

**STEFAN NEUMANN**  
**Brooks Meats, Walton, Kentucky**

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Interviewer: Sara Wood  
Transcription: Shelley Chance, ProDocs  
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Project: Cured South

**[Begin Stefan Neumann Interview]**

**00:00:00**

**Sara Wood:** Here we go. So it's April 21, 2014. This is Sara Wood with the Southern Foodways Alliance. I'm here with Mr. Stefan Neumann at Brooks Meats in Walton, Kentucky. Stefan would you be so kind as to say hello, introduce yourself, and tell me where we are and what you do here? *[Interviewer's note: I forget to ask Mr. Neumann for his date of birth, so I asked him off the record post-interview. Mr. Neumann's birthdate is November 6, 1969.]*

**00:00:19**

**Stefan Neumann:** My name is Stefan Neumann. I'm a German master sausage maker. I moved to Kentucky in September 1998. I started my own company [Detlef Koeppel in Florence, KY] right after I moved here. In—in 2007 we decided to close this company because of some issues we incurred and ever since I've been working with Brooks Meats in—in Walton, Kentucky as their Production Supervisor and we are a retailer, wholesaler, and a food processor of mainly locally grown products and we do up to forty different varieties of sausages, cured meats, and jerky—beef jerky, hams, bacon, and any—any other variety of sausage that you can think of.

**00:01:16**

**SW:** And Stefan I'm wondering if you could start and just—I have a couple questions for you about your beginnings. Where are you from in Germany and—and what made you decide to come here in—in 1998?

**00:01:26**

**SN:** My hometown in Germany is called Neunkirchen which is in Saarland which is for most people would know it as the Outer Lorraine area. And call me crazy but I always wanted to do something like that and I worked in Africa before I moved to—to America and started looking for—for places, outside of Germany to work, and we—I finally wound up here in Kentucky. And it's—to be a master sausage maker you go through a six-year program. You go—you start off—our school system works totally different than it works here. You get—when you—we only go to school to ninth grade and then we start a three-year apprenticeship program unless you would go further onto a university but for most people at fifteen you start a—working apprenticeship which means for some professions you work five days and you go to school one day or you work three weeks and you go to school a whole week.

**00:02:32**

And that is for three years and then you get a journeyman certification and after that you got to work as a journeyman for three years before you can go onto earn your master's degree.

**00:02:44**

**SW:** What made you decide to go with sausage making?

**00:02:48**

**SN:** My parents owned a restaurant back home. I'm the youngest of six [brothers: Arthur, Heinz, Dieter, Guenther, and Markus]. And two of my oldest brothers [Arthur and Heinz] are butchers as well. Then we have a baker and we have two car mechanics and I guess I decided food was my passion and so I decided to be a butcher also.

**00:03:09**

**SW:** Did you have—were there—was there a sense of—in terms of curing traditions did you grow up with that in terms of curing meats or eating cured meat, just the tradition where you come from in Germany? What was that like?

**00:03:23**

**SN:** Food and especially cured foods have been [*Phone Rings*]*—*that's okay. Okay; somebody got it. It has—our long tradition especially in Europe. I mean curing is—was usually the way of making things shelf-stable or—or during the wintertime or they killed hogs or—or animals in the wintertime to—and they had to sustain through the summer, so this is where—where people started curing meats and we have a big tradition especially in the—in the Black Forest region of Germany where—where those traditions are still being—being upheld until today. And if you go further into Switzerland or into Italy it's—it's even more pronounced as—as it is in Germany now with the—the new ways that are possible where I can—where it took me three months to—to cure a product I can do that today in ten days or—or even shorter—shorter terms.

**00:04:37**

And those traditions always intrigued me and especially the new techniques intrigued me even at a young age. And that's why I chose to do something like that.

**00:04:47**

**SW:** Did you—did you like sausage and cured meats growing up? Did you heat ham and all of that?

**00:04:51**

**SN:** Oh of course. I mean if you look at me I'm you know I love food and I always loved food and my—my parents—in my parents' restaurant we killed our own animals in—in the basement and we further processed them right there. So we made our own salamis, we made our own bacons, and—and things like that and our own hams and—and it's just part of my life.

