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Bryan Schaaf:

Back here on the Meat Speak Podcast, powered by the Certified Angus Beef brand. Brian Schaaf joined here with Chef Tony Biggs, meat scientist Diana Clark. Guys, how you doing?

Diana Clark:

I'm doing fairly well.

Tony Biggs:

Fantastic.

Bryan Schaaf:

Nice.

Diana Clark:

How about you?

Bryan Schaaf:

I'm really good. Every once in awhile, we have a subject, we have a topic, and I find myself trying really, really hard to adhere to the conservative nature that Certified Angus Beef is. We're owned by farmers and ranchers, but this one, the worst elements of my nature come to mind when I think, "What should we call this episode?" Because we're talking about sausages, right?

Diana Clark:

Yes.

Bryan Schaaf:

And it's a sausage party, right?

Tony Biggs:

Sausage party.

Bryan Schaaf:

But there's so many connotations that you people in society have ruined what could be a really good title for this episode because we are talking all about delicious sausages, which, for me, it was an eye-opening experience. I always thought of sausages as just something that if you went to the Bob Evans and you ordered the piggy pancakes, right? The little tiny sausages-

Tony Biggs:

That's how we started.

Diana Clark:

The hot links.

Tony Biggs:

Yeah, as a kid. Those little sausages as big as your finger. They call them snausages. Snausages.

Bryan Schaaf:

But as my own, I guess, food acumen has grown over the years, particularly as I've gotten to travel and feast at barbecue places, sausage is a culture in itself. Would you both agree? Tony, sausage, man ... This has been around before Bob Evans, I'll tell you that.

Tony Biggs:

Well, it has been around since the Roman empire, and so let's break down the sausage a little bit. It's a cylinder of meat that's encased in a skin, and back then, we all have to realize there was no refrigeration back then, so everything was preserved with salt. It dates back to the Middle East. Turkey, Iraq, Kuwait. They have a sausage called sujuk, and it's made with beef. And then it's got seven different Arabic spices that's blended in this. So it just kind of evolved from there.

Tony Biggs:

But people want to take credit from around the world. You have Germany with the bratwurst. You have the knockwurst. You have the Italians with the hot Italian sausage, the mortadella. Okay. Diana is going to talk about the mortadella that we make here, all beef. But you can put olives in the mortadella. You can put pistachios. You can put chunks of beautiful rendered fat in the mortadella. And then you've got merguez, right? You've got the merguez, right?

Tony Biggs:

And so it just goes around the world of the passion, as Brian just mentioned, with folks today. Our barbecue folks, our chefs around the world. How about the French? They think they invent everything, right? Saucisson. All right? I'm not putting down my French friends. I love them. I have a lot of them. They're going to go, "That's right, Tony. We did. We did invent the saucisson."

Tony Biggs:

But, Diana, you go onto it. We make a lot of great sausages at the culinary center. We have done some great things. Tell us a little bit about what we've done at the center.

Diana Clark:

Yeah. So we just try to make ... Like Tony was saying, there's so many different cultures, backgrounds with sausages. So what I like to do when we're creating new sausages is try to jump into different countries. For example, for Italy specifically, I'll go to Google.it, so that it's the Google for Italy, and I'll search [foreign language 00:03:56] whatever type of sausage I'm looking for. So that way I get authentic sausages from that country, and I'll try to do that with a vast amount of countries, so we can get these different flavors. Because, to me, that's the neatest part is that there is so much history in the sausage.

Diana Clark:

And then on top of that, you also are taking ... Pretty much, you could take whatever you want. If you had leftover products within your fridge ... One day, we had a lot of mushroom and Swiss cheese. I made a mushroom and Swiss sausage, and it was fantastic. But it was really just taking that extra product. Like Tony was saying, you could take mortadella and put some nuts in it. You can put rendered fat down it,

which we have a ton of, so we try to use that in our sausages as well. So it's kind of neat to have that ability to take that cultural experience, and then to lessen that food waste and bring it together.

Bryan Schaaf:

Yeah. Our guest that is going to join us in a little bit is Arnis Robbins from Evie Mae's BBQ. And you touched on something. Sausage, there's an artistry to it, but there's also a level of economics that goes into it. And Arnis was saying they didn't come out of the chute making their own sausage. They decided to make their own sausage when they realized how much prime Certified Angus Beef brisket trim they were just discarding.

Diana Clark:

Yep.

