

Dylan Williams
Beaucoup Juice – New Orleans, LA

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Interviewer: Sara Roahen
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[Begin Beaucoup Juice 1 & 2 Interview]

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Sara Roahen: This is Sara Roahen for the Southern Foodways Alliance. It's Tuesday, May 17, 2011. I'm at Beaucoup Juice with Dylan Williams. If I could get you to say your own name and tell me your occupation in your own words, please?

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Dylan Williams: Okay, my name is Dylan Williams and I'm an owner of a local juice bar/smoothie shop here in New Orleans.

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SR: How do you pronounce the name?

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DW: Beaucoup Juice [pronounced BOO-koo].

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SR: Could you tell me your birth date, please?

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DW: November 9, 1976.

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SR: Thank you. Tell me a little bit about the history of the business—when it opened, to start.

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DW: Okay. We opened in 2009, June of 2009. I had been in sales for five years and kind of burned myself out on that and saved up some money and had always wanted to open a smoothie shop because I think that there's not very many—you know, at least at that time—and still, there's really not anywhere to go get a really good smoothie around town. At least in my opinion.

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And a friend of mine and I had both separately been traveling in South and Central America, and we had gotten together and kind of put our heads together talking about how we could--we could open up a smoothie shop but also incorporate, like, the juices and exotic juices of Central and South America. And then we decided, well, look how popular the sno-balls are around New Orleans; maybe we could do something with that. And so we looked at it and we decided to start doing—to open a shop that would have smoothies and also sno-balls, which is the shaved ice that's so popular in New Orleans. And then we would put real juice—both local flavors and exotic flavors—on top of the shaved ice, and that would be kind of like our flagship product.

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And so we started—the shop started as kind of a hybrid of a New Orleans sno-ball stand and a like Latin American juice--juice stand.

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SR: So it's been almost two years?

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DW: Yeah, yeah, it'll be two years in June.

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SR: It's interesting to me. I first knew about you as a sno-ball place. But you don't have sno-balls anywhere in your name. And I'm curious: Now that you've been open for two years, how do you feel like you are known, or what is the bigger seller—the juice/smoothies or the sno-balls?

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DW: Right now it's about dead even because of the season that we're in, I guess. It's definitely sno-ball season, so I'd say we're doing about 50/50. My goal was to—I became the--my business partner backed out shortly after we opened, and my goal was to try to get the shop to be selling just as many smoothies as sno-balls because I wanted to be open all winter, and--and in the wintertime nobody thinks about sno-balls around here. It's all the other shops, they close down six months out of the year, and I didn't want to close down.

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So really just expanded on the menu and did a lot more items. We--we're a full juice bar. We do all kinds of veggie juices, smoothies, juices and sno-balls, so it's really getting to be where honestly it's about 50/50.

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SR: Getting to be that. What was it in the beginning, more what—?

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DW: It was all—it was known as a sno-ball shop. Yeah, that was what we--we were definitely known for the in the beginning.

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SR: Did you sell sno-balls elsewhere before you opened this shop?

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DW: We did. We did some markets and some festivals. That's kind of how we started. We got a sno-ball machine and an E-Z Up tent and started doing like some of the local markets and festivals around town, and still do. That's--that's a big part of our business, is doing festivals and markets and private events; parties, and stuff like that.

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SR: That's how I knew about you, then, was from the farmers market, right?

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DW: Yeah, yeah, we were out there.

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SR: It seems like—you have a SnoWizard ice-shaving machine, I see. That was kind of a big investment, considering what you really wanted to do was make smoothies and juices.

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DW: Yeah, yeah it was. But I mean, you know, it was kind of like my partner really wanted to do the sno-balls and I really wanted to do the juices and smoothies, so we kind of met in the middle. He had previously purchased the sno-ball machine to start doing these markets, and it is a big investment but the--the sno-balls, they—you know they sell themselves around here. It's, people just really love them, so it was a worthy investment.

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SR: What kind of sales were you into before this?

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DW: I was working for telecommunications companies around town, selling phone and internet service to businesses.

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SR: Had you ever been in the food business before?

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DW: Yeah, I had worked for—I worked for several different restaurants in--in college and before that. I was working at different types of—I’ve definitely been in the service industry. Pizza restaurants and even some fine dining.

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SR: Tell me about your background, where you grew up.