**00:05:16**

**SW:** And if we could stop for a second; what are your parents' names and what was the name of the restaurant?

**00:05:19**

**SN:** My parents' names, my—my dad's—that passed away today five years ago his name is Guenther and he was actually a coal miner and my mom, her name is Luise and she—she was the owner of the restaurant. And the restaurant's name was Marien Schenke way back then and this is—this is how—how it all started. That's where I grew up in—in the restaurant.

**00:05:45**

**SW:** Did your parents put you to work as soon as you were able to?

**00:05:48**

**SN:** That's one thing that—that a lot of people say, "What do you mean you started working when you were five and six years old?" And I said, "Well you know there was empty bottles that needed to be taken down in the basement and sorted out and this is what we started doing." We—we worked. It's just family business.

**00:06:06**

**SW:** And I'm wondering if you could talk a little bit about you know what is—what is the process; you talked about your apprenticeship, your journeyman, doing the—the six-year program but what was the learning curve like of learning to cure? Did you already know a lot of this stuff from what your parents were doing or did you—was your mind kind of blown open?

**00:06:26**

**SN:** Well the—you kind of sort of grow into—into things but once it gets started with the apprenticeship you actually learn the whole techniques behind it and you—you get more in-depth training on things like that. And this is when it gets really technical about, you know, the amount of salt, how many percent salt, how many percent nitrates and so on and so forth. And—and this is where—where it—really your passion for things like this grow. Once you get started you almost can't stop.

**00:07:02**

**SW:** Why is that? Why were you so compelled to it besides—I know you said you're a big food lover but—?

**00:07:07**

**SN:** For—for—for me if I start something I like to finish—. I'm not the most competitive person in—in the world but I like to at least finish in the top ten and for me when I started my apprenticeship I wanted to make sure we—we started with three apprentices in—in the company that I worked for an I wanted to make sure that I came out on top. And so my—my hunger for—

for information and for—to learn more than all the others did just drove me to—to be better and—and excel and those things.

**00:07:48**

**SW:** Were you—were you there around the clock and watching the meat cure, like how—how did you do that?

**00:07:54**

**SN:** Well I had—I developed a special relationship with one of the—the masters that did work there and so while everybody else was always striving to get out of the house I always liked to stay behind to learn more, to get more information, to get more knowledge. And when it came—came time—. [*Phone Rings*] And when it came time to learn how do you operate the curing equipment or the—the smokehouses I was always the first one to volunteer because I wanted to know? I wanted to have that knowledge. I wanted to have that edge above everybody else.

**00:08:40**

**SW:** Were your parents excited that you wanted to become a master sausage maker after having the restaurant? How did they feel about all that?

**00:08:46**

**SN:** Well for me I know—I knew once I finished my apprenticeship that I really do—did not want to stay in the restaurant. It's—I love to cook. We do catering and—and I did that all my life growing up and I just knew the restaurant business was not for me because I would like to have at least one day off a week and in the—if you own a restaurant that is impossible, even on—on

the days you're off, you're still working. And I—I thought for myself this is not for me. I want to do something else and my parents always supported any effort that I did. And for me to become a master sausage maker was my highest goal that I had and like I said I always tried to achieve the goals that I set for myself.

**00:09:36**

**SW:** And could you tell me where you—who—some of the people you studied with or where you studied in Germany for the program?

**00:09:43**

**SN:** The—we have three schools in Germany that do master—master sausage maker or master butcher classes. One of them is in Frankfurt, Germany which is the Heine Institut and then I went to Heidelberg and studied at the university there with—the institute it's called Muskalla which it does not exist anymore. And then we had another one in the—in the Bavarian region. We—we—and I don't know the name of that institute, so—.

**00:10:15**

**SW:** And who—who do you consider your greatest mentor there that you learned from while you were in Heidelberg?

**00:10:21**

**SN:** In Heidelberg his—his name was Mr. Sorg and Xaver Sorg I learned a lot from him but I think my biggest mentor is—his name is Robert Diehl and he was the one that mentored me all those years that I worked from—from an apprentice until I actually went onto do my master's



degree. And up until today I still call him if I have any issues or any questions. And he's usually pretty forthcoming with the information. If I don't know it, he does.