Bryan Schaaf:

To your point, you can make it out of anything, and the thing that I love about sausage is certain times in culinary, the end product is maybe different than the sum of its parts. With sausage, it is the sum of its parts. If you make a sausage, and you include Swiss cheese and whatever, it tastes like sausage with Swiss cheese and whatever. So, really, even if you are a little lower down the scale in terms of creativity and in terms of culinary acumen, you can make whatever sausages you want and make them taste like however you want them to taste, right?

Diana Clark:

Exactly. And I think one of the neat things that our chefs have done, too, is taking these sausages that we've had and actually using that for more of a charcuterie board. That, to me, is actually a true charcuterie board, too, because it's a cooked and sometimes cooled sausage. And so Tony, I think, has done a phenomenal job, and then bringing out those flavors in the sausage with different pairings as well.

Tony Biggs:

Yeah. And do you remember what we do with those sausages? We pair them with our favorite beverage, [inaudible 00:06:29]. Different beers from around the world. Diana makes a beautiful chorizo, so we do that at the culinary center, talking about cultures, again. I think you and I have gone around the world with sausage-making.

Diana Clark:

Yeah, I think so.

Tony Biggs:

From kielbasa to chorizo to longganisa.

Diana Clark:

Yes.

Tony Biggs:

The Philippines, okay? That one flavor of anesthesia wine, it's called. It's got star anise flavor in their wine, and that's what they blend their pork meat. Obviously, we do beef here.

Diana Clark:

Yeah.

Bryan Schaaf:

Can you guys get into a little bit is the idea of making your own sausage, and we have a pretty wide array of listeners who tune into this podcast. Some are chefs, some are pit masters, some are weekend warriors at home in their backyard who spend eight-to-five Monday-through-Friday peddling insurance, but on the weekend, the sleeves roll up, and they're in the backyard.

Bryan Schaaf:

Making sausage isn't nearly as difficult as one might think, but there are certain pitfalls that you could easily fall into if you don't know what you're doing. Can you walk us through, how can you do this, make sure that it's not only food safe, but also make sure that things are chilled to the point where you're not just going to ruin a batch of sausage?

Diana Clark:

Yeah, that's the main thing. You want to make sure that the product's always cold. Your salt level is really key. Usually, you target between one-and-a-half to two percent salt. That's your goal. We had someone come in one time, and they went back and made sausages, and they told me how much salt they put in, and things weren't holding together. That salt is crucial, not just for flavor, not for preservation, but for binding. So it actually causes the proteins to unfold, and then it is able to encapsulate some of that fat and water, and hold together, and create more of that meat emulsion. So that is definitely key to have.

Diana Clark:

And then you have your sugar usually in there to offset some of that saltiness flavor. And then also you don't have to, but we do add in nitrite into our sausages. One, it helps with that warmed over flavor, so if you are going to make a smoked sausage, chill it down and heat it back up later, it helps prevent that. It makes the color stay that pink, and it looks incredible to me when I see that. And then also it helps with just food safety in general, storing that shelf life a bit longer. So, yeah. It's pretty awesome to make, and now I want to make sausage.

Bryan Schaaf:

Can you guys also talk about ... I think when a lot of folks think about sausages, their mind instantly goes to pork.

Diana Clark:

Yeah.

Bryan Schaaf:

And justifiably so, right? A lot of sausages traditionally have been made with pork. You guys have managed to take certain recipes that do sort of live in that vein and use beef with them, which if you're out there listening, and you end up with a lot of beef trim, you all can make sausage out of that.

Diana Clark:

Oh, yeah.

Bryan Schaaf:

And here's how, right?

Diana Clark:

Yeah. Really, I feel like sometimes pork is not as powerful as beef, so with beef, you might need to amp up a little bit of your seasoning to make sure that flavor carries over.

Diana Clark:

And your other main thing you really want to look at, too, just from a creation standpoint is you have to think about, one, your consumer is going to eat it. So if you make a batch of sausages, and they sit in the fridge for about two weeks, you want to test it at that two week standpoint for the flavor because your flavor variation will change as it sits. I used to work at Sara Lee. We worked on sausages there. We would actually wait three to four weeks before we'd actually test the product to see how it tasted, because that's when a consumer would eat it. So it's making sure that you're doing that correctly.

Diana Clark:

You can also, if you want to, you can make it right away, stuff it, and then you could freeze it the next day, and that's really going to hold in that flavor, and that's what we do at the culinary center. And we pull them out, and thaw them, and then the chefs take them from there.

