

ARMAND OLIVIER III
With his father ARMAND OLIVIER JR.
Olivier's Restaurant – New Orleans, LA

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Date: August 4, 2006
Location: Olivier's Restaurant – New Orleans, LA
Interviewer: Amy Evans
Length: 1 hour, 20 minutes
Project: Gumbo Trail - Louisiana

[Begin Olivier's Interview]

00:00:00

Amy Evans: Okay, this is Amy Evans on Friday, August 4th, 2006 for the Southern Foodways Alliance. I'm in New Orleans, Louisiana, at Olivier's Restaurant on Decatur Street, and I am sitting in the dining room with Armand Olivier, Jr. and Armand Olivier III. And if I could ask you each to introduce yourselves for the record and also state your birth dates, if you don't mind.

00:00:27

Armand Olivier III [son]: Armand Olivier III. April 17th, 1958.

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Armand Olivier, Jr. [father]: Armand Olivier, Jr. March 14th, 1937.

00:00:42

AE: All right. And Olivier's Restaurant has been in existence for some thirty years, is that correct?

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AO-Jr: Not quite.

00:00:52

AE: Okay, correct me. [*Laughs*]

00:00:54

AO-Jr: We started in the restaurant business proper in 1979; however, we started at that time using recipes going back on Armand III's mom's side of the family at least two generations that I know of.

00:01:16

AE: So the—the recipes prior to Olivier's Restaurant being opened, those were strictly [written] recipes or were you—was your family selling gumbo and shrimp Creole and things as well?

00:01:30

AO-III: No, my family did not market them. They were produced generation to generation, and that's what we drew upon to construct the original menu and to construct each prior menu.

00:01:47

AE: And from the history that's on your menu and on your website also, which is wonderful that you have that family history up there, it's striking that the—the recipes are all from the—the female lineage in your family and now the—the two of you gentlemen are now heading the restaurant. Can you speak to that a little bit?

00:02:07

AO-Jr: Well I'll say that the—all of the newer recipes on our menu are Armand's creation—Armand, III.

00:02:18

AE: Yeah? So that's another thing that you all talk about on the menu is that you're combining traditional Creole with an innovative Creole cuisine, which is your—your specialty, Armand?

00:02:32

AO-III: Well I don't know how innovative it is, but it's mine. Call it present generation Creole. But how that came about is [that] the entire lineage of the recipes—other than myself—were attributed to females in my family. In my generation there were three boys; there were no girls. I was the oldest boy and someone had to get stuck with all the knowledge to be retained and passed on and being the oldest boy, it fell on me. I was the one that they taught to cook.

00:03:13

AE: And what are your brother's names?

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AO-III: Kyle, my—the middle boy and Sean, the youngest.

00:03:22

AE: So did your mother teach you how to cook?

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AO-III: Yes.

00:03:26

AE: And your mother's name?

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AO-III: Cheryl.

00:03:29

AE: Cheryl Gaudet Olivier?

00:03:31

AO-III: Correct.

00:03:32

AE: Okay. And she is the daughter of—if we can go backwards in the timeline—she's the daughter of Audrey LaFrance Gaudet?

00:03:43

AO-III: Correct.

00:03:43

AE: Your grandmother who was the daughter-in-law of—?

00:03:49

AO-III: Jeanne?

00:03:51

AE: Jeanne Gaudet Doublet, who is the daughter-in-law of your great-great-grandmother?

00:03:56

AO-III: Uh-hmm.

00:03:57

AE: Okay. And your great-great-grandmother's name—first name? Do you know? I have Grandma Gaudet here on my notes. [*Laughs*]

00:04:07

AO-III: I—actually I always refer to her as Grandma Gaudet because, well I met her—I had the pleasure of meeting both my great-grandmother and my great-great grandmother. My great-great grandmother passed when I was four [years old], so I do have some sketchy memories of her, and my great-grandmother passed when I was fourteen, so I knew her quite well.

00:04:36

AE: Wow. And so all five generations that go as far back as your great-great-grandmother are native New Orleanians?

00:04:42

AO-III: Yes.

00:04:43

AE: And then past that do you know the—the family heritage?

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AO-III: No, the history becomes sketchy beyond that to me because there are no recorded birth records. It's difficult to research. Once you get back to that time slavery existed. But I've been able to trace back on my father's side five generations from New Orleans and on my mother's side, well you already have the history on that. So that's as far as I've been able to go back, and I'm not trained to be a researcher or a historian, so if it wasn't simple, that's as far as I can go.

00:05:39

AE: Well, that's far enough; that's farther than what a lot of people can do. So being a Creole family in New Orleans, can you talk about what that means?

00:05:51

AO-III: Well there's many different aspects to describe it. Depending on where you're from, you have no idea what Creole means. My understanding of the origin of it—it was initially a Spanish word *Creollo*, and while everyone was vying for their little piece of the New World empire, Spain had its stake, England had its stake, France had its stake, the Dutch had their stake, the Spanish when they had a Spaniard that was born in the New World they called him a

Creollo—that he still retained Spanish citizenship but was not born in Spain. That word translated over to the French and initially it was used the same way—a French citizen—Creole born in the New World. And it transmuted over time to the usage that is common now, a person that is part French or part Spanish, part Black, and part American Indian—a blend. And that's its common usage now. So that's what I am.

00:07:23

AE: That applies to you, you'd say?

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AO-III: Yes.

00:07:26

AE: Okay. So regarding food, how would you say that word [Creole] applies to food in New Orleans?

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AO-III: Well the word Creole food pretty much applies only to New Orleans. Louisiana is famous for two types of food: Cajun and Creole. Cajun food—well the Cajuns after the French and Indian War, which the victor was not named in it—Britain, took over Canada; the Acadians, the settlers—the French settlers there had to flee. So they followed the Mississippi River down, and when it ended they were in Louisiana. And since they were hunters, trappers, you know, furriers, they did not settle in a major city; they settled outside. They settled in southern coastal

Louisiana or northern Louisiana, and they became known as Cajuns. And because they were so removed for so many generations, a different language developed; Creole French was what was spoken in New Orleans and Cajun French is what was spoken in the rural parts, and they cannot understand each other. You know they've derived completely different languages. So Cajun food was rural; it was—if you can hunt it, trap it, fish it, grow it, or trade with your neighbor, you can have it. If not, you can't have it. And in New Orleans, a major port city, oh, I feel like having a duck today. You stroll down to the market and you purchase a duck. So the cuisines developed completely different. And by [New Orleans] being a port city with accesses to spices from all over the world—and it's more classical cuisine than the rural cuisine of Cajun.

00:10:16

AE: More refined would you say?

