:

It's funny, I've sat in that. I had to get out quickly, though.

Bryan Schaaf:

So stick around here on the Meat Speak Podcast. Greg Gaardbo, from Chicago Culinary Kitchen, just outside of Chicago, out in Palatine, is going to be joining us to talk about the Chicago Culinary Kitchen

food truck and, of course, he and his lovely wife Kristina and their journey to where they're at. Stick around here on the Meat Speak Podcast, powered by the Certified Angus Beef brand.

Bryan Schaaf:

Back here on the Meat Speak Podcast, powered by the Certified Angus Beef brand. Sitting in the dining room of at least what's going to be called Chicago Culinary Kitchen IV, a few months before it transforms into, what's the name again?

Greg Gaardbo:

CCK Mex.

Bryan Schaaf:

CCK Mex. Palatine, Illinois, just outside of Chicago-Ohare, if you are familiar with the greater Chicagoland area. I'm sitting here with a gentleman whose name comes up frequently on the podcast and it's so good to actually have him on here so he can actually talk about himself instead of us talking about him. Greg Gaardbo, Chicago Culinary Kitchen. How you doing, sir?

Greg Gaardbo:

Good, yourself? Thanks for having me.

Bryan Schaaf:

Man, thank you for taking time out of your Saturday prep, man. Saturday, Sunday are your biggest days. You guys are-

Greg Gaardbo:

Well, it's our only days, really, that we're open to the public for here.

Bryan Schaaf:

Yeah, so you guys are getting ready to turn and burn. Before we get into the nuts and bolts, and we've had a discussion about food trucks and the how's and the why's and where it's at from a cultural standpoint, but before we get into that, tell us about Chicago Culinary Kitchen, how it started, where it's been, and you guys are, every time you turn around it seems like another award is being thrown your way.

Greg Gaardbo:

We try to do the best we can. We try to serve the best products we can, having the best partners. That always is very helpful. We started in the backyard. One thing lead to another. We started catering out of here, this location. We needed a commissary, so one thing lead to another and we started opening on the weekends. Some people didn't understand it, the weekend thing, and then it blossomed overnight and people will wait in line just to get in, just like any place you go in Texas sometimes.

Bryan Schaaf:

I'm glad you mentioned that. So Texas barbecue is what you guys opened on. It's what your standard menu that's actually sitting right above your head as we're sitting here, features a lot of Texas barbecue classics: brisket, hot links. You guys intentionally won't sauce the brisket, correct?

Greg Gaardbo:

No, never. Why would I sauce brisket, right?

Bryan Schaaf:

Spoken like a true Texan.

Greg Gaardbo:

Yeah. Who would ever sauce brisket anyways? That'll anger me. If you put sauce on that, I'm like, "It needs not." Ribs I can understand, all that other stuff, but that beef should stand alone.

Bryan Schaaf:

Bless you, brother. Bless you, brother. Aside from the Texas barbecue, and honestly it's probably one of the biggest reasons that you guys come up in conversation, it seems like whenever we're talking about Diana Clark, who is obviously a big proponent of using cuts that most people don't use, you guys think outside of the box on a lot of things. Your specials, I'm looking at the wall right now. You've got spicy kimchi salsa verde. You've got a lot of your sides up right now, but you guys basically, in addition to the barbecue menu, you guys put specials on of basically whatever you're feeling like each week, right?

Greg Gaardbo:

That's right. The main menu never changes and then the specials will always change, because that allows me to do fun things. Yeah, we'll do specialty cuts of meat. I wish you guys wouldn't advertise sirloin flap anymore, because that was my jam and now it's too expensive. Whatever. But, no, that's a really good cut. A lot of times you can find different purveyors that have things, whether they're fresh to frozen or whatever, that, "I have this this week." "Oh, I can make that work." It's a wide scope of things.

Bryan Schaaf:

Excellent. I want to make sure I didn't hit the wrong button. There we go.

Bryan Schaaf:

About CCK, it's you, it's your wife, Kristina, who's a beer cicerone, which I actually had to Google way back when I heard that for the first time. It's a beer sommelier, right?

Greg Gaardbo:

Yes.

Bryan Schaaf:

She's one of the most knowledgeable people. Actually, she has been a guest on the podcast before you, if you go back into the archives. She's featured in one of the barbecue episodes in season two, along with Diva Q from down in Florida, talking about beer pairings and whatnot.