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DW: I’m from Tampa, Florida. I grew up—as a kid I grew up in Virginia, Northern Virginia near Washington, DC, and we moved from there when I was 12 down to Tampa, Florida. And I spent high school and college in Florida and went to the University of Florida. And as soon as I graduated I moved to New Orleans for a music internship—music business internship—and I worked here for a few years for Tipitina’s. And I guess I’m kind of getting into the adult life but—

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SR: No, that’s good.

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DW: —I worked here in the music industry for several years and still do—still playing--playing music here and in a band, and you know just eventually went into sales and then here I am, still in sales kind of.

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SR: Right, yeah, you are kind of still in sales, but much more colorful. [*Laughs*] Tell me the name of your band.

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DW: The Tanglers, bluegrass band. We're recording an album right now that's going to come out sometime the end of the summer, maybe the beginning—maybe like October, September. And so we play bluegrass.

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SR: All right. Can you tell me in more detail—you know, we've talked about how you do sno-balls and you do smoothies and juices. Can you tell me more about your menu in detail?

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DW: Okay. Well first of all the sno-balls are a little bit—a lot different than anywhere else you'll find them. We make our own juice to put on top of the sno-balls. We make our own juice out of local and exotic fruits and veggies. So we don't use high fructose corn syrup; we use juice in our own concoctions. You know we do add sugar to some of them, sweeteners, but they're very, very much more healthy than the typical sno-ball that you would see around town.

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So, anyway, you know we have Ponchatoula Strawberry, Mississippi Peach, and we--we use all sorts of different fruits from Central and South America like mango, passion fruit, guava, fruits like—anything we can get our hands on really. Local blueberries. So that's the sno-balls.

And also it kind of goes in with smoothies; we--we use all fresh fruit, as much as we can find, and we mix that with frozen stuff that we can get from, like I said, Central and South America. A lot of our products come from Colombia or Costa Rica. And so we have a--a pretty good smoothie—I would say the best smoothie menu around as far as diversity and freshness, you know.

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We use honey, local--local honey, and all kinds of stuff from the farmers markets and from local farmers within just a mile of where my shop is. We get stuff from the Edible Schoolyard, which is right next door, our own gardens at home, and people from around town that are doing community and local gardens will come by and we'll purchase or trade with them to make sure our menu is full of all kinds of local fruits and vegetables.

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So I have one item that we have here that's very popular, is the açai, which is spelled a-c-a-i. It's a Brazilian berry that's only known to grown in the Amazon and we incorporate that into our menu for a lot of different smoothies. We have a whole separate açai smoothie menu and we also serve it in a bowl as a snack. It comes frozen with like a frozen purée kind of like thick smoothie in a bowl with granola and sliced bananas on top. It's—if you were in Rio de Janeiro or somewhere in Brazil, you would see these on the menus in a lot of the different restaurants. They have--they're very popular, the açai bowl. So we get a lot of people that come in--come in to order that ; Brazilian, local Brazilian folks that--that are just really excited to find it on the menu here in New Orleans. Very healthy, super-high antioxidants; it's very—it's known as a super-food. Oprah even talks about it. **[Laughs]**

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But so that—and we also have some things that’s pretty new, is our--our new veggie juice menu. So we’ll have all sorts of raw foods that we’re juicing here. New Orleans isn’t known as a place where you can, you know, find a lot of really healthy options as far as raw foods and--and juices. There’s really not too many places in town. There are a few other juice bars besides here but just one or two. So we have all sorts of veggie juices, when you talk about beets, carrots, ginger, celery. And we use herbs and--and different types of added—of healthy like super-foods that you can add to the--to the mix, like spirulina. And we have wheat grass, just something like you might see in a lot of places out in the western part of the country, like where they have juice bars where you can order pretty much any type of juice and mix it with fruits and vegetables. We want it to be—you know we’re modeled--we kind of modeled ourselves after, as far as the veggie juice, a place where I used to work in Oregon that was called the Natural Café. And I--I just worked there for about a year juicing as and--and learned how to make a lot of different types of veggie juices. So I kind of just tried to remember some of the items that they had and then used some creativity and found—kind of looked around to see what I could get locally and we just put up a new menu just a few weeks ago. It’s a bunch of different veggie juices named after local New Orleans like Mardi Gras parades and musicians and songs and things like that. So we have something like the Rex, which is a really green hearty veggie juice that you could come in and order. And we have the Night Tripper named after Dr. John, which is kind of like a psychedelic-looking colorful blend of beet and orange juice, and it goes on and on. We have a lot of different items on the menu to choose from.

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SR: Have you had him in here yet, Dr. John?

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DW: No, no, not yet. I have his guitar player in here frequently, John Fohl. He's--he's one of our customers, and in fact he told me he might try to bring Dr. John in here.