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AO-III: Well also, New Orleans was the crown of the French New World Empire. And if you were a royal—a Duke or a Barron—and you had four sons, only one could inherit your land, your title; so you sent the other three to school—sent them to college, you tigh them, whatever. When they were of age you gave them some money and said go make something of yourself. Many of them came here with their wife, their mistress, their chef, their musician and furniture and—and settled in New Orleans. So they're French, of course, so of course they took a chef.

00:11:13

AE: Uh-hmm. So growing up how important was cooking and food in your home?

00:11:21

AO-III: Growing up in New Orleans, I—I can't compare it to growing up anywhere else—my one shot—but the world revolves around food and drink here. That's the basis of New Orleans. Don't know how to more clearly answer that.

00:11:52

AE: Did you spend a lot of time going out with your family to restaurants or was most of your food at the home?

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AO-III: No, everyone cooked at home. Everyone cooked at home and—well back in the day Ozzie and Harriet style, on Sunday everyone had to sit down for Sunday dinner. Everyone sat at the same time; each course was served simultaneously and everyone departed the table at the same time—a bit of reverence and that's what I remember.

00:12:42

AE: Uh-hmm. Were these Creole dishes always a part of the Sunday dinners?

00:12:46

AO-III: Yes, Sunday dinner was a day that you would cook something—cook something special, something possibly a bit more labor intensive on the part of the cook. But New Orleans being primarily an eighty-five-percent Catholic city, Sunday was a special day. It was a

day of reverence. You did—everyone had to adhere to the family schedule that day. Any other day there was freedom—oh, I'm going over by Jimmy's house. But not on Sunday.

00:13:33

AE: Uh-hmm. Were the cooking duties shared on Sunday, or would a particular family member take a day to feature their own dishes?

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AO-III: The head of the household—the female head of the household—did all of the Sunday cooking. They would not allow anyone else to participate in that because it might be inferior. So the only time would be at a family gathering; if we're going to someone else's house, then we would bring a portion and they would supply a portion. Other than that, if it was just one nuclear family it was all the head of the houses.

00:14:19

AE: Do you remember the first time that you cooked a meal? The first time you learned a family recipe?

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AO-III: Well my mother started me out—I don't know if this is a tried-and-true fashion and it's always been done this way, but she taught me baking first. Maybe she was, you know, a bit cautious because I was male, and the male thinking pattern may differ. But I learned baking first.

And yeah, this is reminiscent of how you would train a little kid. You would get him a box of Betty Crocker, and you'd start him off there; you can't mess this up too bad.

00:15:10

AE: [*Laughs*] How about your first gumbo?

00:15:14

AO-III: My first Gumbo [*short pause*] actually, the first gumbo I ever cooked was a trial in one of my family's recipes—restaurants. In the original restaurant on Dreux Street we cooked the filé gumbo six days a week and on one day a week okra gumbo was served. And always there was someone [who would say], “Oh, why can't I have okra [gumbo] today?” “No, that's only on this day.” I don't remember what day of the week it was; let's say it's Monday. “No, that's only on Monday.” And that represented—my father made the filé gumbo, and my mother made okra gumbo. And I said, “Well we can do this. We can just have one that's available every day.” So that was my attempt—to just come up with one that would be served every day and you could have this alternative gumbo, you know, a special one in addition to that on your various days. So that was my first experiment at gumbo. And they didn't like it.

00:16:50

AE: Was that first experiment a roux-based gumbo—the Creole gumbo that you make [now]?

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AO-III: Yes. There was a learning curve in it, so I will admit perhaps my first attempt was not stellar, but they rejected it, and that was my first try at gumbo.

00:17:16

AE: But prior to that first attempt what—what had you kind of soaked up regarding a knowledge of gumbo and what it is and what it is supposed to be as a—as a dish?

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AO-III: Because it evolved over such a long period of time just as though everyone that originally inhabited New Orleans was French. Over the 300 years it evolved to where a person that spoke Parisian French could not understand Creole French and vice versa. So with that amount of time every family had a different style of gumbo. When I went to my Grandmother Audrey's house there would always be shredded chicken in hers. When I went to Eva's house, my father's mother's house, there would always be cracked crabs—shelled—shell-on cracked crabs. So every family and even by neighborhood there was different traditions in what to do. So there is no steadfast rule, only the famous one: begin with a roux.

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AE: So how is it would you say then that your father had the recipe for the filé [gumbo] and your mother the recipe for the okra [gumbo]? Personal preferences or are those part of the lineage of recipes that have been passed down?

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AO-III: I will allow him [my father] to answer that question.

00:19:13

AE: Okay. [*Laughs*]

00:19:13

AO-Jr: Well actually—[*Phone Rings*] I got it.

00:19:20

AE: I can pause this for a moment.

00:19:23

AO-Jr: We were assigned to the different gumbos.

00:19:25

AE: How you were assigned to the different gumbos, okay.

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AO-Jr: The—when—when—when we started the restaurant in—the neighborhood restaurant in Gentilly [a neighborhood of New Orleans] in [nineteen] seventy-nine, the—the full burden of the—of the actual cooking was on Armand’s mother, Cheryl. And I could not boil water without burning it. And I was willing to hand her anything she needed but [*Laughs*] as far as executing the recipes, that was not my forte. Armand [III] was—was busy doing other things; he was the

manager, he was the—he—he wrote the menu, he took care of the liquors and the wines— bartender and everything else, so after—after a while, I was informed that I would have to participate in the actual cooking. We—we were—we were selling a lot of gumbo—gumbos because she was doing the okra gumbo as a special two nights a week and the filé gumbo, her filé gumbo was the—on the regular menu. So when I asked her what should I—what should I learn first, her answer was the filé gumbo. So I said, “Well write it down for me.” She said, “Nope, I can't.” **[Laughs]** And—and she actually couldn't because the way she cooked—it was amazing that it came out the same—tasting the same, looking the same every time, but she would just—

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AO-III: She cooked by eye.

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AO-Jr: —she would just grab stuff and cut it up, chop it up, whip it up and throw it in the pot. **[Laughs]** And she—she couldn't give me measurements or increments, anything like that so I had to stand there and watch her and write over and over and over **[Laughs]**. And then I—I proceeded to try my—my own filé gumbo. And when I got it to where I thought she would agree with—with it, she tasted it. And I couldn't let her in the kitchen when I was—I was cooking because she was so critical of everything I was doing, you know. She was a perfectionist. And anyhow that's how the filé gumbo got to be my recipe. The okra [gumbo] remained her—her recipe, and later on Armand, III created the Creole gumbo, which was our third gumbo. And that's the—that's the gumbo story. And I'm sticking to it.

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AE: Is your wife still living?

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AO-Jr: She's very much a live. She's out on the West Coast now. She wants to be back in New Orleans terribly bad, but the conditions in this city is just not conducive for her to come back now. Our house was eight-feet under water. It's been partially gutted, but that's as far as it's gotten; the neighborhood is still not—not developed. It's just—just not conducive for her to come back here. And she's said she'll probably be back as soon as this—as she can.