Tony Biggs:

Yeah. Amazing. And the creativity that you bring to the table. We've actually done this bogus boudin. Of course, you know what boudin is, right? It's a blood sausage. Some add rice to it from New Orleans and Latin America. It's called Morcilla, and we use that. But we did one with charcoal powder. Remember this, Diana?

Diana Clark:

Yes, uh-huh.

Tony Biggs:

And we call it bogus boudin, and when folks came in and tasted this, they go, "Jeff, Jeff, this is the best Morcilla, the best blood sausage we've ever had." And we had to tell them there's absolutely no blood in it, okay?

Diana Clark:

That's why they're so good.

Tony Biggs:

It's only charcoal powder.

Diana Clark:

Oh, goodness. That was excellent.

Bryan Schaaf:

Well, I'll tell you what, on that note, we are going to take a break, and we will be back here in a moment where we're going to sit down with our pal Arnis Robbins from Evie Mae Barbecue down ... We'll say Lubbock, Texas, right?

Diana Clark:

Yeah.

Bryan Schaaf:

Home of ... Right?

Diana Clark:

Oh, don't say it.

Bryan Schaaf:

You know who. Well, we're not going to-

Tony Biggs:

Jerry Lee Lewis, right?

Bryan Schaaf:

Close.

Tony Biggs:

Close?

Bryan Schaaf:

Same era though, right?

Diana Clark:

Okay.

Bryan Schaaf:

There's two of them, and they grew up literally like-

Tony Biggs:

That'll Be the Day? That'll Be the Day?

Bryan Schaaf:

You're close, right? Mac Davis and Buddy Holly.

Tony Biggs:

Both!

Bryan Schaaf:

That'll Be the Day, right? Both, right?

Tony Biggs:

I was close.

Bryan Schaaf:

Lubbock, Texas, natives. Arnis and Mallory, his lovely wife at Evie Mae's. Evie Mae is their oldest child actually, how about that? They reside literally half a mile outside of Lubbock's city limits, and he'll get into explaining why basically at the time when they started, Lubbock didn't allow food trucks. But Wolfforth, which is just outside of city limits, did. So they can actually see Lubbock city limits from where they're at.

Bryan Schaaf:

We're going to sit down with Arnis to talk all things about Evie Mae's BBQ, but specifically about their sausages. And I'm going to tell you, I eat a lot of sausages, in case you can't tell. The sausages that Arnis brings to the table are truly some of the most mind-blowing that I've ever had, not just from an ingredient standpoint, but down to the texture and the snap that you get. And it all comes down to how it's cooked, how it's engineered, and give a listen. The more you hear Arnis speak, the more you realize this guy is kind of the Macguyver of barbecue, folks. The guy can build, make anything, and it shows up in his food.

Bryan Schaaf:

So stick around here on the Meat Speak Podcast. Joining us up next, Arnis Robbins from Evie Mae's BBQ in Lubbock, Texas.

Bryan Schaaf:

Back here on the Meat Speak Podcast, powered by the Certified Angus Beef brand. Joining me here via Zoom, all the way, and I mean all the way because Lubbock, Texas, is not an easy place to get to. But if you think Lubbock, Texas, you think a couple things. You think Texas Tech up around these parts in Ohio. Where we're at, we think of Bobby Knight. But if you are in the food world, if you are in barbecue, you cannot go to Lubbock, Texas, without stopping in Evie Mae's Pit BBQ.

Bryan Schaaf:

Arnis Robbins, how you doing, sir?

Arnis Robbins:

I'm good. How are you today, Brian?

Bryan Schaaf:

I cannot wait to get on a plane and get to Forth Worth to pay another visit to you all. When it comes to barbecue, man, you guys are in an area ... I say an area. Texas, like it's some small neighborhood, right? Texas is known for barbecue, with Snow's, and Black's, and Louie Mueller. There's this guy named Franklin doing something down there as well.

Bryan Schaaf:

Barbecue is a hot bed. You all came into the scene, what, five or six years ago, and you've made Daniel Vaughn's Top 50 list of barbecue joints in Texas, and you've just been going since then. Tell us about Evie Mae's, and really how it came to be.

Arnis Robbins:

Well, really, Evie Mae's at the very grassroots level started in Tucson, Arizona, in my backyard. I had actually started a landscaping business out in Tucson, and barbecue became a weekend therapeutic outlet for me. It started from nothing, no real knowledge, no real barbecue experience or background. And because I grew up in eastern New Mexico, Mallory and I both did, we weren't really exposed to Texas barbecue culture.