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SR: Well I've spotted him at Whole Foods, so it seems like he—.

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DW: Me too. Yeah, yeah, I've seen him in there too.

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SR: Maybe if you knew—oh yeah, I see. There's the Night Tripper: beet, orange, ginger.

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DW: So another thing that we might want to talk about, too, is just like Freret Street and what's going on. I don't know if that's something that—.

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SR: Definitely. That's--that's on my list of questions. So this place, Beaucoup Juice, is on a strip of Freret Street that in my time in New Orleans, in the past 10 years, has been kind of downtrodden. And tell me about how you picked this location, and maybe how this street has changed a little bit since you've moved in.

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DW: Well it was definitely a big risk, like we were very, very low on money at first and we had just started working at the markets, and having saved up a little bit of money from the markets we were looking for a place in town where we could have--we could start a shop. But you know, we needed the low overhead. So definitely the rent and the--and the price was right over here, but it was still very risky because there weren't very many businesses. We were one of the first to open up down here. There was like just—we had a little place called Sarita's, this Latin food [place], and then we had a hardware store and a few other places, but it was just you know—but we knew—. It looked like things were happening and we could kind of speculate that in the near future some other--some other restaurants and businesses were going to open up on this street. So we took the risk and signed a lease and opened up a little spot. We--we were lucky to find this spot. I think it's going to be a good place to be in the years to come because there are a lot of restaurants opening up around us right now. And it's going to be--it's going to be good and it's going—I think the street is about to kind of explode with lots of different flavors and food and some retail, so—.

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SR: Yeah. I mean a lot has changed even in the past six months, and it's—and in the middle of changing. Have you noticed more business yet, or a change in business?

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DW: Yeah. I mean for our shop there's definitely—I wouldn't say we have noticed a huge incline in—as far as our business yet. But definitely when I look outside—at least not because of

the street. I think we have built a--we have more customers coming because of some of the marketing that we've done because we're getting our name out there. But I think as far as what's about to happen, I think is what's going to bring us probably more business is there's four restaurants that are all kind of on the same timeline of opening up this June or July. And I think once that happens—and they're all within just two blocks of here—so I think once that happens there's going to be a big push of--of people coming down here to eat lunch and dinner, and that should bring more business to our block.

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I think it's going to be really—the change in the next year is going to be a lot more than the change was in the last year, so I think that is what we're looking forward to. People are definitely driving down the street looking around and getting out of their cars. I see more and more investor-type people you know getting out and looking at buildings and surveying, and I just think it's going to be really interesting to see what happens for the next couple of years.

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SR: Yeah, your gamble should pan out.

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DW: I hope so. I hope so. I mean it's still a long way to go but--but we'll see.

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SR: What was in this spot before you?

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DW: It was some sort of retail clothing store. I don't know . It was empty for some months before we moved in so I'm not really sure what it was called but it was definitely a clothing store.

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SR: What about the Freret Market? That happens regularly, doesn't it?

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DW: Yeah. The Freret Market has been really helpful in getting us customers and getting our name out there. It's once a month. The first Saturday of every month they have an art market where they have live music, art, food, and quite a few people come--come out. It's definitely an event that the whole city knows about, so they'll get 2,000 or 3,000 people out there on a Saturday and it happens every Saturday—every first Saturday each month.

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SR: There used to be one of the only health food stores in the city [on this street]. I'm not even sure that there is another small, privately owned health food store right now. But there used to be one just down the block. Do you notice that you get some of their regular customers? It seems like people in this area might be excited that there's someone doing something healthy on the street.

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DW: Sometimes people come in and they talk about how there used to be a health food store. I don't think we really get too many—that was quite a while ago when that was there, but in fact the owner of that health food store has been in here a few times. Yeah, I mean people are excited that there's something going on that's on the healthy, you know, path here. They come in; we do have kind of a niche product with the veggie juices and stuff now. I think once more people find out about it and how good it is, and also our prices—like we really don't charge too much for our products compared to what our cost is. So I think it's pretty affordable. And I think that's maybe one of the reasons why some--some of these places haven't—. I may be wrong but I think when I go into a juice bar and I see something that's, you know, a little less than \$10 for a juice I think, “Wow, that's really expensive. I wonder if people can afford that.” And so I'm trying to keep my prices down to where they're a little bit more affordable.

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SR: You're more in the \$4, \$5, \$6 range?

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DW: Yeah, right now that's where we're at, and that's to get something that's really probably more—I would say \$1 or \$2 more at any other juice bar around town.