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AE: Prior to [2005's Hurricane] Katrina was she—did she have a large hand in the business here?

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AO-Jr: She—she sort of retired when we moved [the restaurant] to the French Quarter. We worked—she worked that kitchen from the time we opened until nineteen—actually 1990—'93—'94. '94 when we actually opened. That's when—yeah, when we opened here at 204 Decatur Street we simultaneously closed the original neighborhood restaurant on Dreux Avenue, and that's when she kind of like was not really needed over here because we had geared up this—this place to be like manned and kind of like self-sufficient. So she was—she got a break, but she was—she was the only person—not the only person in the kitchen [*Phone Rings*]

because we hired people, but any time that the doors were opened at that location, she was there and she was participating.

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AE: So what made you all want to open a restaurant in the [French] Quarter?

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AO-Jr: This was actually our second venture in the Quarter. It was—it was mostly like necessity; the—the city—the city at one time—back in the [nineteen] eighties it got to be like crime-ridden and customers were afraid to come out at night and different things like that, even though we were in a nice safe-looking neighborhood—actually, a safe neighborhood. The—all of the young people who were your potential new customers, graduating college and all, they left town promptly upon graduation. And it just got to the point where the restaurant was not doing as well financially, even though we had happy customers; we just didn't have enough of them.

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AO-III: Well if I may interject on that, the reason for the exodus of New Orleans in the [nineteen] eighties that he referred to wasn't, in my opinion, an escalation in crime.

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AO-Jr: No.

00:26:11

AO-III: It was the decline in the economic base in the city. When Mr. Reagan [President Ronald Reagan] deregulated oil, oil was—was a—one of the driving forces. We had a major port, which was the number one economic input in the city; we had oil as the number two, and we had tourism as the number three. During the [nineteen] eighties that switched; now tourism became number one, the port became number two, and oil dropped to five. So these college graduates with a better economic outlook in Dallas or in Atlanta or somewhere else departed upon graduation and the actual size of the city began to diminish. And I think that—that would be a leading reason, as opposed to crime. So he can continue now.

00:27:32

AO-Jr: No; I didn't—I didn't mean that—I didn't mean that we did poorly—well we did—we did miss those—those youngsters whose parents had brought them in and they would have been through the years—and they would have been our new customers, but the older folk were afraid to come out at night—not the—not the youngsters. The youngsters just were not—just were not here; they were gone. But the—the crime was on the old people's minds—the older people's minds.

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AE: So when you came to the Quarter, did a lot of the customer base from the neighborhood restaurant days follow you?

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AO-Jr: Uh-hmm, they still—they still come in when they—when they learn about—that we’re still in business and we’re still here. I get—I get young people visiting town and they say, “I used to eat at your restaurant. My mom used to bring me in, my dad used to bring me in.” And sometimes we get the actual old people who used to eat with us come in and—and we have good times, good talks and all and yeah, yeah; it’s—it’s gratifying, you know. It’s really gratifying. The fact is that’s—that’s some of the only gratification now days because the monetary gratification does not exist; it’s just the opposite. We’re hoping that it gets back to where we used to be where we can—where it can afford us a living, but now it’s affording everyone that works here a living except us.

00:29:13

AE: Yeah, times are hard right now, I know.

00:29:14

AO-Jr: Huh?

00:29:15

AE: Times are hard right now.

00:29:16

AO-Jr: Yeah, yeah. So—but it’s—it’s signs that it’s getting better every day and that’s—there’s lots and lots of folks who want to come down here just to help us out, and we’re very appreciative of that. The fact is lots of folks are coming down here to help us out on a regular

basis. They're gutting houses, they're doing everything—everything that—the fact is some of the conventions, I heard on the—on the air this morning some of the conventions, they're giving a half a day to just donating their time to come and—and do things like clean-up, help us clean-up and—and get the place back—back together. And that—that's a really, really—a feather in the cap of America and Americans. I'm just—at this point in time, I'm just so proud to be an American because we—in my opinion, we are exactly what we set out—what they set out for us to be. **[Laughs]** And—and I'm happy about that.

00:30:32

AE: Well if I may go back to the gumbo for a moment or two.

00:30:37

AO-III: I have a question for you.

00:30:37

AE: Okay. Sure, yeah.

00:30:40

AO-III: The origin of that word—

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AE: Gumbo?

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AO-III: Uh-hmm.

00:30:42

AE: I—there are many origins of that—that word. The Choctaw word for sassafras [dried sassafras is filé] being similar to—I think it's *kombo*. And the Bantu word for okra being *kigombo*.

00:30:58

AO-III: That's African?

00:30:59

AO-Jr: African?

00:30:59

AE: Yeah, Bantu. Africa. [*Bantu is a general term for over 400 different ethnic groups in Africa.*] And also the Gullah word for okra is gumbo, I believe.

00:31:11

AO-Jr: Gullah, what is that?

00:31:12

AE: A community in the outer banks of South Carolina.

00:31:14

AO-Jr: Really?

00:31:16

AE: Yeah.

00:31:16

AO-Jr: All right.

00:31:18

AE: Yeah.

00:31:18

AO-Jr: Did not know that one.

00:31:21

AE: But those are the ones floating around that I've heard, so any and all of them—

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AO-III: I believe it was the African word *gumbo*, which meant okra because that's where okra came from. Okra was not indigenous to the US [United States]. And a few of the soon-to-be

slaves had some seeds in their pocket and brought that over with them, and I guess when they sprouted someone said, “So, what is this?” “Gumbo.”

00:31:57

AE: Uh-hmm, put it in a stew. So then how about how filé came about and filé Gumbo and filé as a thickener and all that.

00:32:5

AO-Jr: [*Nods towards his son*] Brainiac.

00:32:06

AE: All right. Well before we get to Brainiac [Armand III] I want to ask you what—about when you were making the filé gumbo. Did you change it all from the recipe that—

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AO-Jr: Yeah, yeah; that’s why she [my wife] couldn’t be in there.

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AE: Okay. [*Laughs*]

00:32:19

AO-Jr: Every time—every time she would come in there [she would say] “No, that’s not right.” I said, “Wait. Just wait, wait; don’t—don’t criticize until it’s finished,” you know.

00:32:29

AE: So you really made it your own?

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AO-Jr: Oh yeah, yeah.

00:32:31

AE: So even though you say that you couldn't boil water before you made filé Gumbo—

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AO-Jr: I watched and I learned, you know. I mean I'm—I'm not a slow learner, and I just didn't—never had the necessity to cook. I've only had to sit down; my mom cooked for me and then my wife cooked for me, you know, and—and both of them wouldn't let me in the kitchen—even though I didn't want to be in there. [*Laughs*] I'd rather sit there and eat than—than participate. But when I had—I had to do it I did it you know—I did it the best I could.