Bryan Schaaf:

What you guys have built here is really, it's like a meat and beer empire. But if you look around the walls here, it's like an adult playground. There's derogatory statements about lettuce. It's meat, beer, skulls, rock and roll. Knowing you and Kristina, this is like, it's basically if you guys emptied out your brains and put it on a wall, this is you guys to a T, right?

Greg Gaardbo:

It is. That's what it is. We took things that we liked and things we didn't like and, of course, we didn't use those items we didn't like. We've been doing a lot of barbecue places and a lot of them are always the same. It's old, rusty license plates and some stuff they found at a flea market, whatever. It's that rustic look. There's nothing wrong with that, but I'm like, "I want to twist this up. I want to have the same thing, but only let's rock and roll this instead."

Bryan Schaaf:

Yeah.

Greg Gaardbo:

I can't listen to Conway Twitty music. Even though it may be cute, but I just can't do it.

Bryan Schaaf:

Not that there's anything wrong with Conway Twitty.

Greg Gaardbo:

No, no.

Bryan Schaaf:

As you guys have expanded, you have a mobile churrasco unit that you guys would have done. I think you actually did that before you had this space, is that right?

Greg Gaardbo:

Yes, yes. We had the mobile churrascos first.

Bryan Schaaf:

Yeah, so you guys, mobile churrascos you guys do a lot down at Soldier Field, a lot of large scale catering type of events with churrascos. You've got an old pickup truck that you guys have modified that you can actually cook under the hood on, which I think you've referred to as the Battle Wagon at times.

Greg Gaardbo:

That's Mad Max.

Bryan Schaaf:

That's Mad Max. Right on. Noted.

Greg Gaardbo:

Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Bryan Schaaf:

Parked out front is your food truck. Tell us about, why was the food truck something that you guys wanted to dive into? Because a lot of times, you hear about restaurants, they start on a food truck, build their reputation, and then they open the space like you guys have here in Palatine. You guys went in reverse. I guess, what was the thought process behind, "Let's get a food truck now that we're already successful?"

Greg Gaardbo:

Opening two days a week, we're only open for six hours. I mean, lunch. Just like, let's say, Snows. They're only opened for breakfast. What time are they open?

Bryan Schaaf:

It's pretty limited, yeah.

Greg Gaardbo:

Yeah, it's very, and I think they're only open on Saturday on top of it.

Bryan Schaaf:

Yeah.

Greg Gaardbo:

You create the demand and you control the supply. Or is that the other way around? Yeah. The food truck was just another extension for us to bring people our food and to help get our name out there as well, then. I mean, the food truck is a very valuable asset to the restaurant.

Bryan Schaaf:

Tell us about the truck itself. It's not your standard food truck. I mean, it's your standard food truck from the standpoint of there are cooking devices on there.

Greg Gaardbo:

Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Bryan Schaaf:

You guys turn and burn a lot of food out and pump out a lot of food, but the modifications you guys have put in, the lights, everything that just draws attention that if you guys pull up on a curb with that thing people are going to notice.

Greg Gaardbo:

We've been to a lot of food truck events and I noticed or I took picture, and everything just looked bland. Even though they had graphics or whatever on the wall, or on the side of their trucks, everything just looked bland. I'm like, how do I make this where this will stand out versus everybody else? It's not

different than, you get served a plate of food, you eat with your eyes first, right? So let's have a visual appealing.

Greg Gaardbo:

This truck is all stainless on the outside, or diamond plated aluminum. I know that it's going to reflect light no matter where we're at as well, and reflect the lightings that we have on there as well. We have the LED lights. They'll shine in purple or pink. We advertise the brand, CAB, Certified Angus Beef. Our brand partners is there as well, so that's knowing that this is the beef that we're serving or this is the burger that we're serving on here.

Bryan Schaaf:

Excellent. Talk about the food. You guys put a lot of burgers off of that. You've got a flattop, you've got a grill. What is the menu you guys push off of your truck versus what you guys are typically known for here?