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SR: How do you keep your prices down and make a profit?

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DW: Well it definitely involves researching where to get local products at a good price. I mean it's not just go to the farmers market and buy the first thing you see. You know you have to talk to farmers; I've found some local people that have gardens that I can get beets—for example, like I'm getting [beets] right now from a garden that's just a mile down the road and worked out a deal where we're getting them at a really good rate. So I mean like just the little things and where you can cut corners and save money but not sacrifice quality. It's really just about researching how to--where you can cut corners without sacrificing quality and hopefully, you know, showing some savings based on like the amount of money you save. I don't know. I'm kind of going all over the place with that, but—.

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SR: No, I understand. It's a little bit of an art.

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DW: It is. It's definitely—it takes time. It takes a lot of networking. You have to know where to shop for what. I think that's what--what running a business is all about, is finding out where your profit margins are, and also just to me, quality and freshness that's what it's all about. And you can take—as long as you have really fresh ingredients, what you make and what you serve is usually going to taste, smell, and look really, really great.

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SR: Well, your beet grower that you found—when you say “a mile down the road,” where is that?

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DW: He’s got a garden. There’s a garden—I don’t know the address, but it’s just off Louisiana [Avenue] kind like in-between Dryads and—in that neighborhood back in there between I guess you’d say Uptown and Central City. It’s coming from a community—not a community garden but a private garden.

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SR: Urban.

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DW: Yeah, urban garden right down the street.

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SR: Did he before—like, grow to sell to restaurants and stuff?

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DW: He does, he does sell to restaurants. Yeah, they do, uh-hm.

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SR: Well that's really interesting. I'm learning a lot about this business that I've driven by many, many times. Tell me a little bit—I mean I know the obvious clientele for a juice bar. You know, in this town it would draw people who are living a healthier lifestyle, but I know because of your location and because of the way the city works that you must get a broad range of people in here. And I see you have crayons at one table and you have decorated Mardi Gras for sale—Mardi Gras bras for sale—and so tell me a little bit about the range of your clientele.

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DW: So yeah. I mean this is kind of like an art gallery as well. There's art from local artists all over the walls and it's all for sale. You know so it's kind of like an art gallery. We filter it out sometimes. We try to keep it colorful but there's photography, there's 3-D silk screens, there's Mardi Gras bras, there's watercolor paintings. And--and so we try to keep it really colorful and these are all just friends of mine that are artists that I have asked to please come in and display some of their art. And we don't sell a whole lot of art, but it's just part of what we're doing to keep the place colorful and to keep--keep it New Orleans, you know. I'm an artist and most people that are around here have some sort of artistic qualities, so we--we just try to keep it fresh. But maybe I forgot the question that you asked.

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SR: Oh, well, the range of your clientele.

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DW: Oh the clientele. So we get every—you know, from little neighborhood kids that want sweets to parents I'd say like—we get a lot of parents with young kids, so middle-aged kind of parents with kids that are not necessarily striving to live the healthy lifestyle but just to kind of opening their minds to the fact that there are some alternatives to--to these, you know, the normal—I hate to say it but unhealthy New Orleans diet [*Laughs*].

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There's a lot more going on out there. There's a big Whole Foods on Magazine Street and there's much, much more farmers market activity, and so there definitely is a--a push for a healthier lifestyle here. There's yoga studios popping up everywhere, so I mean it is—we do get I'd say like the young families; types that are trying to kind of keep their kids in line with learning to eat healthy. And then we also get a lot of college kids in here that are just, “Wow, there's a great smoothie shop down the street.” Tulane and Loyola are really close by. So we do--we market to the college kids. And you know it's also like simple as this is a great place to come and get it—something that will help your hangover. You know we market our juices for that, too. I mean this is a big drinking town and people are out all night and sometimes they come in here and the first thing they do in the morning [is] get a smoothie, you know. Make yourself feel a little bit better.

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So just, you know, a lot of young people but also parents and kids; that's kind of a lot of what we get in here.

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SR: When you do get school-aged kids looking for a sno-ball—I don't know that there are a lot of sno-ball stands right around in this immediate area.