00:33:05

AE: And so you took ownership of the filé gumbo in the Olivier family?

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AO-Jr: That's correct; this is mine.

00:33:11

AE: Do you have a preference for gumbos; do you have a favorite out of the—?

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AO-Jr: Yeah, the filé is the best.

00:33:16

AE: Rhetorical question. [*Laughs*] What did your wife think about handing over that responsibility to you? Was she happy to let you have it?

00:33:25

AO-Jr: Oh, certainly, certainly, certainly; it—it was almost necessary.

00:33:29

AO-III: One less thing to do.

00:33:30

AO-Jr: She just couldn't handle all of the—because, you know, she—she cooked in little pots just like she cooked at home and—because that's—that's all she knew. She knew how to do it in certain-sized pots, and if you would throw a big pot on her she'd have to fall back and regroup, and that's where I came in. I watched her in the little pots and I had to say, "Hey, I'm not going to cook small pots every day. I'm going to do it a little different." I cooked a large pot every two

or three days. And that's—that's how I did it. You know, I had to make my adjustments and it worked out. It worked out fine.

00:34:24

AE: And why was the filé gumbo sold throughout the week and the okra gumbo just one or two days a week?

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AO-Jr: She brought that okra gumbo in by request. You see, the—the culture that we came up in, the—the neighborhoods, the Creole neighborhoods that—that we came up in, those two gumbos were predominant and they were—if you went to one house and ate it and you went to another house and ate it, it would be basically the same even though these people didn't even know each other, you know. But—

00:35:05

AE: In the homes was it seasonal? Was it literally that the okra would be in the summer and filé in the winter or—?

00:35:09

AO-Jr: I have no idea; I have—I was not—I was only into eating. [*Laughs*]

00:35:14

AE: Okay; I can't blame you there. [*Laughs*]

00:35:16

AO-Jr: I was only into eating; I did not venture into origins or—or, you know, traditions or anything else. But that okra gumbo came later; we only started out with the filé gumbo. The okra gumbo came later because people were saying, “Oh, I sure wish this woman could—could—.” Her filé gumbo was so good that—and consistent that they—they all were requesting okra. And she—she just refused to do okra and filé and put it on the same—on the menu, so she did it like—she’d cook it one day and serve it two days. If it ran out the second day, we were out and she would use the same sized pots she used at home, see.

00:36:07

AE: And she would—prior to the restaurant she would—would she have made okra gumbo at home?

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AO-Jr: Oh definitely, yeah.

00:36:11

AE: Okay, so she already had a recipe that she had established when everybody was ready to—?

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AO-Jr: Yeah, she had recipes for dog-gone near every—anything that Creole people cooked and some things that they didn’t cook. Because it—it was one guy that came in there and—and

what was it—something he wanted, and she looked it up and—and fixed it for him and he raved over it. I—it was—was not a Creole dish; I can't remember what it was. Sonny Deal—[to his son, Armand III] do you remember Sonny?

00:36:39

AO-III: Yes. Yeah, for example she made an excellent lasagna—Creole. But she was a great cook.

00:36:49

AE: Really?

00:36:50

AO-Jr: She just was a natural at cooking. And that's why we went into the restaurant business, you know, because of her love to cook and serve people. And that's how we—we wound up in the restaurant business—definitely not because of mine. **[Laughs]** I wasn't even supposed to stay there; I was supposed to go—help get them going and leave her with it with hired help. It just didn't work that way; it—it was just a little too much for her to be in the kitchen and do everything else, the ordering, and cleaning and—it's—it's a lot to the restaurant business that people don't—don't know or don't care to know or need to know. **[Laughs]**

00:37:31

AE: Oh, yeah. So when you opened the restaurant business in the late [nineteen] seventies, was that kind of a time in the New Orleans community and Creole culture—

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AO-Jr: Good times.

00:37:39

AE: —when people weren't cooking as much at home and so they would go out for traditional Creole dishes or—?

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AO-Jr: It was good times economically and once we—once we got a reputation for doing good gumbo, it was—it was all over, like they say. People would come and try it because most—most people are like me, they would not even eat gumbo in a restaurant, you know.

00:38:08

AO-III: At that time.

00:38:10

AO-Jr: Yeah, at that time. And I'm still like that. [*Laughs*] I don't venture out with gumbo; gumbo can be on the menu and I won't—I won't touch it, you know.

00:38:20

AO-III: You were spoiled.

00:38:22

AO-Jr: And I'm not—I'm not a picky eater but, you know, it's just so many—so many dos, don'ts and ideas about gumbos and a lot of them are—are malarkey, you know, because it—it's always been my opinion that if you—if you have a gumbo that tastes good, it's good gumbo.

00:38:48

AE: Don't mess with a good thing, yeah.

00:38:49

AO-Jr: That's it; if it tastes good, it's good gumbo. I don't care what you put in it or who—whose recipe it was or nothing and what don't go in gumbo and what does go in gumbo. That's going to be—they're going to be arguing over that when I'm dead, so my—my criteria is if it tastes good, it's good gumbo, you know.

00:39:08

AE: [*Laughs*] So what did you and your wife think when your son, Armand III, came in and had this idea of doing a roux-based gumbo?

00:39:16

AO-Jr: We—I—I welcomed anything that he did, really. He's never done anything that wasn't to perfection. And I had—I had all the confidence in the world that it would be as good—the fact is I didn't realize it would be as good as it was. [*Laughs*] You know, and—and I was naturally—I was happy with—with it before and—and after.

00:39:41

AE: Was the roux gumbo something that was made in your family before?

00:39:46

AO-Jr: No.

00:39:46

AO-III: Not that style.

00:39:49

AE: Yeah? Okay.

00:39:49

AO-Jr: We used roux—we used roux in the filé gumbo; never used roux in the okra gumbo.

The okra was the thickener and the filé—the filé was the thickener with the help of a little—a little roux. And to have a—a roux-based gumbo was—was his idea; and that—that—we still serve it and we serve it as the House Gumbo.

00:40:30

AE: Uh-hmm, the Creole Gumbo?

00:40:30

AO-III: Yes.

00:40:31

AO-Jr: I mean the Creole Gumbo. I mean if—if—if you order gumbo here, you get his gumbo [the “Creole Gumbo”].

00:40:36

AE: So what is that—the sampling—that description?

00:40:42

AO-III: Do you want to tell the story?

00:40:42

AO-Jr: No, I’m gone.

00:40:44

AE: Thank you, sir. [*Laughs*]

00:40:46

AO-III: [*To his father*] Well that is asking permission. Shall I tell the story? Why there is a gumbo sampler [on the menu]?

00:40:54

AO-Jr: Why what?

00:40:55

AO-III: Why there is a gumbo sampler?

00:41:02

AO-Jr: Ah—well everybody—

00:41:05

AO-III: He's considering it.