**00:10:57**

**SW:** Wow; and so when you finished the program you—you said you went to Africa. Did you go—I mean what happened between finishing the program and going to Africa? Did you stay around in Germany for a while and work?

**00:11:11**

**SN:** Yeah; I worked for a company that specialized in salami making. They—actually both of my brothers just worked for them as well at—at some point in time. And we made up to 10,000 pounds of salami every week only on one day only and that was always a Friday and which is good because if there would have been two days a week it would have killed us probably. We used to do things the old-fashioned way when I first started there. We had 100-pound blocks of beef, frozen beef that we took cleavers to and chopped it up in small pieces so the bow chopper would be able to handle it. And the same with the pork fat; we—we used the scrap of the pork belly to go into the—the salami and we would hack that—by hand, too. After a while we bought a machine that actually does it for us and it was a frozen block cutter and it just made life a lot easier.

**00:12:16**

So I worked for them for about three years before I moved on and—and moved to Africa for six months.

**00:12:23**

**SW:** And what was the name of the company?

**00:12:25**

**SN:** It was Georg Geiss [in Neunkirchen] And I—I'm still good friends with them and if I—if I have the possibility to go to Germany I—I usually visit with all those people too.

**00:12:38**

**SW:** So only on Fridays; was there a reason why it was Friday?

**00:12:42**

**SN:** We usually kept Friday open for salami because Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday we would start boning beef and freezing it to—to—in order to make salami you want—want to have frozen—frozen raw material so we would start boning—boning cows and hogs and by the time we got it all boned out and frozen and ready to be chopped it took two or three days just to get that ready without all the other work, our regular sausage making and what—what had to happen.

**00:13:16**

And Fridays, the reason why we did the Fridays, we did a natural curing—curing method which means it takes seven days for—from the day we process until the day actually your salami becomes solidified that you actually can cut a slice out of it. It takes seven days. So Fridays we loaded—after we—we made the salami, we would put them in a—in a curing house that was humidity-controlled, temperature-controlled and it would sit there for the whole week on and off

smoke and then like I said the temperature and everything was very controlled. The humidity was controlled that will help with the—the building of the—the lactic acids and by the end of the following Friday we could take those out of the—the smokehouse and reload it again.

**00:14:21**

But we wanted to have Saturday, Sunday for sure for the salami to set in there without any disturbance.

**00:14:30**

**SW:** And I wanted to ask you what made you go to Africa?

**00:14:34**

**SN:** I—like I said I always wanted to do something different and the opportunity came up that somebody from our town and a young gentleman [Romeoul Cana] out of Cameroon had the idea to open a butcher shop in Cameroon and so they were looking for somebody to—to help them out and I guess I was—I was crazy enough to do so.

**00:15:02**

**SW:** So you worked in a butcher shop in Cameroon?

**00:15:09**

**SN:** Yes.

00:15:11

**SW:** What was that like?

00:15:11

**SN:** Very, very different. It—if you picture that it's a third world country and so things were ninety percent of the population is Muslim so our biggest issue was trying to find somebody that would kill your hogs. They only had one guy that would do that—that was not Muslim that would actually would be willing to kill them hogs for us. And if he decided not to come into work we wouldn't get no hogs killed. So we always had to make sure we stayed on his good side and talking third world country you never knew are you going to have electric today? Are you going—is your walk-in cooler going to work today? Are we going to have water? Are we going to have somebody that will sell us ice for sausage making that is filled up water? Is he not going to cheat us? Is he going to use regular water? So it was—it was quite difficult.

00:16:06

**SW:** Was there—in Cameroon you know you mentioned that there—it was a predominantly Muslim country but were there curing traditions already in place when you went there that you learned from or you picked up while you were there?