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DW: There really aren't. I mean the closest one is probably maybe Hansen's. I may be mistaken; maybe there is one in there, but Plum Street [Sno-Balls is nearby]—and those are the two most popular in the city. So I wouldn't say I really compete with them too much. I mean we don't have a line out the door every day for sno-balls. I mean those places have been around for a long time and they're sort of like institutions and there will always be, I think—. The traditional sno-ball is not going to go away and I'm not trying to reinvent the wheel or change that. But there aren't any right in the neighborhood so we have tapped into that—the fact that you know you can get a sno-ball here in the neighborhood. There are still a lot of people that like the traditional sno-balls, so they'll go out of their way to go to those places. But if they want something healthy and really refreshing they'll come--they'll come to us.

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SR: Well tell me, like, when you get neighborhood kids in here, what do they tend to like?

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DW: They love the popsicles. At the end of the day we pour off our juice into popsicle molds and freeze the juice so that we keep everything fresh every day. In the morning I make juice and in the end of the day I pour them into--whatever is left over in the popsicle molds. So we do popsicles and the kids love those. It's cheap. You know kids can get a popsicle for \$1 and a lot of

the younger kids can't afford to spend much more than that, so we try to cater to them as well.

And that's kind of what they like.

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They like—to be honest, the kids like whatever is the sweetest. You know I have chocolate milk, the Smith Creamery chocolate milk. It's local farmers market milk and so we have that and we pour it over sno-ball ice and it's really delicious. That's a popular one for the kids.

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SR: Yeah, that stuff is really good.

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DW: It is.

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SR: That's one thing I was going to ask you. So, in the traditional New Orleans sno-ball world people are making the syrups—and sometimes daily, sometimes weekly, but they make the syrups ahead of time. So do you make all of your juices in the morning, or do you juice to-order or how do you—? I was going to ask you how you keep waste down, but you told me about the popsicles, so that makes a lot of sense.

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DW: Yeah, and sometimes we--we donate juice [or] take it home with us; you know it's mostly we don't make too much. We don't make it for the week. We make it each day in the morning so I may make a few pints or a half-gallon of each juice, and on a nice hot summer day that's plenty to last me for a couple hours. And then as soon as I run out, if somebody orders something I'll make it right here right in front of them and make it fresh and pour it right over the ice. So a lot of--a lot of things are made during the course of the day. We don't carry anything over to the next day, except for—that's not true, except for like the chocolate milk and some things that we don't actually make here. Anything that we make as far as squeezing juice or juicing is going to be fresh every day because the juice does lose its—the enzymes and the quality of the juice, as it sits, it does have a shelf life. And the taste does change so we try to keep it real, real fresh.

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SR: Do you make popsicles out of the vegetable juices?

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DW: No, not really. I have made avocado popsicles, though, which are really good. I don't have any right now or I'd give you one, but—.

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SR: Do people ever get vegetable juice on the sno-ball?

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DW: Occasionally, yeah. We do—we have a carrot-ginger special that we offer, and just the other day somebody ordered, my friend Gary ordered a veggie juice, and then he said, “Why don’t you go ahead and put it on a sno-ball?” So yeah, I mean it’s something we can--we can do. We’re very open-minded here at Beaucoup and we’ll do whatever the customer wants. You know we can put pretty much any kind of the juice over shaved ice.

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SR: Do you have any regular customers that have some sort of strange habits, any regulars that—I don’t know, they make up their own juice or—?

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DW: Yeah, we definitely have some regulars. I don’t--I can't think of any strange habits right now, but we have people that I know when they walk in the door what they’re going to order you know. There’s one little guy named Ian, he’s maybe four or five—maybe five years old—and he comes in with his dad almost every day and he orders a strawberry sno-ball. He’s not--I don’t think he’s ever going to get tired of the strawberry sno-balls. So, but yeah, we have plenty of regular customers that--that order stuff.

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SR: What about you? Does this place reflect your lifestyle? Are you a vegetarian?

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DW: Yeah, yeah, it’s kind of all over the place you know.

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SR: No, I mean the healthy component?

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DW: I think so. I think that, you know, when I first started the shop I definitely wouldn't—I'm not a health nut. I'm still not a total you know—I'm not a vegetarian. I'm not somebody that preaches you know health and healthy eating, but I do incorporate a lot of healthy habits into my lifestyle and practice yoga and eat a lot of veggies and drink a lot of veggie juice. And since I've started the shop I can tell you my immune system has been rock solid. I don't think I've been sick, maybe once in two years, and it's--it's really, I think--I think it's because I'm back here drinking all this healthy juice all the time. So I'm learning as I go. I think that reading and learning more, it's a work in progress. I'm not an expert on even juicing yet. You know I'm still learning, so the more and more I learn, the more and more I realize that these types--this type of incorporating vegetables and fruit—and really especially like vegetables—into your diet in a raw form it can really change your life. It can really change the way people feel and if they're not feeling good it can do--it can work wonders. I'm learning more about that, you know.