00:41:05

AO-Jr: —everybody was saying that his gumbo was the best, so we—we decided to contest it.

00:41:13

AE: On a continual basis? [*Laughs*]

00:41:15

AO-Jr: Yeah. I mean we got some more cards made and let the customers decide who—who
the—bid on whose was the best.

00:41:26

AE: Really? So customers would come in and they would order the sampler and you would give them cards to judge [the three gumbos]?

00:41:30

AO-III: We had a six-month contest.

00:41:33

AO-Jr: We had a set of cards on the table.

00:41:36

AO-III: We had a six-month contest, and we were serving only my gumbo at the restaurant—the Creole Gumbo—and my father said, “Hey, mine is better. Why don’t you serve mine instead—the filé?” And my mother said, “Hey, why don’t you serve the okra; it’s better?” So I said, “Well no, people like mine.” “No, no, no, no.” “All right, we’ll put it to the test. We’ll serve three of them together, and we’ll have a little card where they can vote. Whichever one clearly wins, that’s the one we’ll serve. And that’s the only way to prove it.” So we had this six-month test, and at the end of the test, the [sampler] dish was so popular with the varietal taste of the three, we just continued [offering] it.

00:42:44

AE: And so is the bowl of gumbo that you can buy on—on the menu [the Creole Gumbo], is that the unofficial winner?

00:42:50

AO-III: Mine won.

00:42:51

AE: Yeah? Okay. [*Laughs*]

00:42:55

AO-Jr: But you know, nothing is—there's always a gray area and nothing is cut and dry. It was also learned that—and acknowledged—that the local people preferred the filé gumbo. The business tourists preferred the Creole.

00:43:18

AO-III: And also seasonally it changed because I reinstated the card—the quiz card—several times after that and seasonally—if it was a summer, it skewed; if it was the winter, it skewed.

00:43:35

AE: Uh-hmm. In the winter they like the richer Creole with the roux.

00:43:39

AO-Jr: And as far as the okra, you've got most people who either love or hate okra.

00:43:46

AO-III: Right, some people have never seen it, don't know what it is, and are frightened of it and have no interest in touching it.

00:43:55

AE: So if someone wanted—if someone was a regular here and came and often got the sampler, but they were partial to say, the filé gumbo, could they order a *bowl* of the filé gumbo?

00:44:05

AO-Jr: Every now and then an old customer—I'll do it, but we don't cook enough of it to—to do it as the House Gumbo. So, you know, we can't just let everybody have carte blanche with what they—what they—otherwise, we'd run out, you know.

00:44:24

AE: [*To Armand Jr.*] Do you still cook the filé gumbo, or do you share those duties now?

00:44:29

AO-III: Mostly he does not cook the filé gumbo on a regular basis.

00:44:38

AO-Jr: And I cooked some killer filé gumbo and sent it out to—to Washington, DC, for my grandson's graduation. Oh, man; they're still raving over that and they're sending people down here.

00:44:52

AE: I bet so. I bet you can't get a good filé gumbo in DC. [*Laughs*]

00:44:56

AO-Jr: Yeah.

00:44:58

AE: So then back to filé and—we were talking about the origins of filé and how it became used. [*Filé is actually ground sassafras leaves, which are used to thicken a gumbo. Because of this, sometimes it is called "gumbo filé." The Cajuns and Creoles learned about filé from the Choctaw Indians of the Gulf South. Some maintain that filé was used when okra—another gumbo thickener—was out of season. Today, okra and file gumbos are made year-round.*]

00:45:03

AO-III: Well—

00:45:04

AO-Jr: [*Looking at recording device*] Okay, I'm trying to figure out how that little thing is going to hold all of this—

00:45:07

AE: Don't ask me; it's smarter than I am.

00:45:08

AO-III: It's got a microchip.

00:45:11

AE: I'm just glad I haven't lost it yet.

00:45:13

AO-Jr: It's changing—?

00:45:15

AO-III: If that's—if that's a 512 or a one gig—

00:45:18

AO-Jr: There's no tape in it.

00:45:20

AO-III: No, that can hold about eight hours worth of conversation.

00:45:23

AE: Exactly.

00:45:24

AO-Jr: What's next?

00:45:25

AE: I don't know.

00:45:26

AO-Jr: You don't care either, huh; just turn it on. [*Laughs*] Who was at the door, Armand?

00:45:30

AO-III: Unknown—Oh, in the back? That was Rivera.

00:45:35

AO-Jr: Okay.

[Return to discussion about the origins of filé.]

00:45:37

AO-III: Sassafras, the Indians used the sassafras that is indigenous to this region and to the US, and we used to make tea out of it. We used to make tea out of it and from the—the communal—sort of communal existence of the American Indians in Louisiana and the—the slaves and the free people of color in New Orleans, we used it to season cooking gumbo. That's how filé gumbo—it's the same as sassafras tea in origin.

00:46:34

AE: So would you—can you talk about it flavoring gumbo and flavoring a roux gumbo, as in the filé gumbo here [at the restaurant]? You strictly use it for flavoring, not as the thickener?

00:46:45

AO-III: It is—it is a thickener but as you had the Gumbo Sampler yesterday, that is the thinnest of all the gumbos. So it's—it's a thickening agent, it's a coloring agent; it does add a flavor dimension to it but there's very little, not terribly scorched peanut-butter-colored roux in the file [gumbo]. I cook my roux to like a milk chocolate color consistency for the Creole Gumbo and there's more of it included; that's the thickening agent there, and that's the heartiest one of the three on the plate. So it—it starts from the structure of it, the filé being the lightest and the Creole being the most dense; so we're back to start with the roux.

00:47:51

AE: And where would you say the okra falls in there?

00:47:54

AO-III: Well the only thickening agent in the okra is the diced okra itself. You dice up the okra, put just a little oil on the bottom of a pan and scorch the okra to get rid of—a lot of people don't like okra because they claim it's slimy; that's the step where you get rid of the slime and the little hairs. And then that's it; that's the thickening agent for it. There's no roux in that one at all and that's, you know, my mother's recipe. I'm sure there are people that make okra gumbo with roux—start with roux like everyone else—but that's her recipe, and I think it's great, so no change there.

00:48:51

AE: Now your roux for the Creole Gumbo that you said was a milk chocolate color—

00:48:57

AO-III: Uh-hmm.

00:48:57

AE: —was that something that you were striving for from the beginning, or is that something that kind of worked its way into the flavor of what you were creating?

00:49:03

AO-III: Well since mine had to be the third one, it had to be—helpful if it would be visually different, but it would have to be distinct in some way from the other two existing ones, so that was—yeah, that’s my objective.

00:49:21

AE: Uh-hmm. And if I may ask, what fat do you use to make your roux?

00:49:24

AO-III: Well back in the old days lard was used. No one uses lard anymore; and I use vegetable oil.