Arnis Robbins:

I remember as a child or a young kid, we would travel to Austin to visit family, and I remember stopping at Louie Mueller a couple of times. I would say my very first authentic Texas barbecue memory was going to Louie Mueller, and it was probably 1:30 in the afternoon, it was the Tuesday before Thanksgiving. We were headed to [inaudible 00:15:03] for Thanksgiving, and we stopped in. And the only thing they had was a single beef rib, and we're a family of five. That's what we got, and pickles, onions, sauce, saltines, and I remember taking a bite of that beef rib and thinking, wow, this is something I've never had before. This is very simplistic, straightforward, honest barbecue.

Arnis Robbins:

And then there was a pretty wide gap between there and whenever I started to mess around in the backyard. But in Arizona, I was diagnosed with celiac disease in 2010, and we couldn't go out to eat anymore because of the risk of cross contamination with gluten. So we were able to expand our grocery budget at that point, and so I started buying a lot of steak. I was grilling steak two or three times a week. And then eventually you kind of get tired of a nice prime rib eye, so I decided I wanted to dabble with smoking and barbecue. I didn't know anything about fire management, so I found an electric smoker on Craigslist, and that was kind of my gateway into barbecue. And messed around with an electric cabinet smoker for two years, I think. I put pork shoulder, I put some ribs on, or a brisket on a Friday afternoon for Saturday lunch.

Arnis Robbins:

But, again, the more I did it, the more I wanted to do it. And it got to the point, even grilling a steak, you get everything set up, and you get the grill going, and you go out and cook, and you sit down and hang out. You're kind of disappointed when it's done, because the cook is what I look forward to more than actually eating the product. So barbecue was kind of a natural fit in that, here we go, here's a 14 to 16 hour run that I can hang out, and poke a fire, and all that.



Arnis Robbins:

So the electric smoker originally led to me building a wood burning 350 gallon smoker in my backyard. I have some minimal welding skills that I picked up growing up on a peanut farm, so I found a tank on Craigslist, built a wood burning smoker, and I loved it. I loved everything about it, but it's an expensive hobby, especially when you have that kind of capacity. There's no way you could load that thing up for Mallory and myself and a nine-month-old.

Arnis Robbins:

So that led to me getting a mobile vending trailer in Tucson and setting up roadside one day a week, all while still operating our landscaping business. But every step of the way, the deeper I got, the more involved I got, the more I did it, the more I wanted to do it. There was never a time early on where you finish up a cook, and I was like, "Man, I don't know if I want to do that again for awhile." It was always, "Oh, man, I'm going to try this next time, because I think that that could make this aspect of this product a little bit better."

Arnis Robbins:

So eventually, that passion drove me to believe that barbecue was what I was meant to do. So we did roadside vending one day a week in Tucson. Which, I say Tucson ... We lived in a small bedroom community called Corona de Tucson. It was about 25 miles southeast of Tucson central. And there was a defunct golf course out there, and a gentleman had purchased the clubhouse, and his wife was running a dance studio. And I ended up stopping by one day, and talking to him, and he was really interested, so that's where we set the trailer up from March of 2014 until September of 2014.

Arnis Robbins:

And in September, we decided we want to pursue barbecue, but if we want to pursue barbecue, the right place to do it is in Texas. So we relocated to Lubbock, which is about 90 miles from where I grew up. While I was in Arizona, my parents relocated to Lubbock, so it was a natural fit. Evelyn, our daughter ... Evie for short, which the restaurant is named after, she had just turned two whenever we moved.

Arnis Robbins:

So we moved to Lubbock, and we were going to set up a mobile trailer in Lubbock, and found out that that was not allowed unless you were in an industrial-zoned area. So that was an outdated ordinance that the city was working on trying to fix because they realized that the food truck scene was kind of experiencing a rebirth, and it wasn't just burritos out of somebody's trunk anymore, or fly-by-night burgers. It was really good food that people were doing, and they were using mobile units because that's what they could afford.

Arnis Robbins:

So in the interim, we realized that we could set up in Wolfforth, which is a incorporated municipality just ... We are half a mile from Lubbock city limits. And we could set up there, so we thought, well, let's set up out there and get things started, and then we'll start traveling into Lubbock whenever that gets straightened out.