Greg Gaardbo:

Usually, again, the food truck we can do anything on. It's a \$100,000 kitchen, right? You can do whatever you want on that. It all depends what the customer wants as well. Typically, we'll do chopped brisket, we'll do pulled pork. We only do the chopped brisket on the truck. We don't do it here at the restaurant, because I don't like chopping the brisket, but slicing brisket on the truck is very cumbersome on there. People don't always understand it. It's just best to chop the brisket.

Greg Gaardbo:

We'll do our ribs on there as well. We'll char them and, then again, it's the same thing. We'll do whatever. We do a lot of tacos on there as well. Yesterday, I did porchetta on there and it's fricking outstanding.

Bryan Schaaf:

Yeah, yeah. All right, walk me through your porchetta. You guys tends to do things a little differently. I'm guessing it wasn't your standard porchetta.

Greg Gaardbo:

This was very traditional for the most... Last week, before, I did a Korean one. I stuffed with kimchi and gochujang and basically we made the marinade for char siu and we just dropped it in the char siu overnight. That thing, the color was beautiful on it. We kind of played with the flavors on that. The one we did the other day was very Mediterranean. Herbs, garlic, salt, pepper, lemon, fennel. You roll it up overnight, salt, let it go, and then we sliced it the next day. We cooked it and then we refrigerated it and then we cooked it and then we put it on the flattop for a sandwich.

Bryan Schaaf:

That's glorious.

Greg Gaardbo:

Yeah, it was amazing.

Bryan Schaaf:

That's beautiful. One of the things that I noticed, and honestly one of my pet peeves about food trucks in general, obviously the lines are great. It's good for business, but sometimes you can only push food out so quickly on a food truck. You guys have added an Alto-Shaam, which I would assume allows you to get ahead, allows you to pump food out a little quicker. Has that always been a fixture?

Greg Gaardbo:

Yeah, we used to just have one Alto-Shaam on there, just to hold, and now we have two Alto-Shaams. Alto-Shaam, send the check, please. We have two now and those are, I mean, I think we can put five or six full sheet pans in there at one time. It holds a lot of food.

Greg Gaardbo:

I've seen trucks that, they'll have the commissary and then they have to go to point A to point B. How do you carry your food hot, right? I don't understand how, that doesn't work. We have a generator on board as well. We also have the landline cord that we can hook up to something else as well, but you have to travel with your food hot and cold. So the Alto-Shaams are a really great benefit to the truck then.

Bryan Schaaf:

Excellent. Well said, man.

Greg Gaardbo:

Because you can cook ahead of time, even if you're there 20 minutes earlier. Let's just say you do a tray of burgers then, and then you're ahead. Usually our line, if we looked at another food truck and you see a long line, that's because either they're not doing the right, they're not organized enough or the product that they're making takes too long. On the food truck, we want to move people in and out. Usually the order will go out, people will order and that order's almost ready to go after that money is collected. It's pretty fast.

Bryan Schaaf:

That's awesome, that's awesome. All right, I want to go all the way back to the beginning in terms of how I met you guys. The first part is our mutual friend, actually our friend who, I think last time I walked in you guys had a wooden cutting board with his image carved into it, Rick Tramonto, of course another podcast guest. He was actually on the very first episode we did all about why meat matters in the world. I met you, actually Rick called me and said, "Hey, I've got this guy here I need you to meet. His name's Greg."

Bryan Schaaf:

Tell me about that. You guys are getting started and there just happens to be a two-time James Beard award winner, one of the iconic American chefs in history, he's just hanging out in your kitchen with you guys.

Greg Gaardbo:

Well, Rick and I clicked. We did a culinary fight club event one time and Rick was one of the judges. Of course, everybody was doing pork or something like that. We decided to do fish. We did fish that day.

We did these beautiful red drum fishes and Rick's a big fish guy, so he was very intrigued. We happened to win that day and then, I don't know, we started talking, hanging out, and then we became pals. It's just, it's kind of... Well, we have rock and roll. He's a big metalhead as well, so we have that common ground as well, and food.

Bryan Schaaf:

Yeah. All right. Tell me about, how did you get into cooking? Because your background, you have one of the most interesting... You have one of those resumes like, I always think of Bo Jackson, who's actually not far from here. We're in Palatine, Illinois. I think he's down in another one of the suburbs, but you hear these stories, Greg did this, Greg did that. You're like, did he really do that?

Bryan Schaaf:

How did you get into all of this? Because your background isn't necessarily in cooking.