00:49:41

AE: Do you think that’s an extreme taste difference in how the—how the roux is made?

00:49:47

AO-III: Yes, it is sort of a taste difference, but not only have we discovered that lard is not the healthiest thing on the planet, but I defy you to find any. Walk into a grocery store and try to find an old tin of Crisco lard; don't think it exists—not an option anymore.

00:50:11

AE: [*Laughs*] So when you have—being in the French Quarter now and being an authentic Creole restaurant, of which I would imagine there are not a lot of in New Orleans—are there—are there many authentic restaurants anymore?

00:50:25

AO-III: In the French Quarter, authentic Creole restaurants—two.

00:50:34

AE: What is the other?

00:50:36

AO-III: Arnaud's.

00:50:36

AE: Yeah, okay. So—

00:50:39

AO-III: There are many places with a sign that says “Creole.”

00:50:44

AE: Yeah. [*Laughs*] So being in the Quarter then and having lots of tourist business, are there a lot of people who come in and this might be their first experience with gumbo and—?

00:50:56

AO-III: Oh, yes.

00:50:56

AE: And how—how do they react to the sampler?

00:51:00

AO-III: Well I don't quiz everyone, and unless it's one of the periods where I'm dispensing the contest sample voting cards, they all love it. In fact, the sampler outsells the standard bowl or cup or whatever. They're—they're intrigued by it and they have questions to ask and all of my front of the house personnel—my servers and maitre d', they're quite familiar with all of the questions and all of the responses, and they've been briefed by me of what the correct answers are so they don't just make them up off the cuff.

00:51:51

AE: Uh-hmm, about the differences between—?

00:51:55

AO-III: Uh-hmm, and the origin. Part of what we do here, other than provide hopefully a good meal for everyone, we inform them of—about the history and the culture and—of the city; they get a brief education lesson while they're here.

00:52:24

AE: Uh-hmm.

00:52:25

AO-III: Have you ever seen my cookbook?

00:52:26

AE: No. I saw a mention of it on the Internet, but I have not seen it actually.

00:52:32

AO-III: Well if you pause that for a second, I'll bring you one.

00:52:35

AE: Okay. Yes, of course. [*Short pause*] Is the cookbook just a sampling of—of your best recipes or your most popular or—?

00:52:49

AO-III: No, the ones I'm willing to divulge.

00:52:52

AE: Of course. [*Laughs*]

00:52:55

AO-III: And it's interspersed with little stories and lessons about New Orleans, its history, its inhabitants.

00:53:08

AE: I'm not seeing a recipe for gumbo.

00:53:10

AO-III: No.

00:53:13

AE: Okay. One of the ones you're holding close to your—your vest there. Lovely—

00:53:19

AO-III: Well this is sort of like a starter book. We don't want people to start with the gumbo.

00:53:28

AE: Uh-hmm. Why is that?

00:53:29

AO-III: Some of the more simple dishes are in here. Not—I can't remember; did I put them in order? But we want them to start with that [what's in the cookbook].

00:53:44

AE: Well starting cooking you mean?

00:53:45

AO-III: Yes.

00:53:46

AE: And getting familiar with ingredients?

00:53:49

AO-III: Right, you don't start with the most difficult projects.

00:53:55

AE: Most difficult being gumbo?

00:53:59

AO-III: Well it's—it's up there. I haven't added Etouffee in there. The etouffee recipe—if you can make the etouffee well, you can make the gumbo, but if I had a gumbo recipe in there, that's the one everyone would want to start with.

00:54:18

AE: And they would almost ignore the rest?

00:54:20

AO-III: Right, so it's not.

00:54:24

AE: Well regarding the gumbo and ingredients, where for example might you get your filé that you use in your gumbo?

00:54:40

AO-III: That is commercially available in New Orleans—pretty difficult to find in Kansas City, I think, but I have found it in Los Angeles. You have to search. So it is available, but I get it from—I don't grow it in the backyard and rub the leaves myself. It is commercially available.

00:55:07

AE: Was there a time that you know of or remember your family doing that and harvesting sassafras leaves?

00:55:11

AO-III: Yes, sometime back.

00:55:16

AE: Yeah?

00:55:18

AO-III: My great-grandmothers.

00:55:24

AE: That tradition is just one of those that faded away?

00:55:27

AO-III: Well if you produced it yourself and there was a storm and it was destroyed, or you simply expended all of it, or the plant somehow died, you'd be disappointed—easier to get it in a jar.

00:55:47

AE: And so is the commercially produced filé that you get, is it pure sassafras leaves? Because I understand that some are mixed with a lot of other different herbs and things now—bay leaves and—.

00:55:57

AO-III: No, the ones that I get are pure.

00:55:59

AE: Okay, okay. And then what are the meats in the three gumbos that you serve? There's one with the sausage—.

00:56:10

AO-III: There's two with the sausage; there's one with diced ham, and one of them has chicken andouille [smoked pork sausage] in it for those who—for whatever purpose cannot contend with pork—adjusting to pork; the other one has a traditional andouille, which is made of pork, and the other one has diced ham.

00:56:38

AE: And which of the gumbos that are—relative to those meats; the Creole Gumbo has—?

00:56:45

AO-III: The Creole Gumbo has chicken andouille because that is the one that's available by the bowl and cup, so if a person for religious reasons or whatever cannot tolerate pork, they can still try gumbo.

00:56:59

AE: Okay. And then the pork andouille is in which gumbo?

00:57:03

AO-III: That's in the filé.

00:57:05

AE: And then the okra gumbo has the diced ham?

00:57:06

AO-III: Correct.

00:57:09

AE: Okay, okay. And do you have a sausage—a local andouille producer that you use?

00:57:14

AO-III: Yeah.

00:57:15

AE: Would you mind saying who that is?

00:57:17

AO-III: Crescent City Meats.

00:57:21

AE: Okay. And has that been something that's changed over the years that you've had to find different purveyors or have you stuck with one—?

00:57:28

AO-III: Crescent City Meat, I have been with them for what I believe to be about eight years. And before then, you would switch producers—I would—bought like fifteen years ago from Vaucresson Meat Market, but they're now out of business, so you have to find another purveyor. You know, they had been producing sausage for forty years and someone died or retired or—so you had to search again.

00:58:06

AE: Yeah. And how important are those ingredients to you and also trying to use local purveyors when possible—is that something that you try to do?

00:58:19

AO-III: Well yes, as long as—if I can purchase it locally and the quality is one consistent and it's present, I will pay more. I don't care because you're putting it back into the same pot.

00:58:39

AE: How has it been since [Hurricane] Katrina, and you're reopening and getting back into the restaurant business full swing again? Has it been difficult finding the same producers and ingredients and things like that?