Arnis Robbins:

Well, while we were in Wolfforth, that's when Daniel Vaughn kind of discovered us, and introduced us to everybody else. But the week before he found us, we were desperate. We had kind of plateaued at a place where we were serving a really great customer base. It just wasn't big enough. And it wasn't a viable business for us to be in. So Daniel Vaughn shows up one morning, and the next day, he posts this online review on his personal blog, and within half an hour, we have people coming out that have just read this review, and they're coming out excited because they never heard of us and want to see what it's all about.

Arnis Robbins:

So that is really when this whole thing started rolling. That was in May of 2015, and I think by August of 2015, we had outgrown the trailer. We were selling out before we opened, meaning that the quantity of product that we cooked for that day was not going to serve all the people that were in line whenever we opened.

Arnis Robbins:

So, fortunate for us, we were in a great position of the storage facility that we were leasing that we were utilizing as a makeshift dining room behind the trailer, the landlord of that space also owned a piece of dirt about half a mile down the road. And we had gotten kind of close to him. He had been extremely gracious with us, and kind of understood that we were just trying to follow our passion, and turn this into something, and he really, really believed in what we were doing. So he came to us and said, "If you guys want to make the jump from this trailer to a brick-and-mortar, I will build this space out for you. You guys design it, I'll build it. Here's what it's going to be a month for five years, and I have the most confidence in you guys in the world, and I want to help you out." Which I just can't even imagine that happening. That's not something that happens.

Arnis Robbins:

The lease agreement in itself was just unbelievable. For him to come in, build a brand new building, let us design it, him finish it out, and then for what he was wanting from us monthly was just an unbelievable opportunity. So we made the decision to do that. In January of 2016, they poured the slab, and we moved into our brick-and-mortar in I think it was April 16th of 2016. So here in a year and a couple of months, we went from setting up in our trailer to now moving into a brand new brick-and-mortar space.

Arnis Robbins:

And within six months, we realized we needed to expand, so then we built on a secondary dining space as well as a secondary kitchen, doubled our cooking capacity, cold storage. It was an unbelievable growth rate that was fueled by community support, and at the very foundation of all of it was just every day making an effort to make a product that was better than the day before, and never settling, never being content. Just always being driven to try to do better, and maintain a craft level of product that ... It was easy whenever I was cooking five briskets a day, and now we're cooking 105, and how do we make this product the same as it was? And I don't know that there is a way to actually do that, but to be as close as possible is what we strive for every day still.

Arnis Robbins:

But in hindsight, it's awesome that we were able to do what we did without ... Yeah, I'm a business entrepreneur, but below that, I'm passionate about barbecue, and to do what we've done without a

business plan, without loans, without a plan period. We got into the trailer not as a stepping stone but because we felt that that was the only viable way that we could pursue our passion of barbecue. So it's been really awesome, we've been super blessed, and we're super thankful for the people here and the way that they've embraced us. We have an unbelievable crew that works their tails off for the same reasons that we did when we started, and it's been a really, really cool evolution.

Bryan Schaaf:

Oh, that's so cool. That is so cool. You seem to be one, and we haven't even talked about the building that you have behind where you make these custom pits for people around the country. You seem to be one of those folks that kind of has an engineer's eye about things. You're one of those guys, I'm super jealous because if it's broke, you can fix it, right? You have a gift.

Arnis Robbins:

Well, I was just going to say that comes from my background of growing up on a farm. I grew up on a production peanut farm in eastern New Mexico, and the variety of peanuts that we grew are traditionally grown in very sandy soil. Well, sandy soil, it's hard to maintain moisture, so my dad was able to grow peanuts in a very tight type of soil that would retain moisture, and he was able to yield a lot higher yield on his crops than most other growers. But in order to harvest and process those peanuts, he had to create and build equipment that was able to handle them because they weren't being grown in sand.

Arnis Robbins:

So, traditionally, you pull a peanut vine out of the ground, and the peanuts are legumes, and they grow subsurface, and you pull this plant out. In sand, they come out super nice and clean. Well, in tight soil, you pull them out, and they're covered in dirt. So he had to modify and revise every piece of equipment that we had to be able to handle these peanuts and to get the dirt off without cracking them or without exposing them to too much moisture, which would cause them to rot.

Arnis Robbins:

So I think that I grew up thinking that you couldn't buy anything. You couldn't buy anything and use it the way it was intended. You had to buy something that was close enough and then make modifications. So that was just kind of my mindset growing up. And, yeah, I think it's lent itself very, very well in both landscaping and in the barbecue industry, especially on this scale where there are very few people across the country that build high quality, reputable smokers that are capable of cooking our products the way that we want them to. Not that to say there aren't people doing it. There are, but to be able to do that myself in-house has been a huge advantage.