Greg Gaardbo:

No, it's not. I mean, I have an art background. We opened, I opened my main company, Shockwaves, which I've had for over 33 something years. We do screen printing, embroidery. I do a lot of signage out of there. I do a lot of woodworking out of there as well. That was basically, I mean, I had a lot of odd jobs. I always wanted to be in the industry, culinary industry. I always wanted to cook or be the chef and I never really had the time to do it. Shockwaves allowed me, then, as we progressed to transfer over my time, to split my time between there and here, then, so I could do this as well.

Bryan Schaaf:

Excellent, and you just dabbled in the kitchen? Picked things up? I mean, obviously coming from an art type background, your brain works a little differently than maybe your standard recipe followers.

Greg Gaardbo:

Yeah, it's being creative. That's the cool thing about it, is just being creative and creativity and art. It works in food. It works in all different aspects then.

Bryan Schaaf:

Well said. All right, I got to ask you. Tell me about the tattoos. You and Kristina, from early on in your relationship, you guys have dates to go get tattoos, right?

Greg Gaardbo:

Yeah.

Bryan Schaaf:

I mean, yeah.

Greg Gaardbo:

We would go downtown. We'd go get tattoos and we'd go to Kuma's and eat and drink afterwards and just nurse our tattoo wounds and whatever, go from there, and then that was our fun thing. Now we go shooting instead. That's our Tuesday date night. We go to the range and go shoot.

Bryan Schaaf:

Excellent. Do you have a favorite tattoo? I've got an old school Certified Angus Beef tattoo on my arm. You are the only person I know with a Sysco tattoo.

Greg Gaardbo:

I do. It was one of those things. We were at an event and somebody said, "Ah, you wouldn't do it." And I was like, "Don't tell me that." And then I got the Sysco tattoo. It's a good thing.

Bryan Schaaf:

Excellent, excellent. And they do good work, right? They take care of you guys.

Greg Gaardbo:

Sysco's a great company for us. We do a lot of great stuff with them.

Bryan Schaaf:

Outstanding.

Greg Gaardbo:

Good things happen through Sysco.

Bryan Schaaf:

Send the check, right?

Greg Gaardbo:

Yeah.

Bryan Schaaf:

All right, so tell us what's next. You guys, we mentioned at the very beginning, this particular space that's been your home since really the birth of Chicago Culinary Kitchen, it's going to be a Tex-Mex place. You guys have something big coming up.

Greg Gaardbo:

No, not Tex-Mex. It'll be fusion, basically, but this will not be Tex-Mex like that. This will be strictly tacos, margaritas, stuff like that. Kind of let's say Big Star, kind of. There's a couple places that I emulate from, that I want to emulate from. I have been watching a lot of Netflix. Taco Chronicles is a great one. I love that. Sonora Town. I also like Los Tacos No. 1 out of New York. I like that style, where it's basically, I don't want to call it fast food. It's fast casual. I think dealing with who knows when this BS is going to end, so having fast casual, where it's in and out, takeout even, works really well that way.

Bryan Schaaf:

Yeah.

Greg Gaardbo:

So that's what we're basing it on, but we'll do some traditional stuff and then we'll do a lot of fusion tacos as well.

Bryan Schaaf:

Beautiful, and where's this place going?

Greg Gaardbo:

This'll move down the street to a larger location. We'll be at Lake Cook Commons. Lake Cook and Hicks. We'll be in probably four times the size of the space then and this'll be an open kitchen concept. The outside deck is going to be phenomenal. It'll be probably one of the best decks in the area.

Bryan Schaaf:

Excellent. When do you guys expect to be open?

Greg Gaardbo:

I'm guessing somewhere January, February. Building something takes always longer than you think.

Bryan Schaaf:

Having nothing to do with the actual building process, right?

Greg Gaardbo:

Well, getting your subs in a row, all that other stuff, getting your permits. It always, yeah, it just takes time.

Bryan Schaaf:

All right, and tell us about the new space. You guys are bigger, larger, louder, more fire, things like that. What are you guys going to have there?