00:58:52

AO-III: I would say that the purveyors, roughly seventy to eighty-percent of them still exist—still exist at a much reduced volume. Everyone is struggling. But I'm—I'm pleased with the—with the resurrection of that. Almost everyone wants to return to New Orleans; it's just impossible or impractical for them to with eighty-percent of the city having been destroyed or damaged.

00:59:40

AE: So are you having good business now? Are there a lot of people who are coming in? Is it getting better every day?

00:59:48

AO-III: No, not getting better every day; we're speaking in August. August, traditionally, is the very worst month of the year and for it being August, I can't kick, so it will get better. It will get better as the season cools and business travelers hit the road again in October or November.

01:00:22

AE: When you were growing up did you imagine that you'd be the executive chef of a family restaurant?

01:00:27

AO-III: No, but then again, I had no idea what I would be. As when I started school—or started college—I declared my major as chemistry. That didn't last too long; I found it too exact and sort

of tedious and boring. So I wound up majoring in psychology—a little bit more dynamic and interesting. And what I would do with my degree didn't really matter because psychology, you will use that in whatever field you are in. You will deal with people.

01:01:13

AE: Uh-hmm. So your chemistry background, is that where “the art and science of food” come together in the philosophy of Olivier’s [Restaurant]?

01:01:23

AO-III: Yes. And have you seen my tee-shirt that I designed? [*Laughs*]

01:01:27

AE: No, I have not.

01:01:29

AO-III: It’s kind of comical. Yes, whenever there is a chemist convention in town I sell a lot of them.

01:01:40

AE: [*Laughs*] Does it have a slogan on it or just an image?

01:01:43

AO-III: Sure. I’ll get one for you.

01:01:50

AE: Okay, sure. [*Short pause*] Okay, we have a tee-shirt [that says] Olivier's Restaurant, Creole Science. That is great. That is really a great tee-shirt.

01:02:01

AO-III: Well I made three patterns: Gumbo, Etouffee, and Jambalaya.

01:02:09

AE: Okay.

01:02:11

AO-III: And this is the gumbo pattern.

01:02:15

AE: And what do you call this [diagram]? I'm blanking on what that schematic actually is. The pattern, the—

01:02:23

AO-III: Yes, well I'm not going to tell you what this is. This is actually a [diagram of a] molecule and if you do your research, you will be able to find out what it is. But that's part of the joke, too—what it's based on.

01:02:40

AE: Okay, so it's a little secret science joke?

01:02:42

AO-III: Uh-huh. Each of the three is—each of the three are, you know, different and unique and they stand for something. And the chemists find it really funny, the ones that can digest it.

01:02:58

AE: Uh-huh. So do chemists know immediately—they immediately recognize it?

01:03:03

AO-III: They know what type—what field of substance it is, and they stand there for ten or fifteen minutes and they're debating between them—this looks—this wing here looks like—and occasionally they do that.

01:03:18

AE: So around these hexagonal rings describing this molecule, there's a crab and a catfish and a chili pepper and a shrimp and an onion. Are those—like is the onion in the gumbo schematic the same kind of code as in the etouffee schematic—just a different arrangement, just like is there a key that the onion equals something? **[Laughs]** Do you know what I mean?

01:03:46

AO-III: It's a code, yes. **[Laughs]**

01:03:49

AE: Okay. This is really impossible for me to talk about because I have not a science mindset, but this is hysterical. I can see where people get a kick out of it. “Formula for the good life.” That’s great. **[Laughs]** So do you have these out and sell them or just on—when there’s a science convention in town?

01:04:09

AO-III: I had a display of one hanging on the wall in the rear over there, and it got dusty or something and I took it down, and I just never put it back up again.

01:04:24

AE: That’s great. Even without being a chemist, I think there could be some humor in that and some interest in perhaps having one. Maybe you should bring it back down; that’s funny.

[Laughs] Well so gumbo, what’s—what does gumbo mean to you, I guess, personally and culturally?

01:04:51

AO-III: Sunday dinner and holidays, that’s what it means to me. From my—that’s what I associate that word with. Holidays, birthdays, guests over, family gatherings—gumbo had to be present for a family gathering.

01:05:16

AE: Uh-hmm. And within the family are there arguments about the favorite types of gumbo to be served or had, or that's a given when you go to one person's house?

01:05:25

AO-III: Well you never complain about anyone's gumbo choice. We're gracious guests but yes, there's always a debate about—"Well the last time we came you had—." So yeah, I mean there are favorites, but on Sundays and holidays and anniversaries, birthdays—one must be a gracious guest.

01:05:58

AE: Do you brothers, Sean and Kyle, do they cook at all?

01:05:59

AO-III: No.

01:06:01

AE: No, not at all?

01:06:03

AO-III: No, being the oldest male that—in a female-less generation, that fell on me.

01:06:12

AE: Do you have a family of your own?

01:06:13

AO-III: No.

01:06:15

AE: So who is the next generation then if the Olivier's—

01:06:17

AO-III: That's the question.

01:06:21

AE: Yeah.

01:06:21

AO-III: That's a question. My parents, they were chiding me about “So when are you going to get married, when are you going to get married?” and [*Phone Rings*]*—*well they've desisted now. Pardon me.

01:06:43

AE: Oh sure. [*Short pause*] All right, so we were talking about the next generation.

01:06:53

AO-III: Uh-hmm.

01:06:54

AE: Do you think you'll—do you imagine yourself here in the restaurant business for sometime yet still?

01:07:00

AO-III: Yes, I do. Yes, I do. And actually, my brother Sean has children and my brother Kyle has none, so I feel as though one of them will have to be drafted.

01:07:25

AE: Uh-hmm. You'll take them under your wing to show them the ropes and teach them the recipes?

01:07:31

AO-III: Yes, I feel one of them will have to be drafted.

01:07:35

AE: Yeah? Whether they have an interest or not or will you—will you—?

01:07:39

AO-III: Oh, I can make it interesting. Remember, I did major on psychology.

01:07:46

AE: Ah, so you have your ways, yes. [*Laughs*] Well is there anything about your family or the restaurant business as far as gumbo in particular that I haven't asked about and might not know to ask or that would be worthy of adding?

01:08:07

AO-III: No, we've covered a lot of historical territory.

01:08:14

AE: Have you sampled any other gumbos around? I know your father said that he doesn't care to but—

01:08:20

AO-III: Infrequently—infrequently—I seldom leave the French Quarter because this is a seven-day-a-week operation before the storm—lunch and dinner—so I would put a lot of hours in, and I also lived in the French Quarter for convenience of commuting so I seldom ventured out. And I know all the establishments around and when someplace new would open or there'd be a drastic change in the landscape, yeah, I would go out and try the gumbo.

01:09:09

AE: Uh-hmm. Have you ever met any that you found particularly impressive or enjoyable?