Bryan Schaaf:

That's really cool. That's really cool.

Bryan Schaaf:

Let's change gears. We talked about the engineering behind the smokers. In case you can't tell by looking at my physique, I eat a lot of barbecue, and of course in Texas, brisket is king. And I'll tell you what, and this is not me trying to be biased because you use Certified Angus Beef. Your brisket is among the very best that I've ever had, but it's the sausage that you guys make that when we said we need to

talk about sausage, we need to get Arnis on the horn. I eat a lot of sausage in barbecue joints. I don't know what you guys put in your sausage, but it's exceptional. Can you tell us about the engineering behind your sausages? What makes them stand out like they do?

Arnis Robbins:

So having not grown up in central Texas, A, but not even in an area of the country that ... I never would've thought you could make your own sausage growing up. My parents, we didn't hunt growing up, some game processing and sausage-making, it just wasn't even on my radar. Whenever I got into barbecue, I knew that to be in a good barbecue joint in Texas, you had to have good sausage. So when we first started in Lubbock or Wolfforth, we actually went to a local processor and talked to them. They were making some really, really great sausages, and I went and talked to the manager over there one day, and kind of told them what we were doing, and what we wanted, and they were very, very helpful and actually started custom-making a sausage product that was exclusive to us. So they would make us enough for the week, I'd pick that up on Tuesday, and we'd cook it that week. And it was great.

Arnis Robbins:

And a year-and-a-half into the restaurant, so the brick-and-mortar ... Actually, it wasn't a year-and-a-half. Like seven months into the brick-and-mortar, in a week, I decided I'm going to weigh all of the lean brisket trim that I'm cutting and just see what I'm throwing in the trash. Making sausage in-house was something that I always wanted to do, but it was just an overwhelming thing to think about. Not knowing anything about sausage, and you read these things, and you read about critical temperatures as far as production goes, or else you'll get into smear issues, and then if you smear a 30-pound batch of sausage, it's basically garbage. And so it was overwhelming to think about.

Arnis Robbins:

And I actually reached out to Daniel Vaughn and asked if he could refer me to somebody who might be open to giving me some just very basic pointers. And he got me in touch with Evan LeRoy, which now is co-owner of LeRoy and Louis in Austin, and he told me to order a book called Charcuterie. And I forget the author's name, but if you look on Amazon, just search Charcuterie.

Arnis Robbins:

So I order this book, and it's full of good stuff, but there's a very basic sausage recipe in it that our sausage product grew from. So we started there, and I say "we." My only help in the pit room at the time was Nathan [Peer 00:31:58], the first guy that I hired to help cook and help with the meats, and he and I started experimenting with sausage. And we'd do five or six batches a day trying to get it dialed in.

Arnis Robbins:

Oh, going back to weighing all of my trim, in four days of service, I threw away 100 pounds of Certified Angus prime lean trim, and so it was pretty apparent at that time we've got to cook this. We cannot throw away this much good protein. So our sausage is five primary ingredients, and that's in what we call our traditional German sausage. And that's salt and pepper, garlic, paprika, and we use just a little bit of curing salt not as a curing agent but as a binder. We're not letting this product sit and cure, but having celiac disease, I didn't want to do cereal binder, and I didn't want to use a dairy product either. So that's how we kind of settled on the curing salt.

Arnis Robbins:

And then our green chile and green chile cheese sausage is that same base with fresh roasted green chile and cheddar cheese. So the sausage is a little bit like everything else that I've learned in barbecue. The more simple you can keep it, and just do it very well and very consistent, the better. That's the same as my seasoning started for all things barbecue. Maybe 10 or 15 different things out of the cupboard, and now it's salt and pepper. So it's all about quality ingredients and consistent procedures and cooking.

Bryan Schaaf:

Excellent. What do you guys do with your ... Do you smoke it then?

Arnis Robbins:

We do. So we've actually gone back and forth. They all get smoked. Sometimes it gets smoked and goes straight out for service. Sometimes it gets smoked and then goes into an ice bath to shock, and then we will bring it back really, really hot. And the reason we do that sometimes is it really helps the casings. It gives them that really, really clean snap. That's one area ... The sausage is being produced the same as it was four years ago, but the cooking procedure is something that we kind of go back and forth on from time to time.