Greg Gaardbo:

I think our new claim to fame will be, oh, man, somebody's going to steal this. We're going to do something called the Texas Brexfas, so we spell breakfast the same like Texas. We'll be taking barbecue and so we'll do a brisket and gravy, right? Maybe with a poblano sauce or something like that. Something different, but we'll have pancake boards and all that. I think once a month we'll do a pajama party on Sunday, so everybody can come straight, have beer for breakfast, that type of atmosphere. We'll open a little bit early, but we basically take the same barbecue and transfer it over into let's say breakfast food then. You know, pulled pork on a cornbread pancake, stuff like that.

Bryan Schaaf:

Beautiful. All right, walk us through. You are known for, at least to me, you're known for somebody who does their homework to the Nth degree before doing anything. You take the time, you research, you make sure things are as authentic as can be. I know obviously you spent a lot of time down in Texas when you were doing Texas barbecue. I know you were on a Tex-Mex kick for a long time as well.

Bryan Schaaf:

In your travels, especially with your affinity for Texas barbecue and things like that, if you could, give us a rundown of some of your favorite barbecue places that you've been to as you've been out.

Greg Gaardbo:

In Texas?

Bryan Schaaf:

Anywhere.

Greg Gaardbo:

It's hard, because there's so many different places with certain, different things. I really like Smitty's. I just like it because you are thrown back in history and that's what you get there. I like that they don't have, there's no silverware there. You know what? It's the same attitude we have here. If you don't like it, go somewhere else. If you don't like this, I don't know what to tell you. Take it or leave it. That's pretty much how it is there. I like those old school places in Lockhart, you know.

Greg Gaardbo:

I do like the new school stuff. I mean, we've been to Franklins twice. I never ate there once, because I just never, we never could get in. I just didn't have the patience to wait four hours in line, so we never tried that, but. A lot of times when you go to certain places though, too, sometimes you may be disappointed. It doesn't matter. I'm not saying barbecue, just whatever, but you're like the hype is not there anymore. You're like, "I tried this. I don't understand what the hype is."

Bryan Schaaf:

Yeah.

Greg Gaardbo:

I like la Barbecue. I'm talking in Austin. Freedmen's was fun, if you've never been. You keep on naming different...

Bryan Schaaf:

Yeah.

Greg Gaardbo:

There were some odd places. Valentino's, I liked.

Bryan Schaaf:

Yeah.

Greg Gaardbo:

There was a weird place that we went by Valentino's. It was all weird stuff outside. I don't remember the name of it, but it was pretty cool.

Bryan Schaaf:

That's awesome. Outstanding. On that note, Greg Gaardbo, Chicago Culinary Kitchen in Palatine, Illinois, and I'll go ahead and throw this plug in there. When you fly into Chicago, the thing I always dread is having to get in a rental car and drive towards downtown, because it's like an hour. It's an hour plus to go 19 miles.

Greg Gaardbo:

Yeah.

Bryan Schaaf:

Before you do that, prepare yourself. Drive in the opposite direction on I-90, come up to Palatine. Especially now, you guys will have expanded hours at the new location.

Greg Gaardbo:

Yeah, we'll be open for lunch and dinner. We're not going to be open that late. Kind of like Abby Mae's is open, I don't know what time are they even up until? I think until sell out, you know? And that's that. You still got to do the sell out thing.

Bryan Schaaf:

Amen.

Greg Gaardbo:

Yeah.

Bryan Schaaf:

Amen. Greg Gaardbo, Chicago Culinary Kitchen. Thanks for joining us on the Meat Speak Podcast.

Greg Gaardbo:

Thank you so much.

Bryan Schaaf:

Thanks brother.

Greg Gaardbo:

Thanks.

Bryan Schaaf:

Back here on the Meat Speak Podcast, powered by the Certified Angus Beef brand. Bryan Schaaf, Chef Tony Biggs, talking all things food trucks. Man, Chef, there is a cocktail bar in Tremont, in Cleveland. Will Hollingsworth, a great friend of ours owns it. They don't do food. You go to this cocktail bar, right? You get a couple cocktails, it's glorious. You walk outside. At the top of the hill, the Barrio food truck is sitting there.

Tony Biggs:

Wow.

Bryan Schaaf:

It's like a beacon in the night. Two gentlemen manning the Barrio food truck, just waiting with tacos in hand. Aah! I was having this discussion with a couple chef friends. After 2:00 a.m.-

Tony Biggs:

You know, you're seeing more of that, like that collaboration with bars and food trucks. The bars don't want to mess with food.