00:16:18

**SN:** They—Cameroon is a—or was a French colony so the French—the French settlers that—that lived there—that they liked their hams and—and salamis and but they had a—pulled pork and salami and things like that. When I started out there was nothing in place. We started from

ground zero. So we actually started fresh from nothing to a regular butcher shop level, so it was—it was—it was different. *[Laughs]*

**00:16:53**

**SW:** Why—why did you guys want to open a shop in Cameroon of all places? Was it because he was from Cameroon or was there—it sounds like maybe there was a need for one there; I'm just curious.

**00:17:03**

**SN:** Well the need was—I mean they have supermarkets over there that will sell you a boiled ham or a cooked ham or anything like that but there was quite a few European companies that were—Yaounde, Cameroon which is one of the main cities besides Douala and the need is there and the business is there and I suppose the gentleman from Cameroon was studying business in our town at the university in our town and he saw—he did a project with that butcher shop and he saw that there is money to be made in—in doing what they did. And I think that's what sparked his interest in doing something like this in Cameroon.

**00:17:50**

**SW:** And so what—what were the most popular items that you guys sold in the butcher shop when you opened it?

**00:17:58**

**SN:** Salami and then we did a—a museaux which is like a head cheese. We did a lot of saucisson a'lail which is a—like a coarse ground bologna that has a lot of garlic in it and we did

the gendarms which is a salami snack stick. We did regular salami, cooked salamis and—and boiled hams, baked hams. We did dry-cured hams.

**00:18:27**

**SW:** People did eat pork? Was pork pretty consumed there and I'm just curious with the—?

**00:18:33**

**SN:** Yes, yes; it was. And like I said we had a lot of—the World Bank was—they had a Headquarters in that town and we had the Institut Goethe [Goethe-Institut] which is a worldwide organization. They had—they had offices in town. So it was quite a few European people there. So the business was there.

**00:18:52**

**SW:** Interesting and so you were there for six months you said?

**00:18:54**

**SN:** Yeah; I was there—

**00:19:00**

**SW:** Okay; so—

**00:19:01**

**SN:** I was there for six months and they had some business difficulties and I said I do not want to be part of this. And I decided to come back home.

**00:19:11**

**SW:** And what was the gentleman's name from Cameroon who you met back in Germany?

**00:19:15**

**SN:** His name was Romeoul Cana.

**00:19:18**

**SW:** I'll probably ask you how to spell that later?

**00:19:20**

**SN:** Sure.

**00:19:21**

**SW:** And so from Cameroon did you come straight to Kentucky? How did this work?

**00:19:24**

**SN:** No; I went back home to Germany and worked there for a couple more years and then the opportunity came up to open a butcher shop with somebody from Germany that had already lived here for a while. He was missing the taste of the home country and he decided he wanted to open a butcher shop and that's when I moved over here and that was—we first met in 1996 and over the course of two years we would go back and forth and are we going to do it; are we not going to do it? And then in April of 1998 I came over here actually right after Easter, a week after Easter for a week and we had the opportunity in somebody's shop to do a few things and to do some samples for people and they liked it. And we had a big party and everybody got drunk and we shook hands that night and I left Monday morning and went to my boss and said, "Here's

my resignation. I'll be moving, so—.” And it took—my boss made me stay for three months until they found a replacement. And in September I finally moved over here.

**00:20:44**

**SW:** Wow; it took them that—it took them quite a while to replace you huh?

**00:20:47**

**SN:** Well it's you know one of those things it's not like here you give your two weeks' notice. If you have a somewhat important role in a company they want to try to find the right match and then you will have to train them to do the things you do and the way you do them, so—.

**00:21:05**

**SW:** And what was the name of the guy who you decided to go into business with here?

**00:21:08**

**SN:** His name is Detleif, yeah.

**00:21:11**

**SW:** And I mean what would—what did you think about moving to Kentucky? What was going through your mind when your first—before you decided to come over here? What were you thinking?