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So yeah, it reflects the way that I live but I also kind of still love my vices and my fried food and my, you know, steaks and fried shrimp po-boys and all that. All the good stuff New Orleans has to offer. *[Laughs]*

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SR: You do live in New Orleans. Well, and you're a musician in New Orleans, which is a—you know it would be difficult, I think, to not indulge once in a while. But, so, I'm looking around and when I interview people at other sno-ball stands, I see a lot of extracts. Are you in that—do you order from that realm at all?

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DW: No, not at all. I don't use any kinds of [extracts].

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SR: I'll pause this. Yeah, so we were talking about the extracts and when we were off the recording you kind of revealed that you didn't exactly know even what that was, so I'm guessing that you don't buy any. You use all fresh juice?

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DW: I don't like any artificial flavoring or anything like that at all. It's pretty much just we make our own concoctions with fruit juice. We add sweetener sometimes if the fruit doesn't taste sweet enough, because you know people definitely associate sno-balls with sweet, and to--to come and start serving people sno-balls that aren't sweet is just—that's not really practical. And so we try to get our fruit juice and sometimes we call it like our fruit nectar or syrup but we don't—we try to keep it a balance of sweetness to fresh—refreshment. What's the word I'm looking for? Sweet but not too sweet, I guess I could say. You know, so no artificial flavors, no preservatives, no additives, nothing like that.

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SR: What about your ice? I've talked to a lot of the sno-ball people about their ice. What kind do you use? Where do you get it?

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DW: We get our ice from pretty much the same place everybody else does unless they make their own—from Duplantier [Ice], which is on the other side of town in the Marigny. They--they are the big distributor of the sno-ball ice around town.

00:34:53

SR: And does he drop that off in blocks that fit in your machine or—?

00:34:58

DW: Actually I pick it up because I go down there. In fact, I got a little tour of the--the ice factory the other day. It's really pretty interesting and crazy. They have a custom-made ice block machine that is just really cool, made in New Mexico, like I just learned about it the other day. They can make like hundreds of blocks at a time right there at the--at the plant and they use clean filtered water so it's like—. But that's pretty much the only place that distributes. There's a couple other places, but as far as getting-- stocking most of the sno-ball shops, that's--that's where they get the ice from.

00:35:42

SR: When you say they make hundreds of blocks at a time, are they blocks that fit in your machine, or do you have to have them cut further?

00:35:50

DW: They are, they are. They're blocks that fit to the dimensions of the SnowWizard machine. So there's a custom-made, yeah, custom-made commercial-like factory that makes just snow-ball block ice. I mean they sell other kinds of ice but that--I think that's their biggest seller, which is pretty interesting because I mean there's only one thing you can do with this size block of ice and it's make snow-balls. *[Laughs]*

00:36:20

SR: And do you find there's any trick to keeping the ice at the right temperature? I mean, because you don't have a line out the door. When you make a snow-ball, do you have to take that block out and freeze it again?

00:36:35

DW: Yeah, when it's not busy we take the block out and put it in the freezer so that the idea is to keep the ice as hard as possible. The harder the ice the better the snow, the finer the snow. And keeping the blade sharpened is also important.

00:36:50

SR: How do you do that? Do you do it yourself or does someone come?

00:36:53

DW: No, I take the blades to SnoWizard, which is—these machines are manufactured right here in New Orleans at a place called SnoWizard and it's on River Road. And it's--you can bring the blades to them and they'll sharpen them up for you. So usually you bring them—you have two sets of blades, one that they sharpen and you trade them in. Basically, you bring them the old blades and they'll give you a new--new set of blades, but they always kind of have a set of your blades on hand. And I have two machines actually. One of them is an old, kind of vintage machine from the--from the early '80s. I don't know exactly what year it's from but I think it's from the early '80s, and believe it or not the old machines are better than the new ones just like everything else. That thing was made better back then.

00:37:39

SR: In what way is it better?

00:37:41

DW: Well, for example, the legs are now made of this synthetic plastic that break easier and back then they were made of metal. And it's just a more heavy-duty structure I guess.

00:37:55

SR: Is the older one also a SnoWizard?

00:37:58

DW: Yeah, uh-hm.

00:37:59

SR: Why do you have two?