Bryan Schaaf:

Yeah.

Tony Biggs:

They don't want to mess with the food costs. So, hey, why not have a food truck out there?

Bryan Schaaf:

Yeah.

Tony Biggs:

And it's kind of a safety type of thing. Hey, maybe you had a couple too many beers, right?

Bryan Schaaf:

Yeah.

Tony Biggs:

And now you're going to get a nice shawarma, fresh, right off the stick with a beautiful pita bread and some tzatziki sauce, and voila, you're home free. It's just beautiful.

Bryan Schaaf:

Yeah.

Tony Biggs:

I don't know if you know this, but two years ago I was in our local grocery store down the street. I drove up and I went, "Whoa, are you kidding me? What is this?" Johnsonville Brauts, I'm going to give them a little shout out, they had their big grill truck. This is an 18-wheeler grill truck that they go around the country and serve their bratwurst. Okay, now I'm working on the same idea. I am. I had a company that we collaborated with and they did a beautiful design of a new Certified Angus Beef food truck, 18-wheeler, but ours is going to have a Santa Maria grill. We're going to be able to do half a cow, 300 pounds, on this grill. Once it's approved, I hope you guys are listening, once it's approved.

Bryan Schaaf:

No pressure, guys.

Tony Biggs:

No pressure, guys, but now it's out there. Can you imagine getting a police escort in downtown Austin, Texas, with our beautiful food truck?

Bryan Schaaf:

I only hope that you're going to be the one driving it.

Tony Biggs:

I need my license.

Bryan Schaaf:

And you probably need to work on your CB radio lingo as well. Be like, "We got a great big convoy pulling in here."

Tony Biggs:

Listen, I can't even drive a U-haul to move my apartment. Now you're going to give me an 18-wheeler, right? I can't turn that corner.

Bryan Schaaf:

Glorious. You know, Chef, you mentioned the Johnsonville truck, right? There are certain foods that just work, right? Food trucks are portable. Portable food is what works, because if I want to get something, I don't really want to get something that I have to find a table to feast on.

Tony Biggs:

Sure, sure.

Bryan Schaaf:

What works?

Tony Biggs:

You've seen everything, Bryan, in a food truck, from corn dogs to nachos. The nachos, the cheese sauce is dripping all over you while you have the kids. I personally like the innovative type of food that's on food trucks, like a shawarma, an authentic shawarma that's being carved right off the grill, beautiful pita bread. I love a Pho. You can make these type of things in your commissary and they easily can be put into a steam table and easily served within minutes. And that's what people want. You don't want a line dragging out for half an hour. You want people to serve.

Tony Biggs:

Tacos, really good. Light tacos, amazing. Tacos are in right now. Who doesn't love tacos, right?

Bryan Schaaf:

You know, one of my favorite Mexican food trucks, obviously we mentioned Barrios just now, but it lives over by the Akron-Canton area. It's called the Funky Truckeria. It's phenomenal, phenomenal tacos.

Tony Biggs:

I haven't had that one.

Bryan Schaaf:

It's over in your neck of the woods.

Tony Biggs:

Really?

Bryan Schaaf:

You should totally, yeah.

Tony Biggs:

I'm going to go see it, I'm going to go see it. But a brisket sandwich, a brisket sandwich with some beautiful pickles, a nice aioli on there and a potato bun? Amazing. These are things you can cook in your commissary, bring it to a location, and voila, you're serving hundreds of people.

Bryan Schaaf:

Amen. I will also say, this should come as no surprise if you listen to the podcast for anything, burgers, right?

Tony Biggs:

Burgers.

Bryan Schaaf:

The Chicago Culinary Kitchen burger that they push out off that food truck, it's not just a great burger for a food truck. It's a great burger anywhere.

Tony Biggs:

I think they're using three kinds, right?

Bryan Schaaf:

Yeah.

Tony Biggs:

Three different blends of meat?

Bryan Schaaf:

Yeah.

Tony Biggs:

Brisket, round, and chuck.

Bryan Schaaf:

Yeah.

Tony Biggs:

Yeah, and then they blend that and then they fry the onions right underneath.