00:21:19

**SN:** Well I don't know if I was thinking—probably not as clearly as I was supposed to but I wasn't married at the time so I had time. I had nothing to lose and he was the—the finances behind the business. And I was ready for an adventure and sixteen years later I'm still here, so something must have kept me here. *[Laughs]*

00:21:44

**SW:** And you said that there's a large German community here in the area. Can you talk a little bit about that?

00:21:49

**SN:** Yeah; we have a very large German population. Cincinnati and—and Covington are very largely German-influenced. They have an area in Cincinnati that's called Over the Rhine, which the Rhine River in Germany is one of the largest rivers going through Europe. And a lot of the settlers that came from the Old Country they settled in that area right around the Ohio River because it reminded them of home with the hill country and—and the river, so they settled around here in Cincinnati and in Covington and Newport. So this is where a lot of old German people settled and that's second and third generations now and we have a lot of German companies that settled around here because of Proctor & Gamble and then most of the companies that are over here are car manufacturing places that manufacture parts, car parts, so—.

00:22:49

There is probably 4,000 or 5,000 people from Germany living in within a twenty-five-mile radius from us here.

**00:22:58**

**SW:** How has that influenced the food here do you think? You know you think of—I know that we're in the—close to Cincinnati part of Kentucky but you think of it as a mixture of Southern food and—and the cuisine of Germany. Have you seen that—those two worlds mix?

**00:23:14**

**SN:** Not so much. Newport was the home of the first Hofbräuhaus outside of the City of Munich in the United States of America and we were largely involved in helping them get—get settled and we were one of their first vendors actually for German products for brats and metts and for schnitzel and for haxen And I—I don't think the cuisine has mixed a lot; I mean there is a lot of dishes that people make here that have somewhat of a German influence and I'm sure a lot of them are southern(ized) if that's a word but I'm sure there's like—like when I first moved here everybody was talking about goetta. And I said what are you all talking about? I don't know what you're talking about. What is goetta?

**00:24:05**

Well you should know that's German. I said I never heard of it which come to find out there is something—there's a dish similar to goetta. Goetta is I don't know if you're familiar with scrapple. We make goetta here which is made with pinhead oats and not with—with scrapple I think is made with cornmeal and we make goetta with pork and pinhead oats. And we have a similar dish in Germany which is made with buckwheat and—and pork blood. And so when people came over here they probably couldn't find the buckwheat or couldn't find the pork blood so they started making their own concoction and called it goetta, so—.

**00:24:48**

**SW:** What is the German version of the pork blood and the buckwheat? What is that called?

**00:24:51**

**SN:** That's called kenep or pon haus

**00:24:55**

**SW:** And so you came to Brooks in 1998?

**00:24:59**

**SN:** No; I came to Brooks in 2007.

**00:25:04**

**SW:** That's right; sorry. You said—you mentioned that. And how did that happen?

**00:25:07**

**SN:** We—we decided to close our store down and I was looking for a new home and the Brooks family was very welcoming to me and they needed something else to add to their business and the sausage making was—was one part that they have never done before and this is where I came into play.

**00:25:30**

**SW:** And before I forget to ask you what was the name of your business before here?

**00:25:32**

**SN:** German Cuisine.

**00:25:34**

**SW:** And what was it like coming here to implement your own work within what Brooks was already doing? What was that like for you?

**00:25:41**

**SN:** It's for me it's—sausage making is a part of me and I was very happy that they are so—so accommodating and you know I can pretty much do whatever I want to do, any—any new recipe is more than welcomed and they were—they gave me a lot of free rein.

**00:26:01**

**SW:** Can you talk about some of the things you've brought here when you came—first came to Brooks that they didn't have?

**00:26:05**

**SN:** We did our Black Forest Ham, dry-cured ham that's been cured for six weeks. And then we smoke it for two full weeks. And I made salami, summer sausage, beef snack stick, the snack sticks; we do beef jerky that we didn't do before and then we do different hams and different—different cold cuts. And we do up to like I said forty—forty different varieties of sausages. Our newest invention from last year was a Philly steak—Philly cheesesteak brat that's made 100-percent beef with onions and peppers and mozzarella cheese. And then this year I'm—my—my

newest one was a Tuscan chicken red wine and so I can do whatever I want. I did a Kentucky brew house brat made with Kentucky pork and Kentucky ale and fire roasted onions and peppers.