00:38:01

DW: Because we do a lot of private events and parties and festivals and the shop is always open, so we need to be able to cast a wide net and work you know. We always have to have the machine at the shop, and then we use the other one for events, catering, weddings, and—. We also do adult sno-balls, which are alcohol sno-balls with pina colada, mojito—rum drink sno-balls. And so that's another part of our business as well.

00:38:31

SR: Do you do that in here?

00:38:32

DW: No, not in the shop. I don't have a liquor license. Just at parties and private events.

00:38:39

SR: That's good to know. *[Laughs]* When you first started out, was it completely self-explanatory how to shave ice well, or did you have to—did you go get a training? Or how did you figure that out?

00:38:54

DW: No, I didn't get a training. It takes some time and some practice to figure it out, to figure out how to do it right, but I just taught myself. I mean on the surface it's self-explanatory but beneath the surface there's a lot of little sort-of technique to it—to getting the ice right.

00:39:13

SR: Which you can tell when you eat sno-balls at different spots.

00:39:17

DW: Yeah, sometimes people are like, you know, “Your ice is so great,” but I'm using the same machine—we're all using the same machines pretty much. There's a few people that have their own custom-made sno-ball machines, but for the most part everybody is using a SnoWizard.

00:39:32

SR: Do you get a hankering for the traditional New Orleans sno-ball or is that not part of your diet?

00:39:37

DW: It's not part of my diet. I really don't get a hankering for them at all. They're too sweet for me. Just, I can't even get halfway through one without getting a headache.

00:39:46

SR: Was that always true or just since you've opened this place and got used to a different kind?

00:39:52

DW: I always thought like the first four or five bites were great, but like I said, it's just--it's simply too sweet for me. I like the idea of it, but I can never--I never really was one to go get—believe it or not, I never was a regular customer at any of the sno-ball shops.

00:40:10

SR: What about here? What's your favorite? What's your standard daily thing to eat or drink, sno-ball or otherwise?

00:40:19

DW: I'm big into the veggie juices right now. I like to drink like a beet, carrot, ginger juice, and I love the Bayou Berry smoothie. It's got pineapples, peaches, strawberries, honey, açai, orange, and you know it's just got all the fruit in it and also has the açai in it and it's really, really great. It makes you feel good. It gives you energy. And as far as the sno-balls, right now my favorite is the pineapple-mint. We use fresh organic mint leaves from the garden next door and the garden in my backyard and we mix it with pineapple juice and it just comes out super refreshing and tasty. But that changes all the time. My favorites always change. Like, I love the strawberry lemonade, too, on shaved ice. It's delicious.

00:41:12

SR: I wanted to ask you about your garden. What do you grow in your garden?

00:41:15

DW: I just have an herb garden, just simple stuff. I grow like mint, chocolate mint, some tomatoes, some peppers, and herbs. My neighbor has an amazing garden though. He has all sorts of different vegetables and herbs, so I get stuff from him too.

00:41:33

SR: And is he—does he sell to other places or just you?

00:41:35

DW: No, it's just his own personal place of serenity I think. He just has a really cool garden out back.

00:41:46

SR: It's neat to me that you're tapped into this whole herb and gardening culture.

00:41:53

DW: Yeah, I never would have guessed. You know I've always been interested in gardening but definitely not an expert, but never would have guessed when I opened this shop that it would be—that I would be so tapped into it. But I definitely am and I'm learning more and more as I go about gardening and about what grows well in Louisiana and this part of Louisiana and what doesn't, so—.

00:42:19

SR: You mentioned the Edible Schoolyard, which is really close to here —and just for the record, that’s an elementary school where growing food and preparing food and eating food is worked into the curriculum in many different ways. Are the students at the Edible Schoolyard aware that some of their produce comes to you, and do they visit this place?

00:42:44

DW: Yes, we get quite a few Green School students, and some of them are and some of them are not aware. I think that honestly it’s something that I’ve been wanting to do and haven’t done yet, is to go over there and do like a presentation and talk to the kids and have them come over here on field trips and something we just haven’t gotten around to yet. One plan that I have is to— is to, you know, a dream that I have—I don’t know if it’s ever going to come to fruition but I want to try to get out to all the schools locally and maybe take the sno-ball machine out and explain to them about some of the healthy aspects of fruit and vegetables and show them about what we’re doing over here.

00:43:32

SR: That would be a really good way to introduce fresh produce to schoolkids in New Orleans.