Arnis Robbins:

And kind of seasonally. Here in Lubbock, we have obviously really, really hot, dry summers, but the winters can be very, very cold. So a lot of times, in the winter, that's where we'll finish it really, really hot just to try to get that casing to pop.

Bryan Schaaf:

Yeah. I guess going back to the idea, and you touched on it a few times, is you make smokers, you have this really unique way of looking at the world and food, and things like that. You built all the tables in your own restaurant as well, didn't you?

Arnis Robbins:

Right. Out of necessity. You wouldn't believe how expensive restaurant furnishings are whenever you're starting with nothing.

Bryan Schaaf:

But it's funny, you walk in, and it honestly didn't surprise us at all when we were in there, because you're in the back, welding these giant containers into pits. So that's amazing.

Bryan Schaaf:

I'll tell you what, before we roll, of course, you're in Texas. The Texas barbecue community, it's funny, for state that is so freaking big, the barbecue community, man, is so tight knit. When you travel, especially when you travel around Texas, you got some favorites that you stop in for other barbecue?

Arnis Robbins:

Yeah, absolutely. Now, unfortunately, we don't get to travel a whole lot outside of barbecue travel. That seems to be what we do the most of. As far as barbecue festivals, we don't do competition, but there's I think five barbecue festivals that we try to do annually. One is in Tyler, one is in Austin, one in Dallas, one in Forth Worth. So it's awesome to be able to do that, and we cross paths with these barbecue folks

obviously whenever we do those, but, yeah, we always try to get to a couple of spots while we're out and about.

Arnis Robbins:

I'll be the first to tell you, I haven't experienced a whole lot of the Top 50 just because of time constraints. And, yeah, we're all in the same state, but we're a good six hour drive from Austin. But, no, we've definitely enjoyed going to Snow's, and going to Franklin, and going to Tejas, and Louie Mueller. There's a handful of them. But, yeah, I'll tell you this, I am not a barbecue critic. If I go to a barbecue joint, and they're cooking on wood, live fire, I don't care what their food tastes like. I know that they work their tail off to do it, and I will appreciate it for what it is.

Bryan Schaaf:

Sir, that is about all the time we got here. Arnis Robbins, Evie Mae Barbecue. Please, please, please when you do head back inside, give our best to Mallory and the family as well.

Arnis Robbins:

Will do.

Bryan Schaaf:

If you all happen to be venturing in Lubbock, Texas, home of Buddy Holly and Mac Davis, by the way, right? Local icons. Please, I highly, highly recommend making the trek. I think we went down, we were two hours south of Amarillo to get there, and it was worth every mile of that flat west Texas landscape. So Arnis Robbins, Evie Mae Barbecue. Sir, thank you so much for taking time on the Meat Speak Podcast.

Bryan Schaaf:

Back here on the Meat Speak Podcast powered by the Certified Angus Beef brand. Brian Schaaf joined by Chef Tony Biggs, meat scientist Diana Clark. Guys, and Chef Tony, what constitutes a sausage? We've been eating hot dogs, right, forever.

Tony Biggs:

Forever.

Bryan Schaaf:

Is a hot dog a sausage?

Tony Biggs:

Well, if you ask German culture, they call it the frankfurter, right? And I guess we stole that idea, us Americans, and we're very, very ... And the use of the English language, so what do we call it? We call it the hot dog, right?

Bryan Schaaf:

We Americanized it.

Tony Biggs:

We Americanized it.

Bryan Schaaf:

It's right up there with Notre Dame.

Tony Biggs:

[crosstalk 00:38:44] And instead of getting a German lady with 10 steins of beer in one hand waiting for that frankfurter, what we do is we put relish, onion ... And, Diana, you're from Chicago.

Diana Clark:

Mustard, tomato, pickle.

Tony Biggs:

Tell us a little bit about the Chicago dog.

Diana Clark:

Oh, yeah. You have to have all of those things for Chicago. You cannot, no ketchup. But I will have to admit, guys, I actually do usually have ketchup and pickle on my hot dog. But it's okay. You are not allowed to have it though if you're in Chicago. Portillo's, oh my gosh.

Tony Biggs:

All day long.

Diana Clark:

All day long. I don't know how people don't know what Portillo's is.

Bryan Schaaf:

Explain to me the relish that's on a true Chicago dog, because it's ...

Tony Biggs:

It's bright green. It's [crosstalk 00:39:27]-

Bryan Schaaf:

Yeah. It looks like it's been in a nuclear reactor before it actually hits your ... That's not normal looking relish.