**00:27:08**

I do a—a Kentucky bourbon brat which is made with Kentucky bourbon and apples. And so I got—I got a lot of freedom here that I can do things that I want to experiment with.

**00:27:18**

**SW:** What is the craziest thing that you've experimented with and it actually worked and you were surprised?

**00:27:24**

**SN:** I think the craziest thing we did was a Kentucky wildcat tail for the—for the NCAA tournament. We did blue and white brats, so the—actually it was a regular white brat and a blue brat that we colored with food coloring. So all the Kentucky—the UK fans loved it, so—.

**00:27:49**

**SW:** I bet; I bet. And I'm—I'm curious as to if you could talk just a little bit about sausage making I mean in terms of the curing tradition. Can you walk me through just a—a typical process of making sausage and it doesn't have to be like very specific but just the idea of—of curing sausage?

**00:28:07**

**SN:** Anymore what we use in sausage making is called a speed cure, where before if—if you wanted to have a cured sausage like a salami it would take up to seven days for your sausage to actually totally ripen through—meaning you—you put your components together and by the time the seven days is over your sausage is nice and pink all the way throughout. There's no grey area on the outside edges. It's perfectly nice and red on the inside. No—no grey center of it and now we can achieve all those within twenty-four hours.

**00:28:51**

So technology has come a long way not saying that this is the best thing that ever happened because no more can—because we have to put in something that you know—the more unhealthy I think products get, but what we do now we just—we do either a pre—it's called the pre-rigor which means we're taking our ingredients, our—our pork and we mix it with one-percent salt solution. And we let that sit overnight and what the nitrate and the meat does it starts curing through the meat and then the—the following day we take the remaining one percent or one-point-two percent of salt mixture and add that to it and finish the product up. Then we stuff it and then we smoke it.

**00:29:42**

And that extra day will give us a nice—nicer finished product.

**00:29:47**

**SW:** How long do you smoke the sausages for?

**00:29:50**

**SN:** It all depends on what it is. It depends on the diameter of the sausage and regular smoked sausage. It's usually smoked in about forty-five minutes and I got some—some items they smoke for two or three days. So it all depends on what—what size of—what the diameter of your sausage is or what kind of product you have. And then there's certain things, certain sausages that are smoked and cooked and afterwards smoked again and then there's stuff that's just cooked and then there's stuff that's just smoked. So there's—there's—it depends on what—what brand of sausage you're making.

**00:30:26**

**SW:** Could you talk a little bit—okay; I heard some numbers and I think she's making a phone call. Can I pause it just for a second? Could you talk—is summer sausage something because Greg was talking about summer sausage earlier; is that something that's known around this area in Kentucky? Is that something that—hold on. Is that—is that a German tradition, summer sausage?

**00:30:58**

**SN:** No; I don't think so. It's—it's morphed from something that probably originated somewhere like in Wisconsin and places like that where they started making sausage in the wintertime that kept them throughout the summer. And so it—it's pretty big and mainly in the wintertime. And of course we have a lot of hunters in this area so they do a venison summer sausage and so it was—was a good way for them to—to preserve their—their if you want to say their—their bounties that they took home, you know without having to freeze their meats so they

started making summer sausage and it's—you can put it in your basement or you can hang it somewhere where it's nice and cool and dry and it'll keep you throughout the summer.

**00:31:50**

**SW:** Do you have something particular that you love making the most? Hold on; sorry. Do you have something in particular that you like making the best of everything that you do here?

**00:32:03**

**SN:** No; I think what I love to do is experiment with new things the most so I mean if I could just do—. [*Phone Rings*]

**00:32:16**

**SW:** Could you just tell me—I just have two more questions for you—what do you love most about being a sausage maker?

**00:32:22**

**SN:** That you can be creative with—with what you do and for me there is nothing better than making people happy with my food. I just love seeing people smile when they eat a sausage and say, “Wow; that’s great.”

**00:32:35**

**SW:** Do a lot of—I have—do you feel like you’ve introduced a lot of people who aren't familiar with German cuisine or hadn't grown up in a German community you know people in Walton are you exposing them to things that maybe you grew up with that they didn’t have before?