00:43:39

DW: Yeah, and explain to them, you know this is—and show them something that really tastes good. You know this is really something that you’ll like and just—. I think it’s great that these, you know the edible—that the idea of the Edible Schoolyard though that these kids at a public school are learning how to garden and use that food in their—and incorporate into their diet, in

their cafeteria. I think it's a great concept. And it's cool that it's the closest school to my shop so I can walk over there, give them my compost, which I do; that's something else I mentioned. We do save all of our organic waste and donate it to several different gardens around town, and these are the gardens that we get our vegetables from. So it's--it's a good tradeoff, you know. We save—most of the restaurants in the city, they just throw it all away, and then that's--that's fine. If that's what they want to do. But you can save all organic waste and--and put it back into the earth. And it's just like recycling, so we do that.

00:44:47

SR: You mentioned earlier that sometimes you donate juices. What sorts of places do you donate to?

00:44:51

DW: Well the Edible Schoolyard, or the Green School; the Neighborhood Center. I get a lot of phone calls these days for people just wanting, you know, to see if I'd like to donate juice for this benefit or this certain cause, or maybe they're having like a health fair. So there's just different things, different people that I'll donate to. It's not something I do every day. It's just, you know, friends; sometimes family, you know.

00:45:23

SR: I know that you need to get going soon because is it about—you're about to open?

00:45:27

DW: It's getting there.

00:45:31

SR: Oh, let me just ask you—oh okay, you open at 11:00. Let me ask a final question. What do you like most about your job?

00:45:36

DW: Right now I love the relationships that I have with the local gardeners and learning more about--about juicing and fruits and vegetables. I think just like the fact that I'm learning as I--as I go and providing something healthy to the local people of New Orleans. It gets me excited. You know I think that the city needs more—people need to become more healthy here. There's a lot of diabetes. There's a lot of disease. There's a lot of people that are overweight. There's just—I think the fact that I'm doing something to hopefully promote health is probably my favorite thing about my job.

00:46:27

SR: I can't tell if that was part of the reason that you opened this place or if that's sort of a byproduct.

00:46:35

DW: It's part of the reason I opened the place but it wasn't the main reason. You know the main reason was to just simply—I've always been a huge fan of smoothies and I always thought that New Orleans needed a good smoothie shop. I'm a very simple, surface level—you know that's

kind of where I was at. But it definitely has grown into something more than that, and you know I think it's--it's kind of cool that like I didn't start off as an expert on this subject and I'm kind of teaching—. I'm learning from the people that come in here sometimes as much as they're learning from me, so it's like a give and take and it's really pretty interesting. It's a great job.

00:47:22

SR: Thank you for giving me your time.

00:47:25

DW: Thank you very much, Sara.

00:47:28

[End Beaucoup Juice 1; Begin Beaucoup Juice 2]

00:00:01

SR: I'm back with Dylan Williams at Beaucoup Juice and I just wanted to ask you about this framed \$5 bill you have on your wall from Miss Tee Eva. Can you tell me about her coming in?

00:00:14

DW: Yeah. Literally our--the first day we opened, one of the first customers we had was Miss Tee Eva and she came in here to get a sno-ball. And she paid us \$5 and we were like, "Okay, we're going to frame that." So she came in here and she was really friendly and super, super kind to us and told us about how she used to have shop on this block, which we didn't know. I mean

we all know kind of who she is and she is over on Magazine Street. But she came in and told us that one of her shops was on this block a long time ago when it was a little more [of a] happening area. Maybe it was in the '80s. I don't know when but she came in and chatted with us and had one of our sno-balls, so she may have been one of the first customers to have the real fresh juice sno-ball, and she liked it, so—.

00:01:06

SR: Do you remember what kind she ordered?

00:01:08

DW: I wish I could remember. I could probably call my business partner—old business partner—and ask him. He would probably know.

00:01:15

SR: Can you tell me just for the record a little about who Tee Eva is?

00:01:17

DW: Well I don't know too much. I know that she's an older lady here in New Orleans that's been doing sno-balls for a long time, and baked goods like pies and things—sweets—over on Magazine Street. I don't really know the history of Miss Tee Eva. You probably know more than me.

00:01:34

SR: Well she's—yeah, she's just sort of a local celebrity.

00:01:38

DW: She's been around for a while and she's a local celebrity and she's super kind and sweet, old lady.

00:01:42

SR: And the shop that she had here on Freret Street—that was a sno-ball shop?

00:01:45

DW: Yeah, yeah, sweets and sno-balls, which is kind of like what she does now. Pies and sno-balls and candy apples and stuff like that I think.

00:01:56

SR: All right, thank you. That was a good story.

00:01:59

DW: Yeah, no problem.

00:02:00

[End Beaucoup Juice 2]