Tony Biggs:

Yeah, what is that?

Diana Clark:

It makes it pop. So you got the yellow, you got the green. You see it all. The tomatoes. You get that nice bite. It's everything.

Tony Biggs:

But could you buy this, this relish, already green like this?

Diana Clark:

Oh, yeah, for sure.

Tony Biggs:

Okay, all right.

Bryan Schaaf:

You have to have it blessed.

Diana Clark:

You just scoop it out of the Chicago river.

Tony Biggs:

You have to have goggles. Special goggles. It blinds me.

Diana Clark:

They make it with the Chicago river water after they [crosstalk 00:39:57].

Bryan Schaaf:

So you say at Portillo's in Chicago, right, I'm going to guess the best Chicago dog I've ever had is at Fatso's Last Stand. Have you had their-

Diana Clark:

I have not. I have not.

Bryan Schaaf:

Right? But I've also not had Portillo's.

Diana Clark:

See? That's ... Yeah.

Tony Biggs:

But I have to brag about our Certified Angus Beef hot dogs, okay?

Diana Clark:

Oh, I know.

Tony Biggs:

I've got to tell you, they're incredible.



Diana Clark:

And they can now be found in Trader Joe's, too.

Tony Biggs:

They cannot be found in Trader Joe's. They're amazing. Low sodium. Actually no fillers, we profess. So whoever hasn't tried our CAB hot dogs, Certified Angus Beef hot dogs, go try them. Amazing.

Diana Clark:

I completely agree.

Bryan Schaaf:

Diana, I'm going to tee up because I know this is a soap box that you really enjoy standing on. Hot dogs. Hot dogs are ... We'll call them sausages, but we're talking about hot dogs. They have this reputation, and sometimes you'll hear people say, "Oh, well, they're not good for you because they just put the leftover parts in there." Meat scientist, I want you to defend the hot dog against the people saying, "Well, they're cheap, and lord knows what's even in it."

Diana Clark:

There's meat in it. It's a hot dog. You can see on the label exactly what's in it. The reason why it's so fine is they actually take ... It's called a bull chopper, and it spins around really fast, and it has these blades on there that ... It almost makes it like a toothpaste type texture. It really just emulsifies it. And so that's why it's got that softness to it. And that's, to me, the beauty of the hot dog. Your kids can enjoy them, you can enjoy them, even when you're 95 years old and your teeth are falling out. You can still enjoy a hot dog and reflect back on those days.

Tony Biggs:

Three hours from here is Buffalo, New York. It's amazing, only three hours away, a culture of food is so different from Ohio. So they make a Sahlen's hot dog. Exactly what you describe. Very fine puree of pork and beef, but it's very fine, so when you bite into it, it's got that texture. That very fine texture, which I like. And I like the casing that it's wrapped in, too, so that's a very, very popular hot dog in western New York.

Diana Clark:

That's awesome.

Bryan Schaaf:

Outstanding.

Bryan Schaaf:

On that note, I believe we've approached the witching hour here on the Meat Speak Podcast powered by the Certified Angus Beef brand. If this is your first time tuning in, shame on you. This is season two. There's a whole other season out there that's filled with 30 episodes that you can scratch that meaty itch that might be bothering you. So I implore you to go back and catch up. What's the term all the kids

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use these days? The binge-watching with the Netflix? Binge-listen, right? 30 episodes. They're each about 30 to 40 minutes long. You could do 30 episodes in 24 hours easily, right?

Diana Clark:

Oh, yeah. I challenge.

Bryan Schaaf:

Invite your friends over, right?

Tony Biggs:

Hey, I did Breaking Bad, I think, in two days. Was that 30 episodes, I think? Yeah. Watched every one, two days.

Bryan Schaaf:

Oh, that's it. We appreciate you all for joining us. Special thanks to our pal Arnis Robbins. He actually told me off the air that he had lots of time on his hands when we were doing that, because in his other exploits in addition to building amazing reverse-flow smokers, he was making his own chile roaster.

Diana Clark:

That's incredible.

Tony Biggs:

Wow.

Bryan Schaaf:

As my hobby, I have a beer here and there. He's like, "Ah, I'll make a chile roaster. No problem." So I highly, highly, highly recommend you all get to west Texas, go pay our pals a visit at Evie Mae's BBQ. So until next time, Brian Schaaf, Chef Tony Biggs, meat scientist Diana Clark. Thanks for joining us here on the Meat Speak Podcast powered by the Certified Angus Beef brand.