**00:32:49**

**SN:** Most definitely. When even though my—my old location is only about seven miles down—well about fourteen miles up the road it's—it's pretty amazing to see the difference what people like, what people don't like, but it's also amazing to see that we grew from a store that sold only generic brats and metts to a store that now sells over forty different varieties and that people—people actually travel hundreds of miles for to get it so that's—that's a big reward for me because that shows me something—something is done right and people like our products.

**00:33:24**

**SW:** And you know we talked about this—this is my last question for you; we talked about—I asked you about curing traditions and you talked about the necessity of having shelf-stable products before. But we have refrigerators now so I'm wondering in your opinion what do you think is important about keeping these curing traditions going since you know we do have refrigerators now? But what—what's important about continuing the curing tradition for you?

**00:33:48**

**SN:** Even though we have refrigerators—refrigeration right now that doesn't mean it's going to be always available for you. There is times where if you go camping there is not always refrigeration available for you so taking snack sticks along or beef jerky is a necessity especially if you're looking to stay out for a few days or if you're a hunter or you know—. We sent cured meats to our troops in—in—around the world that—that are incapable of keeping them refrigerated. But it's also an important part because if you have a piece of meat that has been cured and aged and smoked it's not going to taste the same than a piece of meat that you just take out of your refrigerator and cook.

**00:34:28**

So for me to have a nice piece of—of a dry-cured ham or a nice piece of salami that I can put on a charcuterie plate there is nothing that can replace that. There is just no alternative to it. And if you have something that's been cured for—for 120, 180 or even longer days or even longer there's just no—no substitute for that. The age—the flavor is just phenomenal and—and if your taste buds are somewhat alive you will—you will taste the difference.

**00:35:05**

**SW:** Do you have a favorite particular piece of cured meat that you love the most?

**00:35:09**

**SN:** I'm very partial to my Black Forest ham I have to say and I pretty much use that in any recipe that calls for bacon or for a cured—cured meat and it's extremely good on pizza.

**00:35:24**

**SW:** Do you sell it to people who put it on pizza here?

**00:35:26**

**SN:** Yeah; we do. We do sell it—I have a customer that buys the hams as quickly as I can make them so they—they buy them whole and they have a small little German café and a restaurant and people they introduce it to they go crazy over it because he can't find it nowhere. It's not like the Black Forest ham you buy in the supermarket where it's just basically a boiled ham.

**00:35:53**

**SW:** And Stefan I'm wondering is there anything else you want to add that you think is important about what you do or curing traditions.

**00:36:01**

**SN:** It—it's just important that we keep the tradition alive and it would be nice if we could find actually people that are just as interested in—in this and—and interested in apprenticeships like that because we're a dying breed. And especially finding a butcher, a small butcher shop and supporting a local small butcher shop is very important because we are trying to keep a tradition alive.

**00:36:27**

**SW:** And how do you say master sausage maker in German?

**00:36:30**

**SN:** Fleischermeister.

**00:36:31**

**SW:** And so there aren't many of you here? I mean you—you mentioned that before but what about Germany; is this—is this a tradition that is kind of fading away there?

**00:36:40**

**SN:** Well unfortunately even—even in Germany people are more so prone to go to the grocery store, to the supermarkets, to the—to the larger chain stores instead of supporting their local

butcher. And so even in Germany it's a dying breed. And the bakers, the butchers, we're—we're all slowly but surely dying out because everything has become mass produced out of a factory. And Fleischermeister in—in the United States I believe there is less than twenty.

**00:37:13**

**SW:** Wow; wow. That's—that's pretty important that I'm sitting with you right now I guess because I think that this is a really amazing story and it's just really—it's been a pleasure to sit with you and to listen to your stories. And I'm actually quite honored.

**00:37:34**

**SN:** Well I appreciate that.

**00:37:37**

**SW:** So Stefan thank you very much for doing this today; I appreciate it.

**00:37:40**

**SN:** You're very welcome; it was my pleasure.

**00:37:46**

**[End Stefan Neumann Interview]**