Bryan Schaaf:

Yeah, it's just perfection. Actually, another one of my favorite burger trucks is a gal in Cleveland. The truck is called Betty's Bombass Burgers. Let me tell you what, it's good burgers, dude.

Tony Biggs:

I'm going to give another shout out here, because I think this is what people are doing for studies of areas. I keep seeing the Chic-fil-A truck down in one of the churches down the street, selling out of their food truck. I was thinking, okay, they're doing a demographic study here, because they want to see how many eat Chic-fil-A, and they're right down the street from the Certified Angus Beef, but I love Chic-fil-A. Don't get me wrong. I love double pickle and mayo, okay?

Bryan Schaaf:

All day long. You know what's funny about the Chic-fil-A truck? Because I noticed it here, too. People line up for the Chic-fil-A truck, and I'm saying this, I love Chic-fil-A. I'm a big fan.

Tony Biggs:

Me, too. I do, too.

Bryan Schaaf:

People line up for the Chic-fil-A truck, and the line, it's like Franklin Barbecue. Like, it's three hours long and I'm like, "Guys."

Tony Biggs:

I love Chic-fil-A. I'm with you. I just wish somebody was out there saying, "Hey, how are you, sir? Can I take your order?"

Bryan Schaaf:

To be clear, we are Certified Angus Beef, but every once in a while we do indulge in the poultry as well.

Tony Biggs:

Pizza and all that kind of stuff, right?

Bryan Schaaf:

Yeah, I mean, I don't want to expose myself too much, but pre-COVID the folks who worked the Chic-fil-A in the Cleveland-Hopkins airport knew me by name.

Tony Biggs:

What?

Bryan Schaaf:

Tend to hit that a little bit.

Tony Biggs:

Here's your dozen, Bryan.

Bryan Schaaf:

That's right. We know what this guy wants. And on that note, we are going to put a bow on this episode. I don't know even know which episode this is. It's season two, it's like 14 or 15, I don't know, but this is the Meat Speak Podcast, powered by the Certified Angus Beef brand. Not Chic-fil-A, Certified Angus Beef. I'm Bryan Schaaf, this is Chef Tony Biggs. If this is your first time tuning in, know that you can catch us across all of your major podcasting platforms. The big ones, of course, Apple, Google Play, Spotify.

Bryan Schaaf:

I get a list of every platform that we appear on. I didn't know half of these existed. It's amazing.

Tony Biggs:

Hey, I know, right? Hey, you know what? We're gaining traction on our show.

Bryan Schaaf:

Yeah.

Tony Biggs:

I got to tell you, a few people have been calling me personally. I don't know how. Are you giving my phone number out, by the way? Because I had to talk to his guy in Minnesota. I love him. We talked for an hour about braised beef shank and he listened to the podcast. So, please, tell your friends, tell everybody. We love you guys and gals. Come on back.

Bryan Schaaf:

I think I'm going to put your cell phone on a billboard. You're going to be like-

Tony Biggs:

I was on a billboard one time.

Bryan Schaaf:

You're going to be like the Butterball Turkey hotline guy with beef.

Tony Biggs:

I was Santa Claus on a billboard in the Philippines at one time.

Bryan Schaaf:

That's amazing.

This transcript was exported on Jan 07, 2021 - view latest version [here](#).

Tony Biggs:

I'm not kidding. Yeah, I wish I had a picture of that to show you.

Bryan Schaaf:

Once again, Tony Biggs is the most interesting man on the planet. On that note, also, you can check us out by visiting CertifiedAngusBeef.com/podcast. That one, actually, is probably the best one, because it's got our pictures there. You will notice, probably by now you're asking yourself, "What happened to Diana?" Don't worry, Diana is still with us, Diana Clark, meat scientist. She is across the way, across the parking lot.

Tony Biggs:

She's busy today.

Bryan Schaaf:

They're actually doing a photo shoot. They bring in these whole sides and she's like a food stylist, but with raw beef.

Tony Biggs:

She's busy today.

Bryan Schaaf:

It's wicked awesome.

Tony Biggs:

Wicked awesome, wicked awesome.

Bryan Schaaf:

Chef Tony Biggs. I'm Bryan Schaaf. This is the Meat Speak Podcast, powered by the Certified Angus Beef brand. Until next time, enjoy a delightful food truck.

Tony Biggs:

Bon appetite.