01:09:15

AO-III: Yes, a few—a few, but a lot of the places around—here’s a clue. Let’s say it’s called XYZ Restaurant and on the bill or the—the sign outside it says Cajun and Creole. Cajun and Creole translates to *avoid*. **[Laughs]** That’s like Italian and Chinese. So there are a lot of places that serve gumbo around, and I would say eighty-percent of them in the surrounding area are inferior.

01:10:12

AE: You think most of that has to do with them not taking the time or getting the ingredients or having an appreciation for what gumbo should be?

01:10:21

AO-III: It’s partly that, but I don’t think they know what it’s supposed to be; their commercial chefs or cooks or whatever probably have never experienced good gumbo, so they don’t have a mark to aim at.

01:10:43

AE: So what makes the good gumbo then? What is the mark of a good gumbo?

01:10:51

AO-III: My mother, her mother—.

01:10:56

AE: Standing the test of time.

01:10:57

AO-III: I've tasted it; I'm familiar with it. When the House of Blues first opened twelve, thirteen years ago, after they were opened for two weeks, the chef came over and said, "Can I have your gumbo recipe?" "No, sir." **[Laughs]** "Well you can't blame me for trying," he said and he walked back out. Because I guess in those two weeks his recipe received poor reviews and—
[he thought] "Oh, oh, maybe he'll give me his."

01:11:50

AE: That's a very bold move **[Laughs]**—met immediately with a no and a slamming of the door, I'm sure.

01:11:56

AO-III: Well the first thing it met was a floating question mark over my head. He had his chef whites with HOB—House of Blues—on the logo. "Can I have your gumbo recipe?"

01:12:13

AE: So the—the gumbo recipes now that you're in charge of, more or less, are they something that's written down now or have you just committed them to memory?

01:12:25

AO-III: They're written down. They're written down. When I train a new individual I must present it to them in writing to visualize, and once they've gotten it down, I return it to my safe.

01:12:48

AE: Uh-huh. Are you ever afraid of the people you work with in the kitchen taking your recipes elsewhere?

01:12:53

AO-III: Yes, I suppose that to a degree has happened or will happen. It can't be avoided; one—can't be avoided; I'm not Coca Cola. But if they take it somewhere else and attempt to reproduce it, that place would have to stock all the ingredients and what have you, and it would devolve over time—cut a corner here and cut a corner there. It would devolve over time.

01:13:33

AE: Exactly. And then when you serve the gumbo is there any—do you keep in the back—because you don't keep on the tables, according to the style of this restaurant, the Tabasco and the filé powder and the pepper vinegar and things like that. Are there things that people can request if they want to add anything to their gumbo or are you—?

01:13:52

AO-III: Yes, there are some things, but they're not often used. They're not often used. I don't put the Tabasco on the table because some people are used to dumping it in before they taste. And I get very few requests for any additional condiments. If—in this dining room tonight let's say I have twenty tables, possibly two will request Tabasco will be brought to their table.

01:14:32

AE: What about filé; do people ever request more filé?

01:14:36

AO-III: Once every three months. No, people pretty much consume my product as presented because I've taken the time to craft it with multiple layers of flavor that there are no holes to fill.

01:15:03

AE: Do you think that's kind of a blasphemous trend in what people think of as Creole—and particularly Cajun food being all about spice?

01:15:15

AO-III: Spices and heat—largely the uneducated people will come to my door and say, “Well I heard that you have some of the best Cajun food around.” Nope, not exactly; this is a Creole restaurant, not a Cajun restaurant. Or, someone will come in and sit down and, “Oh, is this fish really hot or spicy?” “No, actually nothing in here is really spicy or hot. That's Cajun you're thinking of.” So they receive an introductory lesson and I'm, you know, pretty well received product-wise and people remember me.

01:16:13

AE: Uh-hmm. and you've received some rewards and recognition in City Search and NOLA Area Readers Choice Awards and things like that, is that right?

01:16:28

AO-III: Well about nine years ago we were in *Sky Magazine*, which is Delta Airlines in-flight travel booklet; three months ago we were in American Airlines travel booklet. I forget what the title of that one is. Been in a few national magazines, been on a couple of television shows—on the Discovery Channel twice, on the Food Network last September—.

01:17:11

AE: That was “The Secret Life Of” show, was it not?

01:17:14

AO-III: Yes.

01:17:15

AE: The Secret Life of Creole Food?

01:17:18

AO-III: No, it was a contrast show between Cajun and Creole.

01:17:24

AE: Okay.

01:17:25

AO-III: There was a Cajun restaurant that they filmed and reviewed and—was it Thibodaux [Louisiana] or—and they reviewed me for the Creole Restaurant.

01:17:39

AE: And then what kind of attention have you gotten since then? Have—have people been coming here because of that show or—?

01:17:48

AO-III: Yes, yes. People that—actually people have scheduled me into their vacation plans when they saw the show in New Jersey or some places, “Oh, we have to go there.” And they pencil me in. And they make the reservation two-and-a-half months ahead of time.

01:18:12

AE: When they were filming and they were asking you about Creole cuisine was—was gumbo a focus or was it across the board, across the menu that you spoke about?

01:18:21

AO-III: It was gumbo only.

01:18:22

AE: Oh, okay.

01:18:24

AO-III: It was gumbo only. The Cajun preparation method and flavors versus the Creole. And my father was interviewed in that one because I'm camera shy.

01:18:44

AE: [*Laughs*] I don't know that I believe that.

01:18:45

AO-III: I am.

01:18:47

AE: Are you?

01:18:50

AO-III: My hobby is photography; some of the photos around here are mine.

01:18:55

AE: Oh, okay.

01:18:57

AO-III: And I like to be on that side of the lens.

01:19:03

AE: Uh-huh. All right, so which of these photographs on the wall are yours, then?

01:19:06

AO-III: The horizontals are mine.

01:19:10

AE: Okay. How long have you been taking photographs?

01:19:16

AO-III: That is my self-portrait [hanging on the wall] from [nineteen] eighty-one.

01:19:27

AE: Wow. Do you print them—enlarge them yourself as well?

01:19:32

AO-III: Yeah.

AE: You have a dark room and all that?

01:19:33

AO-III: I had.

AE: Ah, one before the storm. Wow, that's quite a hobby.

01:19:40

AO-III: Yes, I was planning to have my first show. I've never attempted to sell or promote or display any of my work, and I was planning on having my first show last October, which didn't take place. So I'll try again.

01:20:01

AE: Yes, yes. Well I can't think of another question. Can you think of an answer? **[Laughs]**
Anything else that you'd like to add—final thoughts?

01:20:16

AO-III: No, no. Got to get back to work

AE: Yes, you'll have Friday dinner service here before too long. **[Laughs]**

AO-III: And—Well, you've got my card. If you think of anything that is missing—I doubt—let me know.

01:20:23

AE: Okay, I will. Thank you.

01:20:26

[End Olivier's Interview]